

Phyllis Bright

July 14, 2022

Interviewed by Paula E. Kirman via Zoom and via email

PB: My name is Phyllis Bright. I'm the owner of The Flag Shop in the Stony Plain Road and Area Business Association.

Q: Why did you decide to open a business in the Stony Plain Road area?

PB: In the mid '90s my husband was an engineer looking for a career change. I was a teacher. We looked for small businesses, and this popped up on our radar. It was already in the area when we bought it. When I made the decision to move, I wanted to stay in the Stony Plain Road area because I think it's a really wonderful area to work in, and I wanted to make sure that I found a place in the area to move. It took a while, but I finally found one.

Q: So you're not the original owner of The Flag Shop?

PB: No, we are a franchise, and the original owner was the franchisor. She opened it in 1990 and we purchased it in 1994.

Q: How do you find running a business in the Stony Plain Road/Jasper Place area?

PB: I'm sure it's not any different than any other area. There are people who will tell us that we have challenges in that area. Every area has challenges, both good and bad. We are a destination business rather than walking up and down looking for businesses. It works well for us, because we're pretty accessible. Yes there are challenges, but I like that there are a lot of different people who come in there. People who do come in live in the area and are happy to talk to us about living in the area, and there are people who come from all parts of the city. I think sometimes Stony Plain Road gets a bad rap.

[....]

Q: Have you ever lived in the Jasper Place area?

PB: [...] Actually, I'm south of Jasper Place, in Meadowlark. No, I've lived here since we moved to Edmonton many years ago.

Q: Can you tell me about your involvement with the Gateway Foundation?

PB: Sure. It was a long time ago, so some of it is somewhat hazy. Through the grapevine, I had heard about some people who were interested in planning events in the area. We named the organization the Jasper Place Gateway Foundation because we felt that Stony Plain Road was the gateway to the west. Our logo was a rainbow, which in some of our graphics was placed over Stony Plain Road as an archway to the west part of the city. We planned some really fun events. We were all volunteers. I'm not sure where our funding came from to buy things like paper plates and cups for various events. We had the dirty buster derby, which was an event that swept the streets in the spring. We had teams and we worked against each other to see who was the most efficient. We had an event that utilized the parking lot at what was then Grant MacEwan and is now the Orange Hub. It was a chalk drawing event, and we had tons of people who came and drew pictures on the concrete parking lot. We had lots of different events and it was just a lot of fun. That kind of really got me interested in the area more so than I had been, and allowed me to see all the benefits of being in that area.

Q: As a Jewish person, have you been involved in the Jewish community?

PB: I think because I didn't grow up in Edmonton, I never really was part of the Jewish community. I did belong to Temple Beth Ora for a time. I've kind of moved away from organized religion in general; that's another story. I am proud to be Jewish, I'm happy to be a Jewish business owner. I will help my community in any way I can, but having said that, I will help any community in any way I can. My kids didn't go to Talmud Torah, so I'm not really part of the

overall Jewish community and I don't have a lot of contacts. That's probably about all I can add to that.

Q: What are some other organizations that you've been involved with that pertain to the Stony Plain Road/Jasper Place area?

PB: I'm a member of WEBA, the West Edmonton Business Association, and I'm currently on the board of the Stony Plain Road Business Association. Other than that, nothing really.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

PB: In the 25 or so years that I've been in the area, first on Stony Plain Road and now a couple of blocks away, I've seen a lot of changes for the better. We still don't have the reputation that we deserve. But I think that because of committed people, the revitalization group of people, the business association group of people, people who really want to plan events in the area to draw people to our area, I think it's become a really strong, vibrant community. There are a lot of shops that perhaps 25 years ago wouldn't have considered moving into our area but are now here. While there are a number of vacant buildings, that's probably due more to the LRT construction than to anything else. I know a couple of other businesses who have had to move for whatever reason, and have stayed in the area. I think that says a lot about our area. I like being in that area. There's so much to do, there are so many businesses. You really don't have to leave the Stony Plain area to shop, because there's everything that we need. I'm really pleased by the improvements that have happened and I'm really glad that we were able to find a space in the Stony Plain Road area.

[END]

Additional information (added August 12, 2022): Upon further research, Meadowlark was one of the communities considered part of Jasper Place prior to amalgamation with Edmonton. For the purposes of this project, Phyllis Bright is therefore considered a Jasper Place person. She was contacted via email with the following questions:

You mentioned that your children didn't go to Talmud Torah - did they go to school in the Meadowlark area?

Were you involved at all in the local community league, or any community-based organizations, apart from the business organizations you mentioned in our interview?

Last, but not least - is there anything you would like to share about living in the Meadowlark area (any cute/funny/interesting stories)?

Her response (August 8, 2022):

My kids did go to Meadowlark School. It has always been a small community school - it had strong parental support. It is now a Mandarin Immersion school. My husband and I were always involved in the Meadowlark Community League, serving as various board members, working the bingos and casinos. I taught preschool at Meadowlark School for several years, and it was great to walk to and from school with my kids.

Living in Meadowlark (I still do) has been great. There are a lot of families who have had their kids move into houses in the area, even after their parents moved out. It is close to so much. A number of small businesses are in the area. It's close to downtown, to lots of amenities. It's a great area. And of course, it is close to Stony Plain Road.

Additional information (added August 26, 2022): Two questions were sent:

1) From where did you move to Edmonton?

2) Why did you choose Meadowlark as your area of choice to live?

Her response (August 26, 2022):

We moved from Winnipeg. It was 1980 and interest prices were 18%. Our budget chose Meadowlark. Although as it turned out - it was a great choice.