

Interviewed: Shirley and Hilton Silberg
Oral History Clip Title: The First Midnight Store
Theme: Contributions To Canada
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(Hilton)

We weren't allowed to be open 'til midnight in Hamilton, so I went and got the by-law changed. I went to city council and we opened the first midnight store. And it was brutal. For the first year and a bit, I worked nine 'til midnight seven days a week. It was brutal. My kids would come to me for dinner. My friends would come visit me for dinner. After about a year and a half I started taking Sunday nights off. And Shirley had gone out to work full-time so it was doubly hard on our kids.

(Shirley)

Yeah I had to [inaudible]—

(Hilton)

We started from scratch again, you know.

(Shirley)

—because somebody had to bring in the salary, right?

(Hilton)

Yeah, well, because we thought we were really rich 'cause we sold to Shoppers. But we bought a house and I bought my parents a house in Toronto. And then suddenly you got no money. You're not rich any more. You never were, but you thought you were.

(Shirley)

Yeah.

(Hilton)

And that store also just took off just like a house on fire. So I mean it was in 1999 that we opened Daynight—

(Interviewer)

You opened—

(Hilton)

The first Daynight. And we always thought we'd own a store and then by [sic] serendipitously a young boy—a Toronto boy—a bright brilliant young boy—and he calls me and he's like, "My father-in-law lives in Dundas and he said to me you are the best pharmacist ever and I've got a plaza at the other end of the Hamilton mountain." And he said, "You're the guy to go in there." And I'm like, "Are you kidding me?" I didn't know I was going to have two stores. I'm only going to have one store. We're quite happy. I met with this kid—and it was an ex-Dundas customer's son-in-law, a Jewish guy—and we ended up opening at the other end of the mountain. So now we had two stores, which was unfathomable for us. And then, a year or two later, a big Jewish organization, a family-owned property business, the biggest property business outside of Toronto, the biggest property owner outside of the big, big boys in Toronto, called. And I sit on their board now, which is quite amazing. They called me and said, "We're opening up a store in the middle of the two." I'm like I never thought I would have three stores. So we opened a third store. And then we opened the Dundas store and...

(Shirley)

I used to fill-in at all the stores.

(Hilton)

And Shirley would fill in at all the stores. And then we ended up with five stores. We were very fortunate. We—for five stores—Shoppers had thirteen. Rexall had about eight. But if you asked anybody for a pharmacy in Hamilton they said Daynight Pharmacy. And we were dominant. We had our own radio show. I was on the radio every day. We had an hour-long radio show at midday on the biggest radio station called *Health Matters*. And we were really well-known. We made ourselves out there. That's the way we did business.

(Interviewer)

[inaudible]

(Hilton)

Yeah, so we were pretty dominant. And then—But just to go back. And during that time I still worked crazy hours. I still worked way too much. I'm...whatever. I shouldn't have been. I had like twelve pharmacists on staff. Two hundred staff but I still... We even had a head office, which is pretty fancy. And we were really involved in Jewish affairs. We both worked for JNF forever. I was president. We were lucky enough to be Negev Dinner honourees.

(Shirley)

We were on the shul board.



(Hilton)

We were on the shul board. I sat on Federation board for a while. It wasn't my thing. Maybe four or five years. We [sic] I sat on a thing called Dundas Community Services, which was non-Jewish, but it was run by an amazing Jewish woman, and it did all the social service agendas in Dundas and looked after shut-ins. People who needed rides to doctors. I was on that board. I sat on the St. Joseph's Hospital Foundation board. So we were really involved. So when you said Silberg or Daynight everybody knew. In this little pond, you know. Compared to Toronto, they don't know who we are. And that's okay. But yeah, we became a dominant force. And then, luckily, what prompted our move in 2007, Rexall bought us.

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