Farzad Salehi’s journey from Iran to Canada full of close shaves

Farzad Salehi and his wife Shelley relax in their barbershop in Yaletown Wednesday.

In October, Farzad Salehi, barber, former political refugee and now Canadian citizen, will celebrate the 20th anniversary of his journey to Canada. He first stepped on Canadian soil in 1994. He was in the wake of the revolution.

“I can’t go into too much detail because of the immigration process,” Salehi said. “But basically I left because of freedom. Freedom of speech, freedom to be a human being.

He lives in Gastown with his wife, Shelley. As was the case with much of his journey to Canada, Shelley’s place in Farzad’s life appears to be a case of kismet and improbable good luck.

“I would not be who I am today without her,” he said. After a decade of fleeing Iran, cutting hair for other barbers, he saved enough money to open his own place. He and Shelley now run Farzad’s Barber Shop in Yaletown, a two-chair establish ment as busy as the shop’s appointment book is filled in advance. Farzad’s generosity is his expertise with a straightedge razor, a skill learned in Iran, he gives free haircuts. And earned them.

To leave Iran, he had to get the passport services of a smuggler. He crossed the border, formed political refugees, and was a fake passport. He made it to Hungary, across Soviet-occupied territory, into the Bulgarian socialist republic, and cutting hair for barbers, he saved enough money to open his own place. He and Shelley now run Farzad’s Barber Shop in Yaletown, a two-chair establishment as busy as the shop’s appointment book is filled in advance. Farzad’s generosity is his expertise with a straightedge razor, a skill learned in Iran, he gives free haircuts. And earned them.

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