

TRANSCRIPT

JEWISH EDMONTON STORIES ONLINE

Person: Barry Slawsky

And how long have you lived in Edmonton? Too long. 1950 on. So we're looking at 75 years.
Were you born here? No, in Winnipeg. *So you came here as a child with your family?* Yes.
And what led you to stay? Well, I like it here. I created a business here, my family and that sort of establishes it as a home. It's a good City. Yeah.

I've always supported the synagogues, both conservative and Orthodox, and other ones, and involved in the Jewish school that came a little later down the road. I also was involved with the United Israel Appeal campaigns in the 19, late 1970s, ran the campaign in 1981, raised a record amount of money. At that time we were sending the majority of the funds to Israel and then got involved with the young leadership at the time, then moved on you know in my own business world, and then came back about 1994 as the fundraising chairman of the Edmonton Talmud Torah. So I was involved with selling the old school, with negotiating with the City of Edmonton, Edmonton Public for the location we got, and dealing with the rest of the Board in terms of what the building as you see it today which is probably the most modern Jewish school in Canada, and even though it's 27 years old, it still looks brand new. But the layout is perfect. We had an amazing architect and worked with him as did the building chairman Mr. Randy Sawyer.

It goes in phases. You know when you have your family and kids, there's lots here. We had a cottage west of the city. Used to go there on the weekends. There's a lot of parks in Edmonton, the different events during the summer. You know I go to a lot of things fairly actively. Involved with the Edmonton Jewish Hockey League -I was there. I've played in that league for 30 -39 years. I'm just retiring from it. I'm the oldest player at 78, that's been within the Edmonton Jewish hockey league. So that's been an important part -that way of meeting younger people and others which has been a positive thing.

My kid is now going to camp B'nai B'rith. I went to camp B'nai B'rith. So there you take advantage of what you feel is there for you at a certain time in life, when it is. In the last few years, the community here has been shrinking and the majority of my friends have moved away. So when you take a look at my kids at Talmud Torah, probably 80% have left Edmonton over the last 20 - 30 years. They're all in Toronto or Vancouver. The parents are all following them there. So this community is currently in dire straits, the way I see it. We're still dealing with -we're expanding at the Talmud Torah. In terms of attendance, the school is getting better and better, and that's sort of the only hope for the future that I see here for young families.

Yeah, that was a long time ago, there were several Jewish newspapers. Most of them were just advertising rags, and there were people writing anti-israel articles in the Jewish papers because the the editors weren't interested in the betterment of the Jewish community. So I started the Edmonton Jewish News. It still has the same logo. I ran it for a year and then sold it for \$1. Probably the best dollar I ever made. No headaches after that. But I used to write articles for several years. That was instrumental in helping build the Talmud Torah

-reaching the community. After that I decided not to, but the paper still exists today. It's a good Jewish newspaper, and they've expanded into Calgary. So it's a viable concern.

In 1981 when West Edmonton opened up, I opened up a store next to the Hudson Bay and called it San Francisco by the Bay, and went on to open over 200 stores across Canada from Newfoundland to Victoria, and operated the stores for 30 years. Also we were the first, with my son helping me -we were the first to open up these Halloween popup stores. We had over probably 40 of them over a period of 4 to 5 years called Halloween Distributors. Also did kiosks in the malls, right across Canada -about 90 of those. And so I was very active in the retail business, but retired from that 12 years ago -let the leases end and been retired ever since.