

JEWISH EDMONTON STORIES ONLINE

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

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In my adult years, Edmonton Menorah Academy is one and the Edmonton Kollel is another. Then as I started thinking back to when I was young, the old Beth Israel synagogue, my grandfather's bakery, Furman's Tasty Bread, Teddy's Lunch, actually Marcus Furs was important, the old Talmud Torah, and in Jasper Place my mom's cousin had a store but I can't quite remember the name of it. But that store was also really important to me. I know that some of these places are not traditionally what you would call "Jewish community places" but they were an integral part of the Jewish Community.

Menorah Academy started around 30 years ago. It was the brainchild of the Ghermezian brothers who wanted to make a strong [frum] Jewish community in Edmonton and they asked me to be a founding partner in Menorah Academy. At the time, I was on the board of the Talmud Torah and it was just a crazy time. When it started, first we were going to have a shared arrangement with Westminster Junior High and that fell through. At the time, the Woodward's food floor in the mall had closed and we didn't know where the school was going to be. It opened first of all in the convention center of the Fantasyland Hotel, where the rooms were classrooms and the kitchen was used for lunch. It was just a nuts time. Nader Ghermezian asked me to help him interview staff for teachers. Sylvia Benjamin and I and Nader formed the nucleus of the school. We got it up and running, it was amazing. Then we moved into the food floor at Woodward's and it was completely open concept. We had classrooms that were divided by business dividers, you know those really tacky orange things? Eddie had a little teeny tiny kitchen to work out of to feed everybody and it was just a really pioneering time. I had pulled Carla and Mitchell from Talmud Torah and put them in there. Shannon started in kindergarten at Menorah and went all the way through. Our kids thrived in this environment and it really jump started our religious journey. We didn't move into the school location for at least a year. I remember Sylvia on the Woodward's food floor. She had a platform so she was like sitting on a platform looking down at all the kids. The parents -- we wanted to see what was going on so we brought couches and we made a

library. We said we were making a library with couches but really it was for all the parents who were out shopping to come and sit down and watch what was going on in the school. This was such an interesting time.

We were already on our way because prior to opening this school they opened the Kollel. So the Kollel was opened, it must be like 28-29 years ago that all of this happened. So the Kollel came first, actually before the school. Prior to the Kollel coming they brought in a lot of speakers and we had a weekend where we went to a Shabbaton in Jasper and that really inspired a lot of families. Once there was more than just Howie and I and the rabbis keeping kosher and Shabbos, it was kind of like a snowball because other people were and we could invite people over, teach them, and inspire them. So that really helped.

Well we got married there [at Beth Israel], it was my shul. I was my shul growing up and I remember going. My dad used to take me every Saturday for services. I don't know, I can still smell the old Beth Israel. I used to love going into the little chapel in the basement. I don't know, it was just **the** shul that we went to. I never actually went to high holiday services in my life until I was in high school because my mother was Shomer Shabbos and we didn't drive on holidays at all. My job was to sit and read the *machzor* at home. I do remember Purim, I remember quite a few Purims where the adult population did Purim *shpiels* in the basement. Isaiah Staav repainted the basement and everybody was appalled because he had done a creative paint job with mauve and yellow. I loved it but the rest of the people, the board especially, didn't really appreciate it. I remember the rabbi's office way at the top of the stairs, sitting in there waiting for them to come and get me so that I could walk down the aisle to marry my husband.

I remember the Saturday services and going as a child. I'm still linked in my heart and my brain to Beth Israel. Now that it's moved to the West End and now that Howie's president, it's hard not to be linked. Menorah, I'm very sad that it's closing and I'm not looking forward to the end of this year.

I mean the cemetery is another place. You know it's becoming more and more a home now to me. All of my family is there like my grandparents. Reuven Dolgoy A"H (*Alev Hashalom*), he

once sat me down and we did a tour of the cemetery. He showed me where the original funders of the community were, where their graves were. He told me stories about all different kinds of things and it was very interesting to me.

Like I said earlier, you may not think of these places as Jewish community “places” but Zal's butcher shop and Silverman's butcher shop I remember very well. It's so amazing to me that so many years later we no longer have a butcher shop. We have a bakery, we had Bon Ton, but we don't have a *Vaad HaKashrut*, so that's probably a big reason why. I remember the bakery because, again, we had this route on Saturdays -- we'd go for shul and then we would go to get gas at the bakery. Then we would go for lunch at Teddy's and then we would go to visit my uncle Allen and my auntie Eva at the fur store. When it was next to the King Eddie, the storage was also there. So while my dad was talking to my uncle, I would just cuddle up inside the furs that were hanging on on the racks, so I remember that very well.