

TRANSCRIPT

JEWISH EDMONTON STORIES ONLINE

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How long have you lived in Edmonton? All my life, 92 years. *What made you stay in Edmonton?* That's a good question and I really don't know the answer, except it just seemed the natural thing to do at the time: practice law and taught periodically at the Faculty of Law at the University of Alberta.

First and foremost I guess was the synagogue -the old synagogue on 95th I think it was, Avenue. Rabbi Postone was the rabbi. *Was that Beth Israel?* It wasn't Beth Israel. *So that was the original location on I believe 95th Street?* Yeah I had my bar mitzvah there and that's of course where we went when we went to the synagogue. There was no other synagogue at the time in Edmonton. I guess it would be accurate to say that Beth Israel originally was an orthodox synagogue and it was the only one in Edmonton at that time. At that time, being when I was bar mitzvahed, shortly thereafter the next synagogue to be created in Edmonton or built in Edmonton was Beth Shalom and that is a conservative synagogue, and that's where I have been a member since I can remember.

I don't think I have any interesting dramatic outstanding memories of things that happened. I was really torn as a young person between being Jewish and not being Jewish, primarily because of my love of sports. There weren't a lot of Jewish kids in those days and I was very much involved in sports activities, which placed me with a member of the non-Jewish community who were involved in sports because most of the Jewish people of that time were not so. I was always trying to balance between the two communities: the Jewish community and the non-Jewish community. Young Judea was of importance to me because they carried on a sports program and I remember particularly going to Omaha, Nebraska for a basketball tournament at the Jewish community. But I can't say that there were dramatic incidents in my Jewish community. At least it didn't seem so to me. It seemed pretty normal. Beth Shalom is still my synagogue, the UJA.

I would say those would be the two in the non-Jewish community: well the University for one because I attended there as a student. I graduated from there and as said before, taught in the faculty of law. Periodically the football field because part of my career was playing football, which I followed on. When I left football, I refereed in the Canadian Football League for 20 some odd years and so that was important to me.

As a child and a teenager I was involved in playing baseball and hockey. When I got to high school I played basketball for the first time. I achieved the status of ball star and in high school basketball and I played football during high school for my high school, and then when I got out of high school, went to University. When I started university, the University didn't have a football team at that time. It was because of the War, the Second World War, and so there if you wanted to play football as a teenager up until the age of 21, you played in what was called the Junior League at that time and I was fortunate enough to be voted the most valuable player in the League. One year we played in two junior Grey Cups, two national championship games: once in Edmonton against Hamilton and they beat us, and the following year in Windsor where we played Windsor and lost a second time. So I got used to

losing and as I say when I was unable to continue playing because of wanting to achieve my career, I was asked to if I was interested in officiating in the Canadian Football League and said yes, and as a referee I was fortunate enough to officiate in five Grey Cup games across the country. But sports like hockey, football, baseball -they were really pretty well close to me after I was going to University. But because of my love of sports, I took up golf and took up tennis and while I didn't achieve the same kinds of successes I did earlier, it was still things that I enjoyed doing and still do. I spend my winters in Arizona. We stay at a place called the Racket Club and I play tennis there. I'm now of course a great admirer of television sports.

Did you watch the Stanley Cup finals? The Stanley Cup finals, I sure did! *What do you think of Zach Hyman?* Well it's nice to have a Jewish boy playing for you. I guess he plays sports like a Jewish person. And what do I mean by that? I mean you play with your head as much as your body, and his ability to score goals in the way that he does, indicates that it's very difficult to be involved in sports in a way and to the extent that you could achieve something almost professionally, and still live a Jewish life.

When I was a youngster and playing hockey and baseball, and all those games: I was born on the South Side, near Scona, and my first six years of school was at Garneau School, and when I started junior high school, my family moved to the Oliver District in the west end on the north side and I went to the Talmud Torah on 105th, I think it was. And I went there every day except of course Friday after school, and of course after school is when those teams practice, and I was always fighting or this obligation to be in the Talmud Torah to learn my bar mitzvah, to be able to pray in the synagogue and at the same time enjoy the love of my life: sports. It's very difficult to be in two places at the same time. Another sort of example of that is that when I finished junior high school, I finished grade 12. Sorry, finished junior high school which would be grade 7, 8 and 9; and ready to go to high school, the new high schools on the north side had not yet been opened or the old ones were overflowing with students at the time, and as a result Edmonton arranged for all kids between 109th Street and 124th Street north of the river to about 104th Avenue to go to high school on the south side, and so and Garneau, where I spent my first six years was converted partially into a high school, so I went back to Garneau High School, and I was living in the west end of Edmonton, and that meant taking the streetcars over the top of the High Level Bridge to get to high school every day, and then when school ended, to go downtown to the Talmud Torah for my after-school Jewish education, and believe me it left little time to play the sports that I wanted to play.

But I found the time, and as a boy, a young teenager, you can imagine that sports would be number one in my life, and the concept of religion would be something less than that. But something that my parents and my grandparents insisted and encouraged is the development of my Jewishness. And as a result of all of that my Jewishness is not that I was going to say important, but that's not really right. I'm just not as able in the area as I might have been, had I had more time. I guess one of the things that was important to me was trying to understand how I could live in two worlds, and that's how I felt about it: living in two worlds. I had two sets of friends: the Jewish friends and the non-Jewish. But I've been rewarded with fabulous friends and wonderful opportunities to do the things I like and achieve success, both in the practice of law, which opened the doors for a lot of non-Jewish experiences, as well as my Jewish friends.