The Real Scoop on Ed

At any of Ed's four counters, my limit is one kiddy cup per week,
but after our chat at Oro's I wish it could be one a day ~ for health!

Marion: So Ed, where are you from, and why are you here?

Ed: I actually am from the States originally. I grew up in southern Ohio in a small town south of Columbus, not too far from the Ohio River. It's an old town kind of like Kingston, Ontario; it was the first capital of Ohio, actually. I went to university in the U.S. and graduated during the Vietnam War, so went into the Peace Corps to avoid it. My major in college was physics, so when I came back, I found a job in the high-tech industry in Boston in '71. High-tech at that point was mini computers.

Marion: Were you working with the IBM system?

Ed: I worked some with IBM, but the first job I had was actually with one of the original mini computers. It was about the size of a home refrigerator, the PDP 8 by Digital Equipment Corp. but it didn't fill a room like the IBM computers did. I quickly got into data communications; my specialty was internet connectivity back before the internet existed. Back then, ARPANET was interconnecting some universities, and the last place I worked in the U.S. was for the company that wrote all the code for [Department of Defense's] ARPANET: Bolt Beranek and Newman, if you look it up ~ BBN.

Then I met my wife in my backyard.

Marion: What was she doing there?

Ed: Sunbathing. I lived in a two-family house in suburban Boston, on the main floor, and she was visiting her friends who lived upstairs. I was actually sick that day, so I drove home from work, pulled up onto the parking pad right beside the backyard and saw these two girls sunbathing, and I thought, Well, I'm not that sick. And that's when I met my wife, Jennifer Pah. She has a different last name because we got married in Quebec.

Marion: Better laws in Quebec for women.

Ed: Yes, I think so. So, that's how I met her. BBN were going through organizational changes and had hired a guy who was promoting an IBM network instead of the ARPANET. I'd just got married, and Jennifer was going to come live in the US, but I thought, I don't want this. She's Canadian, from Lachine, but was working in Toronto and lived in an apartment on Balsam, in the house just passed St. Dennis School. Her family had a wholesale clothing business in Quebec, she was the Ontario rep and her sales were booming. I was unhappy with BBN since they let my boss go, so I said, I'll come to Canada instead. So, I came up.

Marion: You were married already?

Ed: We were in different countries when we got married. It was a few months later that I actually moved to Toronto. Which is fine. You could move across the border to live with somebody that you had married a lot easier back then.

Marion: Yes. It's harder now.

Ed: Yes. because of the lineup. So ~ that's how I started, and then came here. I got a job at a software development and consulting company. It had maybe 40 employees. It was a good company. One project was for STR, the Alcatel company in Switzerland; they put me in as technical leader, so I spent a lot of time in Switzerland for five years.

Marion: What was your favourite part of this?

Ed: I was in Zurich. I had a motorcycle that I flew to Europe and left it there, so I could go riding through the Alps on the weekends, if I was there over a week. My wife would come over and we'd go on holidays. So it was nice. It was also interesting because that was in the early 90s and now the internet was around. What I'd done before [in Boston] was develop network software and code, link level protocols and messaging protocols and that sort of thing. I'd been in charge of network management for the actual internet in the late 80's, but of course it was pretty small then.

Marion: You wanted all the hardware pieces to talk to each other through cables?

Ed: Yes. That's right.

Marion: This is before firmware, just before embedded.

Ed: Oh, yes. This is all just software you download into the node somehow. What happened at my job in Toronto was I was in charge of big contracts, but I wasn't happy being a manager. I'd been happy doing creative development but once the [www] internet came along, all the protocols were pretty well defined so then it was a matter of who makes a cheaper or faster box, right? That wasn't the area I was in. So, I was bored. My wife had this wholesale clothing business selling to retailers, and it was growing, so when I left the Swiss project, I worked with her for a few years.

I have to go back a step. In Boston I lived about a half a kilometre away from a store owned by a guy named Steve Harrell, who opened the first homemade ice cream store in Boston. I used to go by because I've loved ice cream all my life. My parents used to make it with the old hand crank machines.

Marion: And so you had some home recipes?

Ed: Well, I had some, but there's only one that I ever really use that much. I just kind of like the idea of [an[ice cream [store]. I used to stop at Steve's and think, 'This is really cool. But I don't know anything about ice cream. I don't know anything about business. I build computer networks. But it's really kind of cool.' So anyway, jump forward to the 90's - I'm working with my wife, selling to retailers.

Marion: Okay, I'm going to make a point here and you tell me if it's a real one. When you were learning physics, then doing coding, you're dealing with IF-THEN. You consistently set up an analytical process in your brain. If this, then this. You work with scenarios. Some of the best business people also work with scenarios. I'm just putting that out there.

Ed: Actually, as far as getting into business eventually, the important thing I had ~ even though it bored me ~ was managing a department of 45 people and having a budget, having to play off this expense against that expense, best use of your resources, right?

Marion: Yes, that's exactly what I'm talking about.

Ed: I had to deal with that for a number of years and finally, I got tired of that environment. But you're right. Having studied physics and math, my mind's pretty analytical; those studies did appeal to me, as did running a network. In the late 70s through early 80s, the Boston company I worked for built an international network for Chase Manhattan Bank, back before the internet existed. I was in charge of this department that had maybe 50 people in it. I had communication lines running all over the world that came out of my budget, plus equipment, and people. I had to balance: do I want to spend the money on people, or do I want to spend it on equipment? How do I best use my budget here? All that came in handy once I opened the store since I had to see, how am I going to make a profit? How can I make this a real business?

Marion: Were you utilizing any of those skills at that point, *working with Jennifer's wholesale? Or was it a shift when you opened up your ice cream business?*

Ed: Some, some, but she was really a sales rep for her father, who owned the company.

Marion: Oh, so your end was the Ontario logistics setup.

Ed: The main warehouse was in Lachine, right? Jennifer was doing deals for them all over Ontario and getting commission. We sent them the orders, they sent us money. It was a lot more relaxing. So I was dealing with small businesses. Looking at them, one day I had this thought, 'Okay, I think I see how small businesses work. I can see people who are doing a bad job of running their little retail business, but they've survived for a few years. So I probably could do as well as they're doing.'

Marion: What were the variables?

Ed: Just people making bad decisions. For example, 'Last summer was cold and I didn't sell that many t-shirts and shorts, so I'm not going to order very many for this year' ~ and then it's a hot year, and suddenly they don't have the stock they need. Seeing people make decisions based on their emotions or short term past experience. Seeing someone put a sign that I consider negative on their door of a store that mostly sold women's clothing, but had sold some men's clothing. Once when I visited, there was a sign right on the door that said, 'We no longer sell men's clothing', because they didn't want people to come in and start asking for that, right? But you're giving a customer a negative message even before walking in. That kind of mistake. If you're going to open a business, you got to realize you don't want to turn people away. You want to attract them in. So even if they were looking for men's clothing, maybe they'll see something else

they like such as an extra-large women's T-shirt. You never know. So finally, I decided to open an ice cream store.

Marion: Because of your memory of Steve in Boston?

Ed: I'd wondered about it since then. So I started looking up my mom's recipes.



Ed with his parents visiting from Ohio for his Beach opening in Y2K

Ed: My elderly parents were still in Ohio. I have a story about the pumpkin ice cream that I have. It's really popular, and is based on Mom's pumpkin pie filling. Early on in the business, maybe the second year, it was mid-September, maybe. A woman came in while I was in the store alone, serving and making ice cream. She asked, 'Do you have pumpkin ice cream?' I thought, Oh, that doesn't sound very good, and said, 'No, I don't.' She told me, 'You know, it's my husband's favourite flavour. He used to get it at Baskin Robbins, but they don't sell it anymore.' My thought was, 'There's a reason they don't sell it, which is nobody wants it!' But then she left, I'm all alone in a quiet September, and I started thinking, 'Maybe I should try, but how would I make pumpkin ice cream? Well, I'll take my mother's pumpkin pie ~ because I bake pies and I have her pie recipes. So, I'll take the pie filling recipe and just add cream to it, basically, until I think it tastes right.' So I did that, but only made a half a tub as I thought, 'Oh, this could be really bad.' I put it in the batch freezer, as you can't really tell how it's going to taste until it comes out. You have to wait for it to harden up. Next morning I came in, took it out, and put it in the dipping cabinet. I took a taste and I thought, 'Oh, this is actually pretty good!' People would come in and I'd say, 'Hey, you want to try the pumpkin ice cream?' And everybody liked it. So I started making full

tubs of it during the Thanksgiving period, and now it's the biggest selling flavour in this store during Thanksgiving. More than burnt marshmallow, which is the favourite the rest of the year.

Marion: Did she ever come back? The lady that asked for it?

Ed: I doubt it. I don't even remember if she bought an ice cream or just left. But she gave me the idea. So, yeah. I have four sisters, one is older and lives in North Carolina and she asked me one time, 'Do you make ice cream pies?' I said, 'No, I don't even know what they are.' She told me about this ice cream store near her that makes their own ice cream and ice cream pies. They just fill a crust with ice cream. I thought, 'Well, that's a cool idea, but you don't want to use dough crust.' So I bought graham crumbs, melted honey and butter together, mixed it into the graham crumbs so they would stick together, put them in the tray, and then extracted the ice cream into it. So we sell ice cream pies now pretty much all year round.

Marion: You figured out that recipe yourself?

Ed: Yes. I just like recipes, I think if I put this much in of this and this much of that. Once I figure it out, since everything's done by weight, I don't have to make everything. I can train somebody, you know, so many grams of this, so many grams of that, and so many grams of this, and you mix it together. So yes, I create the store recipes. That's easy. But one time, I thought, 'This is a lot of work, making our own graham crumbs when you can buy them at the grocer.' So one Thanksgiving I bought one of those premade graham pies shells and put ice cream into it. Luckily, I took that one home and tasted it, and I did not like it at all. The pre-made crumbs add sugar, so it was too sweet. We always do all of them by hand now.

Marion: But how many people do you have in there?

Ed: Let's get to that later.

Marion: Yes. Open your store first.

Ed: Okay. First I went to an ice cream school that's not there anymore, in North Carolina, operated by Carpigiani, the big Italian equipment manufacturer. I learned from a guy named Luciano Ferrari. who apparently is now retired, but everybody in the industry knows him. He'd go around the world, training people to make ice cream and gelato. He'd show the different ways to do it: the cheap way using flavourings, or using real food. If you ever see lemon ice cream and it's yellow, they've just put yellow colouring in and lemon flavouring; if you use real lemon, it's just the juice, not the skin, so the ice cream is clear white.

Marion: And you use the real thing.

Ed: Yes, we use the real thing, I'll tell you, I use probably the most expensive fruit purees that you can buy. There's a local distributor of French Boiron fruit purees, and their fruit is all picked ripe. If you go to the fruit market here, the fruit is picked partly ripe, and then ripened over time, so the Brix count is low and the flavour is not correct. Boiron gets theirs from all over the world in season. I use mango, and you can't grow mango here. There was one time a salesman came in and said, 'Hey, I have this fruit puree and it's less expensive than that one that you're using.' I think it was pineapple. I tasted it, then asked one of my staff over and said, 'Here, taste this, and

tell me what fruit it is.' They couldn't, it didn't have flavour. It hadn't been ripe. So that's why it's cheaper.

Marion: You don't want to compete with the franchises, right? Like Baskin and Robins. Because they can do it cheaper than you can.

Ed: Right. You have to be special. You have to have something that separates you from the crowd if you want people to come to your store. Anyway, that's one of my rules.

Marion: So who is who is your competition then?

Ed: My only real competition is other homemade ice cream stores. Here in The Beach is probably the most competition, but it hasn't affected our business, really, having other people come in. The weather is so much more important than somebody opening another store down the street. And our hours. We're open a lot. Actually, before I learned how to make ice cream, I thought I'd use those old hand cranks, round bucket things. Then I did the math. I thought, okay, if I use a bucket, it makes a quart of ice cream in 40 minutes. If I have four of them, that's four quarts, a gallon in 40 minutes. I have to sell that at $20 a scoop if I want to pay the bills, pay the rent, pay the staff, pay all of that. I realized that I needed an ice cream making machine, and that's when I contacted Carpigiani. Each store has one person trained to use their machine, a three-gallon tub that takes maybe ten minutes. Very quick. Right? So each store has one ice cream machine and one person we've trained to make ice cream.

Well, actually, before I bought the machine, I looked for a place to open. I thought, 'I'll open in The Beach,' because there was nothing here except one Baskin-Robbins in those days. That was pretty much it, and it was way west. We found this little ladies' dress shop that had gone out of business, so my wife and I rented the space. I became general contractor and hired a carpenter, an electrician, a plumber. I designed it all.

Marion: Did you have to go and get the approval of the owner first?

Ed: No. When you rent a store, the only thing is, when you sign the lease, they said, 'You can't have a deep fryer.' They didn't want a restaurant in there. Fire hazard. I said, 'No, it's ice cream. We just freeze it.' We do have a little stove in there because when you make ice cream, you have to heat some of the ingredients. We make fudge brownie ice cream, so we bake brownies in our oven and crumble them into the ice creamer.

Marion: No wonder it tastes so good!

Ed: Almost all the inclusions that you see in the ice cream, we make in each store. Actually, the menus are different in each store because the preferences of the community are different. The staff learns what's popular, and they tend to stock what's more popular.

Marion: So what's the most popular in The Beach?

Ed: The most popular one, burnt marshmallow, it's the same in each. What's different is Leslieville's the younger audience so when you do experimental flavours, like maple bacon crunch, in Leslieville it'll sell out quickly but The Beach is slow. I call The Beach more my meat

and potatoes place, it's older and likes traditional things, though we do make Guinness stout ice cream for St. Patrick's Day and the Jazz Fest. Roncesvalles is an interesting store, inbetween The Beach and Leslieville. They have more of a foodie scene, I'd say, people looking for different things, but they also have older people living in the community around so you still have the people who want the standards, you know?

Marion: It's basically Perogy Strip.

Ed: For the Polish festival that they have out there, we make a Polish cookie ice cream, and I can't think of the name of it now. (He did later: 'It's *pierniczki*!'). But anyway, we do a deal with a local bakery, and we get these Polish cookies from them and make a Polish cookie ice cream for the Polish festival.

Marion: And what about Mimico?

Ed: To be honest, Mark handles most of that. I don't have as good of a handle on that one as it is a 'franchise' owned by my son's best friend.

Marion: Why did you decide to open other stores after the one in The Beach?

Ed: I opened The Beach store in 2000, and in 2005 I started thinking, 'I have a single point of failure. I have this batch freezer. And if it fails, I'm dead, right? For however long it takes to get it back on his feet. So I need a backup. So if I have a second store, I can run a second shift at that store and move ice cream if I have to.' After the Beach store had been open three years or so, some guys opened a gelato shop down the street here about three blocks. They made their own, but they did it the cheap way with flavoured liquid, then froze it and put it in a gelato case to make it look good. But luckily, The Beach community really supported us, and we had gelato by that time. I'd gone back to school to see Luciano Ferrari again, said, 'Okay, how do I make gelato?' and he taught me.

Marion: What's the difference between gelato and ice cream?

Ed: The main difference is the milk fat content. Ice cream has more fat, has to be at least 10%, or you can't call it ice cream. Ours is closer to 16%. Gelato's 5% or a bit more. And because of that, with gelato your tongue tastes the flavours more intensely because butterfat actually absorbs more of the flavour. And sorbet is really strong because there's no dairy in it at all: mango, raspberries, lemon, there's a selection of sorbet in the gelato case. In Italy, it's all gelato. *Gelato* just means frozen. If you go to France, it's a sorbet, you go to Italy and it's a gelato. But it's the same thing.

In fact, we make a chocolate sorbet with no fat. We don't always have it up, but it's really good, and it's very intense. We use cocoa powder, and semisweet chocolate melted down. We search around for one that's good, though it's hard to find right now with the price going up. But it's a funny thing, you know, our biggest cost is dairy.

Marion: And you're in the middle of Ontario?

Ed: Well, dairy's all controlled. Every gelato, except for sorbets, and every ice cream has dairy. Only a few have chocolate, so the fact that chocolate doubles in price is less important than if dairy goes up 10%, because then our costs basically go up almost 10%. So, it's more of an issue. If something else goes crazy, like pistachio, we just have it less often. When I first opened in 2000, I did a lot of filled chocolates and fudge as well as ice cream; then a couple of years later, I added gelato to the mix. Then I looked at it and asked, 'Where's the revenue coming in?' It was all in the ice cream, in gelato; some in the filled chocolates but not so much, so now it's a side shelf product, whereas the chocolates case used to be right in the front. Our real specialty became the ice cream and gelato. I have all kinds of moulds that I don't use much anymore.

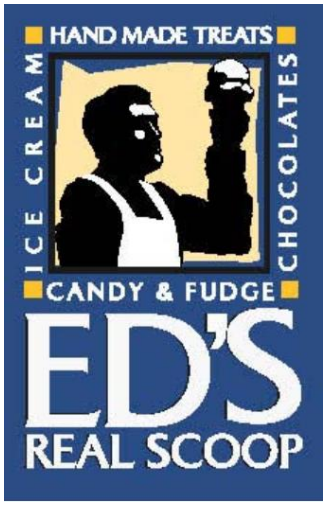
Marion: So then where did you get your name from? Ed's Real Scoop?

Ed: Oh, it's funny. I wanted to use the term "real" somehow, because what I'm using is... real. It's homemade. The fruit is real fruit. The chocolate is real Belgian chocolate that we import. So I was talking to a friend who did marketing stuff and I said, 'I think I'm going to call it The Real Scoop.' And he said, 'No! You should call it Ed's Real Scoop, make it more personal, put your name in it.' And so now people call it Ed's, they don't call it Real Scoop.

Marion: Right, they do!

Ed: Yeah, so he was right. He helped me. He actually drew the little logo picture and helped me pick the colours for the stores. I was really lucky. The logo's really good. It's beautiful. It works perfectly.

Marion: And it's easily recognizable from across the street.



Ed: Yeah, yeah. It's a great logo. Who's the director? Did *The Shape of Water*? Anyway, he sometimes comes to the store. I don't work in the store anymore, but I did for 15 years. This is another thing about having the store, it's like having a baby. For the first five or six years it's seven days a week, ten hours a day every day, because there's always something that you have to do. It's only when you've grown enough that you can afford to pay other people to do some of those things, then you get a break. It's kind of like your kid has grown up a bit, and now they can walk to school on their own. So it gets easier, just like having a kid gets easier over time.

Marion: Also, you've developed your reputation. Constant customers would still be coming back later, but they'd see you the first few years. Ed was very real. Do you think that matters?

Ed: It's funny because I go to this Beach store once in a while now. And if I'm there with my wife and they have customers around, she'll say, 'Have you ever met Ed?' They've never had, no. And then she says, 'That's him there!' This is a little embarrassing, but I go, 'Yeah, yeah.' And they always want their picture taken or something like that. It's nice, but it's kind of weird for me. Yeah. It's kind of weird, but she's okay to do it. But I don't advertise who I am. Guillermo del Toro! That's the Mexican director's name! And he goes to this store. I remember the first time I saw him in there. I was serving, and I saw him, and I sort of nodded to him and he nodded back. I've never talked to him. But some American was interviewing him once, this was years ago, who said to him: 'You're from Mexico, from a hot climate, but you're filming in Canada, like Toronto. How do you like the winters in Toronto?' And del Toro's response was: 'The best thing about winter in Toronto is there's no lineup at Ed's!'. My nephew in Ohio was watching and contacted me. He said, 'You know, Guillermo del Toro just mentioned your store!'

Marion: Oh, that's so great! It might not bring in business, but it's nice. It strengthens the ties. That's one of the things I've always loved about The Beach, why I came back here to walk even while I didn't live here. There's that sense of villageness.

Ed: When I married Jennifer, we lived in that little apartment on Balsam. We thought, 'Okay, we'll buy a house', because I'd sold mine in Boston and had the money. We looked in the West End, but we didn't really know anything about it. She only knew The Beach, so we looked around here and finally found a house up on Glen Oak Drive. We've been there for 38 years now. Our son grew up here. Yeah, it's a nice place.

Marion: We're basically done. Is there anything you can think of that you'd like to tell us?

Ed: You have to have a good idea. You have to really like what you're doing. You have to work hard, but you also have to be lucky a bit. Like, when I opened in the year 2000, there were, I don't think the term 'foodie' even existed. But I knew I wanted to make something special. So I kind of caught the beginning of this wave. I was lucky. You don't have to be at the beginning, but you have to have some luck in life. Then you have to pick a location where people are going to come. This is an easy one right here. And we knew The Beaches. I thought then, 'Well, it's not the middle of The Beach' ~ but it was all I could afford.

Marion: Every single evening, I see people walking to you, and then they walk back from you.

Ed: It's a different feeling in Leslieville. It's a bit funkier. If you look at our stores, Leslieville does the most business. They built all those condos so with that population density, Leslieville is way higher. Roncesvalles used to be the slowest of the three, but now it and The Beach are pretty much neck and neck. The Beach kind of just stays steady. But Leslieville is really the busiest store, not by a ton, but busier.

Marion: I go to your Leslieville store during my Value Village trips and get my chocolate cup. You won't find me experimenting with different flavours.

Ed: You get chocolate?

Marion: I get chocolate.

Ed: Chocolate's an interesting story because at first I used the chocolate recipe from the ice cream school. But I didn't really like it because it tasted like soft-serve ice cream chocolate, not strong enough. Then I made a really strong one but it's like, nah, it's too strong. It took me months of going back and forth and back and forth, till I finally honed in on a chocolate that I liked. I do stuff generally the way I like them, and just hope there's enough other people who like it that way, you know?

Ed's Real Scoop I Serving Real Treats to Toronto

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