

Alfred Dallaire MEMORIA

75 years of history

Alfred Dallaire was born on July 4, 1893, in the little village of Saint-Narcisse-de-Beaurivage, County of Lotbinière. At the age of 15, he left the village for Québec City where he became a barber's apprentice. When he finished his apprenticeship, he moved to the Hochelaga neighbourhood of Montréal. During the First World War, exempted from military service because he had tuberculosis symptoms, he worked as a barber, first in a shop on Ontario Street, then on Montgomery Street.

On August 17, 1920, he married Aline Dupuis. The young couple moved into an apartment facing the barbershop where Alfred worked. More educated than her husband, Aline took care of the couple's finances. Alfred was an independent thinker and a very hard worker, and saved up to start his own business. He left the barbershop, rented a taxi and became a taxi driver, while also working as a cobbler. During the same period, his introduction into the funeral business came when he began to use his vehicle to transport families or flowers for Ernest Rajotte's funeral home. Sometimes, Mr. Rajotte asked him to work as a porter or a funeral director.

Two years later, Alfred returned to work as a barber, while continuing to drive a taxi, to drive for funerals and to work as a cobbler. In July 1925, with the assistance of Aline, who was his secretary and accountant, he had put enough aside to buy his own barber-shop, at 1717 Ontario Street East. Aline and Alfred set up their home behind the shop. In quick succession, over two years, the couple moved into a new shop, then another larger one, at 2817 Ontario Street East. This space included a large extra room in the back, which became a determining factor in the destiny of Alfred and Aline.

Hochelaga was a working class district, buzzing with many small businesses. It was home to many immigrants who worked at the port and on the railroad. They included Poles, Lithuanians and a large Ukrainian community. Among the immigrants, the Ukrainians were particularly unpopular because, as the western Ukraine was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire during the First World War, they were considered as enemies. And because they were Orthodox, it was very difficult for them to integrate into the mainly French-Canadian Catholic society.



from top to bottom:
• Alfred Dallaire, barber
• Church of Saint-Anselme,
where Alfred and Aline got married
• Alfred Dallaire, taxi driver

A tragic turn of events precipitated Alfred's decision to get into the funeral business. One day, in 1931, a young Ukrainian woman, who had just arrived in Canada, was struck and killed by the one of the many trains that ran through the district. No funeral director wanted to take the risk of laying out the body for a viewing, out of fear of not being paid and of offending the sensibilities of Canadians. The new Orthodox priest, Father Vladimir Sluzar, asked Alfred if they could use the back room of his barbershop for a viewing of the body of the poor woman. Alfred let them use the space at no charge and he and Aline tidied and prepared it for the viewing.

Father Sluzar was grateful and told Alfred that if he got into the funeral business, he would recommend his services to all the Ukrainians in Montréal. The perspective of a faithful clientele and Aline's encouragement led to Alfred becoming an undertaker. Over the following years, the family home became both a barber shop and a funeral parlour. In 1932, Alfred gave up being a barber for good and, with Aline, set up the first floor at 2817 Ontario Street East as a funeral home, and they lived on the second floor.

A family history

Over the years after their marriage, Aline had six miscarriages and gave birth to four children. Only the youngest girl survived—Thérèse, who was born on September 24, 1927.

The Great Depression was over; the economic recovery engendered by the war gave hope to everyone, and even more so since people were finding jobs again. In this favourable context, Alfred and Aline, confident of the future, inaugurated another branch at 3225 Ontario St East in October 1941.

The years went by and little Thérèse was now of marriageable age. She met a young insurance agent, Paul-Émile Légaré, who was not lacking in panache. They got married on May 29, 1952. Almost immediately, Alfred initiated his son-in-law into the funeral business and he became part of the family enterprise. Alfred also opened a new funeral home at 2590 Rouen Street, overseeing its construction to better control costs. It was the same for other branches that were inaugurated over the years.

Little by little, Alfred and Aline withdrew from the business, handing it over to their son-in-law, Paul-Émile, a dynamic man who developed a network of branches throughout Montréal, Laval and the South Shore. A visionary, he introduced funeral complexes and the prearrangement formula to Québec. When Alfred died in 1973, Father Sluzar held a funeral service in his honour at St. Sophia Cathedral, attended by the most influential people in the Ukrainian community. Aline died in 1998 at the age of 98.



from top to bottom:
▪ Alfred Dallaire in 1915
▪ Inauguration of his first funeral home
▪ Aline Dallaire and her daughter Thérèse

Alfred Dallaire... Memoria

Paul-Émile and Thérèse had four children: Jocelyne, Yves, Diane and Marc. They all held different positions in the family business. In 1996, Jocelyne and Yves acquired Alfred Dallaire Inc. In 2004, to facilitate management, brother and sister split the enterprise into two distinct entities: Groupe Yves Légaré and Alfred Dallaire Memoria, directed by Jocelyne Dallaire Légaré. A compassionate woman of action, Jocelyne Légaré breathes new life into Memoria, linking tradition with the sensibilities of today's changing world. She obviously inherited her grandfather's entrepreneurial genes. Through her endeavours, innovations and creative strength, Memoria stands out as a unique enterprise.

The Memoria network includes 11 funeral complexes and homes and employs about a hundred people, including people who were there from the beginning, such as André Brazeau, to the latest additions, such as Julia Duchastel-Légaré, engineer and great granddaughter of the founders. While many funeral businesses have been passed on, or sold to foreign interests, Memoria is still an entirely Québec business and intends to remain so.



from top to bottom:

- Thérèse Dallaire and Paul-Émile Légaré
- Alfred Dallaire
- Thérèse and her eldest daughter, Jocelyne