

TRANSCRIPT

JEWISH EDMONTON STORIES ONLINE:

Person: Sylvia Benjamin

(How long have you lived in Edmonton?) Since 1992. *(And where are you from originally?)* Originally from India, then I moved to Israel, and once I got married I came to Canada. My husband had citizenship -Canadian citizenship. So he sponsored me. Jim's brother was here and we looked in different places, and the cost of living was much better here than any other province.

The Synagogue because it binds me with the community *(Which synagogue, Beth Israel?)* Beth Israel. I've been a member ever since I came, and the Jewish community in general. Yeah, I started in the old shul downtown, and then once it moved here we moved with it. *(And now you work here?)* Yes I started about two years ago, as Menorah [Academy] closed down, I took a year's break and then there was an opening here.

So Menorah Academy started in 1993 and I was called to recruit kids as well as start the office. Before that I was working for the Jewish Community Centre, UJA, then once the school started, I felt like I was part of it. Education was important to me as well. And then I joined them where I was doing just about everything from the office to cooking sometimes when the chef was sick, replacing teachers, if I had to -if they didn't show up. I felt like my own. I didn't think of it as somebody else's or as a job -8 to 4. The education was very important because the kids were getting the Judaic and the academic side of it.

(You mentioned the Jewish community that you worked with, the Jewish Community Centre, is that when it was in the Hillcrest area?) Yeah. *(And what did you do there?)* I was at the front desk as well as the secretary. Started from there and later on was for the working UJA as well and doing front desk if needed. When I first came, I also worked part-time with the CZF: Canadian Zionist Federation, and part of it was Na'amat. So there were quite a few that I was working part-time when I first arrived here.

I liked the green houses. I like the Muttart, the museums -things like that. The nature -you know, walks and stuff like that. The river valley -those kinds of things I enjoy. The city is beautiful. I think that's why I stayed here so long.

I have three kids. The oldest one will be turning 50 this month. So not a kid anymore. He was an RCMP -just retired. The second one is in New Jersey. She's the daughter and she has three kids -three boys. And the youngest one is here in Edmonton, and he has two kids. And the first one has three kids as well. And they have moved to Saskatoon now. So they're doing quite well there.

I like to go to the Holes. I don't know what they call them, yeah the Holes one, and the Muttart. You know -to see the gardens, the different gardens. Yeah. I used to take the kids, the grandkids to the Museum when it was on 142 Street -no 132 Street I think it was -102. *(On 102 Avenue. That's the one that's being demolished now.)* Yeah, I used to love going there with the kids as well.

But originally I came here in 1975. But we were in Wetaskiwin. So I have a long story: a wandering Jew went from Wetaskiwin to Toronto, and in Toronto we stayed there for a few years, and then moved to Israel for eight years, and came back again. So that's when the 92 came in is back to Edmonton.

(Do you ever go back to India to visit?) I've been there about the last time I went there was 2000 for a wedding. But since then I haven't gone there because nobody lives there. Everybody has moved to Israel. So I go quite often to Israel and visit my family -Jim's family is there, and lots of cousins and stuff like that.

I was born in Bombay which is Mumbai now and there was a big Jewish Community there. We moved from India in ' 67. Yeah, my great-grandfather had a long history there. He built the first Jewish school in India. He built a synagogue and he's well known. And he's also written a book about the Jews of India. So I think the education part comes from his side of the family. Very important that my kids,also was very important for me that they get the education at the right time. Yeah, I was in accounting. But because I moved, so many times it affected. I'm proud to be Jewish. I'm proud to be an Indian Jew. I just love coming here and for prayers and stuff like that. I think I have a strong belief in Judaism and in everything like that.