

# BUSINESS

## BUSINESS PROFILE

### Farouk Shami

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After hearing numerous stories from his father, who had lived in New York for several years, Farouk Shami, Northwest Houston entrepreneur and business owner, knew he wanted to come to America.

"My dad came to the United States in the 1920's. He lived in New York and married an American lady. I have an American brother as well, so we had roots in America. We were also educated in American schools taught by American teachers. Always my dream was to come to America, so coming here was a dream; now it's reality."

Shami's ticket to a new life was a scholarship to the University of Arkansas, where he planned to follow in his father's footsteps by becoming an English teacher. Those plans changed once he was introduced to the world of cosmetology and took a job as a hairdresser.

"I was a student and at first, to support and pay for my tuition, I was working as a waiter. I thought that being a hairdresser was a better job than a waiter and it paid well. I was a teacher and I didn't think teachers got paid enough. I really thought that it would be just a stepping stone to pay for my college, but the job grew on me. I started it and I thought it was just more artistic. It was the people, it was everything about it. I fell in love with the profession and I've been in it since 1966 and I love it more everyday."

Unfortunately, Shami's family did not share his love for cosmetology.

"My family's opinion of my decision wasn't a pleasant one. They thought the beauty business wasn't for me. They thought it was for drop-outs, for



"I came to America on April 1, 1965 - with 71 dollars in my pocket - as a student looking for educational opportunities and a new life."

people who can't find another job, and they thought it was not for men. So I had a lot of resentment from the beginning. Then they saw my success when I became a manufacturer, and they believed that following my passion was the right thing to do."

Shami currently owns and operates Farouk Systems, Incorporated, one of the most profitable companies in the beauty business. He resides in Houston, Texas, due to his love of western culture.

"I heard so many stories from my father in New York. I was used to seeing western movies, so I expected America to be like that and that's why I wanted to come to the south. I thought it was all cowboys. Since I grew on a farm myself, I thought I would just fit right in, so here I am in Texas. It was a dream... and now it's reality."

#### HIS BUSINESS

In 1972, Farouk Shami's business began in Lafayette, Louisiana, where he opened his first salon, Le Salon Farouk.

"I started in it slowly and there were lots of challenges like anything else. I was like a small fish in a big pond with lots of sharks and barracudas and I had to navigate to safety and not give up on my mission and my passion."

After finding success in Louisiana, Shami decided it was time to move.

"I felt I had reached my goal and peak. I did the hair of most important people in Louisiana, and I thought Houston would be a bigger city and a bigger opportunity and that's when I

moved to Texas."

#### FACING CHALLENGES

Shami opened Salon Farouk on FM 1960 in 1978, but faced some major challenges after learning about his allergic reaction to ammonia, the main ingredient in hair color.

"I was heart broken at the beginning. It got worse when I talked to manufacturers and they said, 'There is no way you can do hair color without ammonia. You are going to have to give up your profession.' So it was heart-breaking, but impossible was not in my dictionary. I really thought of nature, how the sun lightens hair and colors hair without chemicals. At first, I was really investigating doing it with lasers, with no chemicals and I ended up with organic chemicals following the law of nature."

Shami introduced his new line of ammonia-free hair care when he started Farouk Systems in 1986 and received a patent for his product. Shami's invention shocked many, so he set out to show consumers his new product.

"It was difficult getting started with the ammonia free hair color because it was not the norm and people did not believe it. They started the rumor that it would not work without ammonia; it was impossible. So I had to do it in practice. I had to get up on stage and show them. In fact, they said, 'Well, if that works so fast and so quick, it might be dangerous.' So I started eating my color on stage to show people that you can work with organic herbs and develop

systems that are safe to the human body."

Shami's success grew as he invented the CHI ceramic flat iron, the Biosilk and SunGlitz hair care lines, and received several more patents.

#### FAROUK SYSTEMS

According to Shami, Farouk Systems is built on teamwork and dedication.

"I run it very, very democratic. I'm a team builder. I have teams and we don't micro-manage. We encourage independence but also teamwork. We call it tight and loose. Loose to be creative and tight to be a team member. That's how we run our business."

A very successful businessman, hairdresser, and leader, Farouk Shami attributes his success to one thing - his hard work.

"Just getting up is motivating for me, coming to work is motivating, seeing the success of this business is motivating. I'm motivated everyday. My hard work, focus and determination have led me to success, and my success keeps me going. The more successful I am, the more successful I want to be."

#### BUSINESS IN NORTHWEST HOUSTON

Farouk Systems Inc., has created thousands of jobs for Americans, especially those in the Houston area. Shami believes that the key to improving business in Northwest Houston and America itself is the innovation and creation of jobs.

"Business is there (in Northwest Houston), and it's for the