

Basil Rosenblatt - Northview class of 62

Only a month or 2 after finishing at Northview, I started my first real full-time job – as an articulated clerk in the accounting profession – at Schwartz Fine. At the same time, I attended Wits University part-time (evenings and Saturdays – I had lots of stamina in those days). After 4 years of university, I wrote the Board exam the following June, and, despite being nervous about the results, came first in South Africa. About a year later, I became a partner at Schwartz Fine, the youngest ever at about age 23.



Basil and Caroline – Holland: 2012

Despite all the work and study, I managed to have a bit of a social life as well. In 1966, I was introduced to my future wife, Caroline Cramer, by Melvyn Jaye (remember him?). On November 26, 1967, we got married and recently celebrated our 46th wedding anniversary. We lived with my parents in Highlands North for a while (the pay was pretty poor in those days), subsequently moved

into a tiny house in Lyndhurst and then graduated to a decent house in Bramley View.

In 1969, 1972 and 1973, we had 3 kids, Lana, Mandy and Craig, respectively.

I continued as a partner at Schwartz Fine, and then in about 1978, an event took place that was life-changing. The firm was taken over (“merged”) by Arthur Andersen, a giant US based accounting firm, which epitomized the definition of Ugly American (apologies to fellow Northview-ites who are now American, but I’m sure you know what I mean). After about 2 years, I couldn’t take it any more, and we decided that, if I was going to resign from the firm (the only place I had ever worked at), it was perhaps time to make a BIG move. (Footnote – like many other people, I was delighted when Arthur Andersen went out of business some years later. A case of schadenfreude).

So after doing a bit of research on the relatively few English-speaking countries in the world, we decided to move to Toronto in 1981 (I might add that the choice of Toronto was not made lightly (the weather!!), but having visited and met with former partners living there, and of course, my good friend Brian Eisenberg, we weighed up all the pro’s and cons, and decided that it was a good place for our children to grow up. The pro’s included a safe place to live, modern, clean, compatible culture, good education etc. The only real con was the weather, although no-one ever told us quite how extreme the weather is – in some winters, temperatures can drop to minus 20C or lower, although this is fairly rare (typically, it’s not nearly that cold; also there generally isn’t a huge amount of snow). The other unexpected extreme was the summers, with temperatures in the 30’s + humidity).

We arrived in Toronto on a beautiful early summer day in May 1981. Within a week, a recession hit, the economy took a nose-dive, interest rates soared to about 20% (which was good for the savings we had), and there was a mail strike. Some of our paperwork, credit cards etc. were stuck in the mail system for weeks. For the first few weeks, we stayed in a dismal furnished apartment (OK Brian ...I know the choices were limited and you did your best) and as my ever-optimistic wife said, “things can only get better” (and sure enough, they did!).

Fortunately, I had a pre-arranged job at Deloitte, but the first few months were a bit scary – the firm was in firing mode due to the poor economy. Again very fortunately, I had a minimum 2 year contract, which the firm honoured. I ended up spending 11 happy years there.

In the meantime, Caroline decided to go into real estate, where she has had a very successful career, and is still working at it.

Getting back to my career, I left Deloitte in 1992 to join one of their clients, Shoppers Drug Mart, the largest pharmacy chain in Canada, as an operations finance controller. Another 11 years later (do you see a pattern here?), I left Shoppers to join United Jewish Appeal Federation of Greater Toronto, where I am still working in the finance area (been there almost 11 years).

Now to the kids. They adapted to Canadian life very quickly, did very well at school and all graduated from university. Lana is an accountant with an MBA, Mandy is a teacher, teaching special needs kids, and Craig is a chiropractor. All 3 are married to Canadians, and am pleased to say that they all live within a 15 minute drive of our place. We have 9 grandchildren, ranging in age from 4 to 16. Lana has twin girls, now 16. Mandy has 2 boys and 2 girls ranging in age from 8 to 16. Craig has 2 girls and a boy, ages 4 to 9.



We try to take at least 2 vacations a year, often going to Europe in summer and the Caribbean in winter. Cuba is one of our favourite sun destinations. We also love cruising. We live in a condo, so going away is very easy, just lock the front door and leave.

Basil

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