

The following transcript of
Sidney “Sid” Woodley’s interview
on

Memories and Music

(broadcast between 1974-1976)

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INTERVIEWEE: Syd Woodley
INTERVIEWER: D.M.

TAPE NO: 47

THEME:

D.M. Now ~~you~~ our guest on "Memories and Music" is Mr. Syd Woodley. Syd retired in 1972 after ~~34~~ 34½ years with Inco at which time he was a construction leader underground. Now Syd to give us a little bit of background on ~~me~~ yourself? Where are you from?

S.W. From Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

D.M. ^{Well} That's interesting would you a, born and grow up in Saskatoon.

S.W. Yes I was born in, in Saskatoon. Went to school.

D.M. Was your . . . was your, were your parents westerners from Saskatchewan?

S.W. No they came from England.

D.M. From what part of England?

S.W. Lancashire and Yorkshire.

D.M. What, ~~was~~ what brought them to Canada and specifically what brought them to a Saskatoon?

S.W. Well they first came a, to Canada's pioneers and a, they did a little homesteading for awhile and they were near Brandon at that time and then they came to Saskatoon and my father started started working for the a, C.N.R. railroad and then a, later on he a, left that he started what we call ^{draying} delivering for himself and that is delivering with horses and a wagon and he did that until his retirement.

D.M. Well that would . . . draying would ~~be~~ just about be going out of style about that time too.

S.W. Well it actually

D.M. With construction and what not coming in, eh?

S.W. Well it actually went out of style a little before that but a, . . . at that, with his age well there was no chance to change positions. So he just continued until he, until he pensioned.

D.M. Well that, that happens to ~~lots~~ lots of people. Now Syd did you tell me before the broadcast that your father was a, an ardent Salvation Army man.

S.W. Yes he very much so, yes. I was brought up in the Salvation Army, in fact the whole family was.

D.M. And your father I think ^{some of} solved his problem in keeping a job ~~on~~ out there, was he didn't like to work on ~~Sun~~ Sundays, is that true?

- S.W. Well, well that was the whole trouble with the ~~ex~~ M.C.N.R. they worked 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, and a my father didn't believe on working on the Sabbath. It was, it was to ~~x~~ the extent that he wouldn't ride the streetcar on ~~Snd~~ Sunday, he would walk on, on the Sabbath day.
- D.M. ~~Well~~ Now, now there ~~is~~ is a man of strong convictions let's face it. I mean a, a few of us today have convictions like that ~~xx~~ Syd.
- S.W. No and I can always remember, remember father ~~x~~ telling mother not to cook a, Sunday dinner because it was the Sabbath day. But that didn't go over very big with the rest of us. We a, . . . thought off our stomachs too much.
- D.M. Well this, ~~x~~ this is interesting ~~well~~ now . . . I ~~xx~~ don't know a great deal about the Salvation Army except that it's an organization which I respect very much. Your father then would be involved ~~with~~ ⁱⁿ the Salvation Army in England before he came to Canada I take it then, eh?
- S.W. Well no he was a baptist in England but a, then changed over to the Salvation Army after being (unintell.) at Saskatoon at that time.
- D.M. Well now Syd before the broadcast . . . you mentioned ~~x~~ something I didn't know about the ~~Sax~~ Salvation Army teaching the Chinese english. Now what was that story?
- S.W. Well my father used to teach one night a ~~xxx~~ week the Chinese boys to speak english same as they're doing today. The immigrants that are coming to Canada they want to learn english they're going to a, high schools and night school ~~x~~ classes and that sort of thing. But that time the Salvation Army did that ~~x~~ it was just a welfare work you ~~xxx~~ know.
- D.M. Well Syd that's fine now we're, we're not turning this a, program into a commercial for the ~~Sxx~~ Salvation Army. It's a fine organization, that it is. I ~~xx~~ think But a, ~~xxx~~ that's interesting now a, was your father active in some of the other good works that the Salvation Army did in Saskatoon, then I suppose he would be. Would he?
- S.W. Well he taught Sunday School and a, executive in the ~~Sax~~ Salvation Army. What I mean is like a sergent or a treasurer or that sort of thing, you know.
- D.M. ~~x~~ And he was ~~xx~~ an, I'm sure an ardent Salvation Army (unintell.)
- S.W. ^{Oh} definitely, ~~yxxx~~ yeah.
- D.M. Well it's, it's fine you, you have to respect a man who, who, who has a belief and, ~~xx~~ and a, and follows his star if that's the word. Well now getting back to you sir you . . . born in ~~Sax~~ Saskatoon back around 1912ish or thereabouts . . . I believe you left ~~hxx~~ high school around a, in the late 20's around '26 and then you got a job, your ~~fix~~ first job was delivering, is ~~x~~ that right?

- S.W. That's right I was delivering on a bicycle as a youngster and then from there I a, got a job at ~~East~~ Eaton's and I was there for about, about 2 years and then depression set in.
- D.M. All right before we go what sort of job were you doing at Eaton's?~~x~~
- S.W. I was in the dining room as a, I guess you'll have to call it as a chore boy bringing in meats and a, looking after the stock and that sort of thing.
- D.M. Now this was a, was smack dap ~~ix~~ at the start of the depression so any kind of a job was a job. I mean it'd be delighted to have it I take it in those days, eh?
- S.W. That's true and I found ^{that} ~~it~~ out for the next a, 5 or 6 ~~x~~ years because all you could get was the odd job at ~~x~~ 25 cents an hour when you could.
- D.M. Right.
- S.W. When you could get it.
- D.M. Well then you worked at Eaton's for 2 or 3 years and then a your were laid off I think you said when they ~~xx~~ closed the lunch counter. Then a, remember now we're talking about Saskatchewan now in the middle 30's or so on. Did you work on farms? What type of work did~~xx~~ you get up there Syd?
- S.W. Well at that time you did everything and anything. But I was threshing for one or two falls in a, northern Saskatchewan and one year I went out as far as Calgary and did threshing out there.
- D.M. Now that a, I guess alot of our listeners this ~~xxi~~ will ring a ~~x~~ familiar bell with some of our listeners. Did you get paid much in the mid-depression for threshing?
- S.W. I can't remember~~exactly~~ the amount~~x~~ we were paid but a, one thing about it ~~x~~ the food was very good and even if the pay was small the food was good and I sure liked to eat.
- D.M. I think most of us do, Syd, most of the time. That a, that takes us on to the end~~x~~ of the 30's to, not the end~~x~~ of the 30's but right through ~~x~~ up until around about it seems 1937. What happened then?
- S.W. Well that's when I left Saskatoon to come east looking for work, another chap and myself and a
- D.M. Well now did you buy a first-class ticket on the C.N.R. or something like that.
- S.W. Well we didn't a, have that sort of a, doe, ray, me for a first-cl~~ass~~ ticket.
- D.M. Right.

- S.W. And that was when the, the saying was, "We rode the rods" in those days.
- D.M. Right there we have an authentic, you weren't involved in, on to Ottawa affair by any chance.
- S.W. No, I remember that though. I was in Saskatoon at the time, I remember that.
- D.M. That a, one to Ottawa sort of ran, sort of happened in, in Regina.
- S.W. In Regina ~~yeah~~ yes. ^{D.M.} That's right. So you got aboard a freight train . . . a presumably making a mental note to pay your fare later and headed east, is ~~that~~ that true?
- S.W. That's true.
- D.M. And a, were you with a friend then, were you headed directly to Sudbury or what happened.
- S.W. No when, when we left ~~a~~ Saskatoon we planned on going to ~~a~~ Little Longlac to work in the ~~mines~~ mines there but a, we had a little trouble in Winnipeg getting the same freight out and a, so we got a separated and a, I came right through to Saskatoon, to Sudbury.
- D.M. Well that's an adventure. The day~~s~~, is there anybody around ~~a~~ who now might be listening to this who was on that same freight with you.
- S.W. Well
- D.M. ~~T~~ Well it may not be,
- S.W. No, no
- D.M. It's just a question I have.
- S.W. But one of the funny thing is when I landed in Sudbury I a, the first chap I met on the street was a, a young lad from Saskatoon and that was a great help because
- D.M. You didn't feel quite so far away.
- S.W. I was right at home.
- D.M. Right. Is he still ~~around~~ around by any ~~chance~~ chance?
- S.W. A, yes he's still around and he works for International Nickel.
- D.M. Good, what's his name? I . . .
- S.W. I forget it right now, off hand but a
- D.M. We're asking you to go way back to 1937 (unintell.) just a ~~x~~ few years~~x~~ ago, 40 years or almost ~~wax~~ will, maybe we'll remember it before the broadcast is over, if not I wouldn't

be surprised if he phoned up and toldx you who, who he was?

S.W. I, I'llk hear about it.

D.M. Well now Syd '37 you land in Sudbury, you've a, a . . . fairly strong, stalward young fellow. You worked on the farms threshing (unintell.) and so on. So what did you do, join a line up here? or get hired on or what, what happened hear here?

S.W. I joined the a, line up and a, at that time they weren't hiring too many just three or four a day and a, & there was about ~~xx~~ another 4 or ~~xx~~ 500. They just told them, "That's all for today."

D.M. "Come back tomorow."

S..W "Come back k tomorrow."

D.M. I've heard that story so ~~xx~~ many times.

S.W. Yeah.

D.M. But you did have something special going for you, you were a musican, is that true?

S.W. That's right, I've been playing in bands for k all my life and a, so I contacted the band master of the city band and a, fine and dandy. He give me a note that a, to take to the officex

D.M. Well now that's, that's interesting. Now Stew getting back to this band, this musicianship. This is ~~xx~~ something. Did your father play ~~ix~~ an instrument?

S.W. No he didn't, no.

D.M. It, it just came to you, ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ surely came to you naturely, eh or

S.W. Well being in the Salvation Army and they always have bands

D.M. Right

S.W. And a, you a, it kind of got in your blood and you wanted to be one of them too, you know.

D.M. It's fair, so what a, what instrument did you start out on?

S.W. Well I, as a kid I bought a baratone and a

D.M. When you say baratone, you mean baratone, saxaphone do you?

S.W. No I mean ~~thx~~ a brass ~~band~~ baratone.

D.M. A brass baratone.

S.W. With three, withxthree bells.

D.M. Oh yes, yes ~~indeed~~ indeed, that's right.

S.W. And a, then I started a, joining the junior band and a, took lessons from a, the band master and then a, ~~when~~ oh when I was about 14 I was playing in the senior band.

D.M. Very good. Now . . . it seems to me that your, you travelled around a good deal. Did you do any travelling ~~xx~~ around, could you, was the Salvation Army Band in Saskatoon or did that happen ~~x~~ after you came here to Sudbury?

S.W. You mean travelling around as

D.M. With the Salvation Army

S.W. With the band?

D.M. Yes

S.W. Oh we played in a, different places. ~~x~~ Played in Prince Albert, in the . . . town of Prince Albert and also in the ~~xx~~ pentatenchre, played in ~~xxxx~~ ~~x~~ North Battleford and also at the lasimion there and we played in Regina and a, made other small a, trips ^{to} to small communities. ^{DM} Well, well that's very good, ~~x~~ well getting out of the west and ~~xxx~~ down to the east then you. ~~Yes~~ When you, I'm trying to get this straight, when you hired on with Inco you also hired on to play with the company band, is that true?

^{S.W.}
D.M. That's true, ~~x~~ ~~xxxx~~ yes.

D.M. Do you remember when and ~~wxx~~ where was your first concert with the band?

S.W. Well the first concert will be at Bell ~~x~~ Park at the

D.M. And you would, you would remember this I guess.

S.W. Oh yes because we played there for, ~~x~~ I can almost say generations. ~~for~~ For the last 25, 30 years we've been playing at the park.

D.M. Ah that's great, do you a, anybody around, I'm ~~x~~ putting you on the ~~xxx~~ spot and maybe unfairly who would go with you that you recall at the time, that was in that band with you, who might be listening to this broadcast.

S.W. You mean ~~xx~~ musicians.

D.M. Yes.

S.W. Well there's still a great many of a, members of the Sudbury band that have retired and a, all Inco employees.

D.M. (unintell.) here I am asking you to think back 40 years and name names and so on, I'm just a, well who was the band ~~xxx~~master then, let's put it that way. (unintell.)

S.W. Mr., Mr. Oates was band master ^{at} that time. He has passed away since then.

D.M. Right.

S.W. Then after him was Johnny a, Jersack which ~~was~~ he's just taking his pension . . . a year or so ago.

D.M. We'll be, he may be listening to this broadcast.

S.W. Well he should be.

D.M. Well he better be or you'll let him know about it, I guess, ^{eh?}
 Andy Any other ~~was~~ band masters that a,

S.W. And a

D.M. That you can name.

S.W. Then after that we had Gord McCallaster and he's passed away and Carl Sonhom, ~~he~~ he's passed away and I took over the band about, oh about 15 years ago and a, I was conducting the band up until the last two years.

D.M. Well very, very fine sir. Now a, with the band here you've, of ~~a~~ course, played many places, eh?

S.W. We've played everywhere and for everything. We ~~was~~ played, we used to make it a habit of a, at ~~the~~ playing at hospitals at least one or twice for the summer and a, the sanatorium and the senior citizens' home.

D.M. Very, very good. Now ~~it's clear~~ ~~a~~ very clear to us that, that music is, is in the blood, eh? That . . . you love it.

S.W. Yes, yes it's part of my life.

D.M. Right, now Syd have you been active at ~~the~~ all in the Salvation Army here in Sudbury?

S.W. Just a short while when I first came to Sudbury. I'd say about 6 months to a year, I played in the band here. And then ~~the~~ . . . more or less got ~~g~~ settled around ~~and~~, and a played in the Sudbury band from there on.

D.M. Well I guess you, you'd be busy enough in what you were doing and ~~part~~ certainly later when you got ~~to~~ conducting. You, have, operating one band would be enough I guess, eh?

S.W. Yeah I've also played in bands at the same time, a good, a good band has been, doesn't sit home you know.

^{oh} D.M. That's right what was it you said about the number of uniforms a good bandman has?

S.W. Well he has 2 or 3 uniforms in his cupboard. In Sudbury I played in the Cruso band and conducted for a, for relieving,

S.W. For relief purposes. And a, I've also played, ~~in~~ played in Coniston band and a, and also relief for the conducting for one or two of the high school bands, and the Lion's bands. So we kept busy with bands, you know.

D.M. Well now . . . what about bands . . . this is an unfair question ~~my~~ but there are people who will claim that ~~a~~ this or that or the other orchestra is the greatest ~~and so~~ you know and so on. Like the . . . New York Phil Harmonica or something. Where are the great bands?

S.W. Well your greatest band you'll find in England and Europe because the Europeans are more a lover of bands than what the Canadian is.

D.M. I get the feeling that our younger ~~pep~~ people . . . are not ~~takein~~ taking all that much interest in band music now. Is, is that a ~~fi~~ fair statement?

S.W. That is ~~the~~ true, it is a shame that the students do not continue with their band work and a, be more dedicated to a bands. It's only 3 percent that continue bands after they leave high schools where they ~~should~~ should continue and ~~and enjoy~~ join their local band or a town band or a club band or whatever band they can join and continue.

D.M. Syd I, I think that's something ~~would~~ that all of us would like to see happen but it's not happening at the moment now. Getting back to you, away from bands for the moment a you were, you were married around about a, was it 1956 or

S.W. 1956 yeah.

D.M. And a, ^ason, a step-son by that marriage. Is he, where is he now?

S.W. Ah, he's in Ottawa working for the government.

D.M. Oh yeah.

S.W. I got him started in bands ~~and he~~ but he's just like the other, he too, he ~~down~~ dropped it ~~and~~ after he left high school.

D.M. Right.

~~S.W.~~ Well now Syd we have you a good westerner from Saskatoon, living in Sudbury. ~~M~~ Have you done much travelling, have you been back west?

S.W. Yes we made a trip, the wife and I made a trip in 1970 and a, we went. I have a sister still in Saskatoon, we visit her for a week and then I have a sister whose married in Calgary and we visit them for a week and saw the Stam, the Calgary Stampede and a, local events that were going on there and from there we went on to see my other sister who ~~x~~ is married and in () River and a, from () River we went to Victoria and a, so we covered all the west~~af~~ of Canada for a sightseeing trip.

2.4 ← He Counts

D.M. Now Syd I'm going to ask you a question here that, that we have asked of many of the people who have come here. Now you've seen a, the Rockie Mountains, an unforgettable sight I think you would agree.

S.W. They are beautiful.

D.M. W You've seen Victoria, B.C. which is unquestionably a, a beautiful city yet many, many people who have lived in Sudbury for any length of time claim that they couldn't move away somewhere else that they wouldn't want to come back to a, to Sudbury. Now what's the story there?

S.W. Well that is true. But Sudbury is a friendly city and we've been here so long and it is very hard to pull my stakes after you have been in a city for a number of years and then when you go back to your original home there's so many people who have moved away. They did the same thing you did and a, so a, you have no friends there any more. So naturally you come back to good old Sudbury and a, stay there for the remainder of your life.

D.M. Well we bless you, bless you Syd. One chap we talked to on the air said he Florida was all right but he got, he couldn't stand the hum of the air conditioners. So he Sudbury for him. Now a, hobbies now, I think you, you would have a camp that a, that is sort of your hobby now.

S.W. Yeah we have a camp at Long Lake and a, if anybody has a camp they know there is an awful lot of work entailed with a camp so that's about the size of my hobbies is camping and a, we don't do any fishing because a, the scarcity of fish, that a, we spend the summer at camp and any weekends possible. Take in the sun and do a little swimming.

D.M. Now a, your wife I believe enjoys the camp and that she is working now, is that correct?

S.W. That's true she likes the water and a, she got a little ambitious and took a course in a, in nursing and she's working at the Memorial Hospital at the present time.

D.M. Syd its just occurred to me that we've talked about camps and about bands and about musicians and about the Salvation Army and about anything and everything. But we've overlooked the fact that you are a miner.

S.W. Yes I have been for

D.M. For quite a number of years now. Can you give us a little run down on where you started in mining and just what, what has been your history of work with the company as a miner?

S.W. Yes a, I have 34½ years. I started in Levack and stayed there for a short period until 1938 and was transferred to a Sudbury, to Frood Mine which I spent the rest of my seniority there and I started the same as anybody else as a shoveler, then a block holder and then a timberman and then a pillar leader and kept on mining and mining. And a, in the

latter years I was construction leader which is maintenance and building shoots and ~~xx~~ a, the main thing that keeps the mine going.

D.M. Right. That's, that's what you liked to think anyway.

S.W. Well after all I blew my own horns

D.M. Right.

S.W. There's two ways of blowingx you know.

D.M. Well Syd that's great. Now friends and neighbours as you have gathered our guest ~~today~~ has been Syd Woodley. Syd ~~ret~~ retired in 1972 after 34½ years with Inco. At his retirement, he was a construction leader underground. Syd is a westerner from Saskatoon originally. He's had, he's told us about his excellent mining experience. Earlier in the broadcast he told us about his . . . experiences with a, as a band leader which I guess we'd have to call the, the other love in your life Syd.

S.W. That's true.

D.M. And we say you, to you thank you very, very much for coming to visit with us on "Memories & Music."