

TRANSCRIPT

JEWISH EDMONTON STORIES ONLINE

Person: Marilyn Sheckter

I'm Marilyn Sheckter and I was born in Edmonton, and I've lived here most of my life -except for during school, university -that sort of thing and my family is really rooted here - grandparents on both sides and I have two siblings.

I worked as a lawyer for 35 years and I've just recently retired. I was working as a family law lawyer and I had my own business called the Legal Family Crisis Clinic and I did crisis law so yeah a lot of 24-hour kind of things. I was married at the old Beth Israel and I had my wedding pictures taken on the top railing of that, the way it used to be and that place is a real landmark. Unfortunately it was sold and it's now somebody's house. But you know my family on my father's side, they were Orthodox, and so we you know we were there all the time.

The family business on my father's side was Alberta Bakery and my grandfather started that Bakery in about 1920, and he and my father -well let me put it this way, my father was educated in baking. He went to Guelph to the School of Baking to learn the trade, which was unlike a lot of people who ran bakeries and hired bakers. He knew the science and he really relied on the science his whole life. Like he had books about the science that he kept on the shelf that he would check when he was baking. It was not just about following a recipe. So he worked all the children. My grandfather Meyer and Feigel -that was his wife. But Meyer was not a trained baker. He did start a bakery. He had 10 children and I think all of them worked in the bakery and in those days baking was -to get the bread out, they did it by horse and wagon and there is a picture of the wagon which I sent you right.

And there's a story about his bar mitzvah which is really cute in that he said on the day of his bar mitzvah, he had to drive the bread wagon. So he drove the wagon to the synagogue, he had to change into his suit in the bushes. He got his suit on, went into the synagogue, nobody came. It wasn't a party or it wasn't a celebration with the community. It was him and the rabbi. He did his bar mitzvah, went back in the bushes, changed his clothes, got back on the bread wagon, and carried on with his delivery of bread. He contrasted that with the way bar mitzvahs are done these days and always thought that people go overboard considering what he had as a bar mitzvah.

Yeah so the Alberta Bakery was around 1920. In 1936 approximately it might have been even a bit earlier than that, he started his own Bakery. I think he just didn't agree with some of the things his father was doing and they couldn't get along, and so he borrowed a hundred pound sack of flour to start his bakery, and I always thought that was so funny because he didn't give it to you, he lent it to you. That's how it was in those days. Today with our children, we're a lot more like, generous. But in those days I think every penny counted.

So he started with this hundred pound sack of flour and he was more interested in pastry -that was his thing. He liked to show people what he could do, and he was famous for certain things that he made, and one of those things was cream puff swans, and if you had an event and he brought you cream puff swans for your party, you were like ecstatic to get them because nobody made them, and still really nobody made them the way he made them. He

had these ducks and they had a certain expression on their faces, and only he had those signature ducks. So I have the recipe. I've made them, not recently, but once in a while I get out the duck recipe and try and do it.

So he ran that Bakery for about 20 years: 1936 to 1956. But I'm a little unsure on the fact that in the pictures it's called the Dainty Maid, but originally it was called the Dainty Cake and I think it burnt down and it had to be reconstructed or renovated or something, and it was renovated, it became the Dainty Maid. I was born in 1954 and that Bakery closed in '56. What I remember him saying was you had to get up at about 3:00 in the morning to be at the bakery by 4, in order to get going with the fresh pastries for the day, and after 20 years of doing that it was just too much and he just didn't want to do it anymore.

But he always maintained an interest in pastry and sometime later on like maybe in the 70s or '80s he built a second kitchen in my mother's -in their home and it spanned the whole back of the house, and he put in a commercial oven, a commercial fridge, big counters and he did nothing but charity baking. So you could call him and say I'm having a -you know he used to bake for the Hadassah Bazaar. You may not remember that, but the Hadassah Bazaar was a big event every year, and he would provide like a lot of the baking that was sold at the Hadassah Bazaar, and he also would bake for anything. If someone called him and said I need 2,000 cookies, he'd say I'm on it. And my mother just loved to help him. She would go behind him. She would clean up behind him. She would just follow instructions and they were quite a pair in the kitchen. Yeah so he never really let that part go.

But my sister Lori when she was a child, she had her picture on the Dainty Cake cookie boxes and that was a big thing, you know a source of pride to him. Also the other thing is the Bon Ton Bakery which still exists today as you know, 149th Street and 87th Avenue. It was originally started by Gene Edelman and my father would go there and try his bread and if he thought it needed something or other, he would go over there and they would discuss the bread, and some of my father's recipes ended up in Bon Ton Bakery.

So when I go there, there are certain things that are very nostalgic for me because I've had these same pastries since I was a very little girl, and I was upset because the last couple of years, I don't know if you remember this, but they used to have these blueberry buns, apple buns -they're kind of a flat thing, and they're filled with this filling and that was one of my father's originals and then now they've stopped making it, and I don't know why that is. But I was really disappointed not to see it. But my father had a real thing about rye bread and the rye bread had to taste a certain way, and so I don't know which recipes are in that Bakery, but I know when I go there, there are certain things that taste like his.

Yeah so Lawrence had a sister Corinne, may she rest in peace, and Corinne was my sister Lori's best friend, and so it's just funny because we sort of grew up with the Bliss family and then he ended up having this bakery deli sort of thing. So I go in there a lot too and I like his stuff and I like to talk to him because it's like the old days almost. So yeah, I was just going to mention one more thing that I think is funny is my father used to say in the Alberta Bakery, because my father had nine siblings and everybody had to you know, like my grandmother, had to help in the Bakery. Everybody had to help. The little babies, they made a play pen out of flour sacks, and to amuse the babies, they were given a piece of dough. That was their

toy. That was what they had to play with, and that's how you grew up, and maybe when you grow up like that you're a baker from the word "go".

Obviously I went to Talmud Torah for seven years: kindergarten, one to six. It was good to get to understand how to read Hebrew and we learned how to read Hebrew there, and I didn't really pursue reading Hebrew until I was much older. But for many years I was...

Well the Beth Shalom is really important to me because -the Beth Shalom and also the Beth Ora. I actually was a member of both for many years. I'm still a member of Beth Shalom, but Beth Shalom used to have -this was say 10 years ago. They had a women's day where women ran the service on Saturday morning and I was in charge of two of those days, and I did a Torah reading on both of those days, and somehow when I got older I learned to read from the Torah and that was really great for me. Like I really thought that was amazing to be able to do that.

Because when I was 12 and we were Orthodox, we did not have bat mitzvahs. So I never got my turn. But as an adult I was able to do it twice and I also got all these women out to read from the Torah and you know to sing and it was really quite an amazing thing. So that synagogue has played a big part in just my feeling connected to the community and Judaism and all of that. Yeah I had forgotten about it being in the JCC. But you know I do remember my son having his bar mitzvah in that back room of the JCC with the view of the river valley, and I don't know if you remember that, but you know that was an incredible building -really, and normally when you're in a sanctuary, you don't have that huge view of the valley, and it was a more beautiful day because of that, right.

Well I live in the south side which is not that usual. Most of the Jewish people live in the west end. But my husband and I have always loved the south side. We live near Whyte Avenue. We love Whyte Avenue and we like to walk easily from our house to the shops etc., and Whyte Avenue has such character, and it's so much the heart of the City, really.

I also love the Muttart Conservatory and I used to take my children there oh like many many times in a winter when you couldn't -it was too cold to go out. But we'd go there. I think that's such a wonderful resource. It's one of the -and I was just there recently. But it's one of the few places where you can go and stay warm in the winter, run around a little bit if you're a little kid and you feel like you've been somewhere and you actually get an education while you're there. So I think it's like really a wonderful resource -yeah.

I think I'd like to mention the high Level Bridge. I don't know why but I feel like that's a really important connector you know, and it's beautiful, and our Valley is amazing, and when you're on that bridge you feel like you can see the City from you know -you get to see the south side in a different way. You look down and you see, is the ice melting? You know, what stage are we at with the seasons? The leaves look beautiful, like we're lucky to have that river valley and that bridge.

I have two children: Jonah and Suzannah and I have a stepchild Shaeah, and both my kids were raised with all of these things and you know they're very nostalgic about them. They're very important to them too.