

JEWISH EDMONTON STORIES ONLINE

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Howard Starkman: The Starkman Building

June, 2021

The first location that I'm going to refer to, and you refer to it as a building on Jasper Avenue, that is referred to and called and has a sign on it called the Starkman Building. It's been there for many years; it was built in 1949 and I think my father bought it in either '49 or 1950. It's been part of our family for all these years. It's now my building and I hope it stays in the family. It had many manifestations -- my father had his wholesale dry goods in the basement of the Starkman Building, which at first when we first purchased it housed the Hudson Bay Company tobacco wholesale which was kind of interesting. It's had a very checkered and varied career in the basement. The main floor was always interesting; it had a grocery at one point, and a Jewish family by the name of Shapiro ran a grocery store there. Subsequently, one of my good friends, a Lebanese man by the name of Ken Halaby, had his grocery store there. Coincidentally he was my very first client when I became a lawyer. He cleverly came to my office and asked me to do a lease on a store he was buying and to act for him in that context. I readily agreed to do so until I found the address and I said "Well isn't that a building owned by my dad?" He said "I know that, I'm sure you'll do a fair and good deal for me". I think that he got a favorable rate as a result of my intervention with my father. It then became Sid Estrin's restaurant called the Hot Box Restaurant, which is one of the early delicatessens in Edmonton. It subsequently became a restaurant owned by Normand Campbell who is celebrating his 32nd consecutive year as a tenant. In that building we always seem to have long-term tenants, from the Hudson Bay tobacco we now have a basement that's filled with a new cannabis store. It's called Cellar Cannabis -- I must admit that I've never been in that basement. He had to live with it while it's been operating but I did see it being developed.

In grade eight or grade nine we lived in the back of the Starkman Building. I felt very independent because I had a room to myself on the second floor, which years and years later became the mainstay office of my son Daniel Starkman. He's a realtor there and we have our business office in that building, so the building is still belongs to us and is tied closely to our family history.