

The following transcript of
Gordon “Sparky” Harry’s interview

on

Memories and Music

(broadcast January 13, 1974)

was created by the Sudbury Public
Library as part of a

Summer Canada Project

in 1982.

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWEE: Gordon Harry TAPE NO: 15
POSITION: Inco Employee TRANSCRIBER: Wendy Mayhew
DATE: DATE OF TRANS: August 1982
INTERVIEWER: Don MacMillan SUMMER CANADA PROJECT

THEME: Immigration, employment with Inco, baseball, depression.

D.M. Friends we've got a most interesting guest today with us on our program. A man whose been 46 years with Inco, he's 66 years of age now, his name is Gordon "Sparky" Harry, who has been retired for 4½ years. Gordon let's start at the beginning now. Where would you get a name like Sparky?

G.H. I got that practically over 50 years ago when there was a comic named Barney Goccala and his famous horse and the horse's name was named Sparky. So I derived the name 'cause I used to be able to run and move very quickly in my younger days.

D.M. Well, well now at least we got that established Gordon. Speaking of your younger days ah, where are you from, where is your home town?

G.H. I came from Stanhouse, Stanhouse, near Plymouth, England.

D.M. And what year were you born over there?

G.H. I was born there on April the 20th, 1907.

D.M. But you didn't remain in a, Stanhouse very long you came to Canada.

G.H. I came to Canada.

D.M. At what age was that?

G.H. That was a, 5 years of age when I came to Canada in August the 12th, 1912.

D.M. Gordon you've got a great memory for dates. Tell us a little bit about Plymouth. What a, what did your father do in Plymouth?

G.H. My father was a manager of a shoe store in Plymouth.

D.M. But I guess you wouldn't remember too much about that at age 5, eh.

G.H. Very little.

D.M. Do you remember anything about the boat trip across to Canada?

G.H. The only thing that I remember was a school of whales passing near the boat that we were travelling on and I was lifted up by one of the passengers to see this school of whales, the only thing that I can remember.

D.M. A great childhood memory, now a, with all of Canada to chose from how come the family came to ah, Copper Cliff.

G.H. Well my mother had a sister living in Copper Cliff and her husband was at that time was working for Inco and his name was Charles Heale and he is still alive.

D.M. He is still alive, do you see him from time to time.

G.H. Yes.

D.M. And would you like to say hello to him now on this broadcast?

G.H. Hello uncle Charlie.

D.M. All right uncle Charlie there's a hello out to you. What I didn't ask you Gordon is, is why the family decided to a, pack up and come to Copper Cliff?

G.H. Well the doctor advised my parents to save my oldest sister's health we would have to leave England and come to Canada where the air was a lot better for her.

D.M. Well I guess the air couldn't have been all that bad around Copper Cliff then if she improved, is that right?

G.H. Well at times compared to the old days the sulfur smoke was just out of this world.

D.M. But a, sister flourished on it.

G.H. Absolutely, we all did.

D.M. Very, very good. Well now ah, I think you have some pretty vivid memories too of your arrival, actual arrival in Sudbury and Copper Cliff.

G.H. Well we came from ah, right from Montreal, right straight, straight through to Copper Cliff and right in at the C.P.R. station in Copper Cliff. I remember distinctly on getting around in what we call a stage coach and two horses.

D.M. This is like the old western movies I guess, eh.

- G.H. Well not quite as bad as the old western movies.
- D.M. Well sir they ah, so we've got yourself and your mother. Were you the only child at this point or would you have
- G.H. No I had an older and a younger sister.
- D.M. So the, the entire Harvey, Harry family arrival in Copper Cliff, eh.
- G.H. Yes we did.
- D.M. Did your a, was your father able to get work then?
- G.H. He was very fortunately employment with the International Company. At that time it was called the Canadian Copper Company in the early days.
- D.M. Right. Well then you ah, would literally start school in Canada then. Do you remember
- G.H. No I had some pre-schooling in England before I left.
- D.M. Oh yes. Well now do you remember any of the, any of your school mates that you went to school with when you started out here?
- G.H. Yes, well there's Percie Morrison, we went to school with for years, George Lieman; John Halliton and an older brother of John's which was Barney Halliton, known as, known as Leonard.
- D.M. And I think before the show you mentioned a couple of girls' names or was it
- G.H. Oh yes Mar, Margaret and Linda Menzies.
- D.M. Tell me Gordon are any of these people you've been talking about now, are they still around in town, in Sudbury.
- G.H. Yes everyone that I have mentioned have all retired, the two ladies are two retired school teachers.
- D.M. Well now having finished public school then, what would happen then?
- G.H. I had one year at Sudbury High School.
- D.M. And then what happened?
- G.H. Through the Depression . . . of 1921 when my father was out of work for 15 months and after going back to work suffered a very severe accident in losing most of his

right hand. So my father spent considerable time in the hospital. So somebody had to get out and earn a bit of money.

D.M. That's a familiar sound.

G.H. So I went.

D.M. Yes.

G.H. So I was offered a job as a messenger or as an office boy in 1923.

D.M. I gather that they didn't over pay you at that time Gordon, is that true?

G.H. No I remember very distinctly my first pay check for 3 days was \$3.60.

D.M. However it to a degree I suppose things are relevant, eh.

G.H. True, it could be, could be

D.M. Things were a little cheaper I guess in the, in the stores in those days.

G.H. Yes.

D.M. Now I believe that you went on from being an office boy to an Inco department, is that right?

G.H. I moved then up to the engineering department, which they needed a print boy at that time to look after making blue prints.

D.M. And ah, were you with them for any length of time?

G.H. I stayed with the engineering department until I retired.

D.M. Which ah, you told us earlier was in the neighbourhood of 46 years or something like that.

G.H. Yes correct.

D.M. And I guess as we said earlier . . . you thought the job was going to be permanent when, when you started there.

G.H. Very fortunate it was.

D.M. Gordon . . . I gather that when you started to work in the print department there, that you ah, that you had to hump around there and, and ah look after yourself and hussle and, and ah get ahead as best you could. Now and also that you took a correspondence course, is that true?

- G.H. Yes I did, I figured if I was going to stay in the engineering department I had better try and better myself, which I did and I took an ICS course that, during all the time that I was at the early stages in the engineering department.
- D.M. And a, this then enabled you to get promotion or movement or more money or something in the department, is that right?
- G.H. Correct it did, yes.
- D.M. Right. I believe Gordon that largely due to this hussle of yours that you . . . eventually became sort of full charge of that print department, is that true?
- G.H. Yes, it is. I used to buy, I used to buy all the paper, I used to order all the supplies that were needed in the engineering department.
- D.M. Well, well now, anyway let's go back in time a little bit now to around 1931 or thereabouts. What, I believe something interesting happened in '31, is that true?
- G.H. Yes.
- D.M. The
- G.H. That was the year that I got married in September
- D.M. And I believe
- G.H. September 24th, 1931.
- D.M. And I gather that you had sort of a surprise waiting you when you got back from your honeymoon, is that true?
- G.H. When I returned from the honeymoon I learned that the company had gave me a wedding present of a 10 percent reduction in salary.
- D.M. Well we, we can laugh that off now.
- G.H. Yes we sure can but it wasn't so funny then.
- D.M. Have you any, any family Harry?
- G.H. Yes I have two sons Roland [mistaken pronunciation] Donald and the next one Morley and I have five grandchildren.
- D.M. Are they a, living in Sudbury, Copper Cliff or this area?
- G.H. Both my sons live in Sudbury. The oldest one is working with the International Nickel Company as a combustion engineer. My youngest son, Morley worked for the Canadian Tire Corporation.

- D.M. Well, well we're going to go way back in time again because we've up to now, we talked chiefly about a, how you were a young fellow had to get out and hussle and ah, after one year of high school because your father wasn't well and so on had this problem. But er, you obviously took quite an interest in sports now. You ah, you were a mas, mascot at one time, weren't you?
- G.H. Yes I was a mascot of the Copper Cliff baseball team when famous Bert Flynn was the manager of the Copper Cliff baseball team.
- D.M. And a . . . I believe that, was it Sam Rothschild or somebody that you met around about that time.
- G.H. Yeah it was. I knew Sam Rothschild when I used to spot pins for them at the Copper Cliff Club and they came from Sudbury to bowl in the 10-pin league and Sam Rothschild played every Sudbury baseball team but then played for Copper Cliff in the play-offs.
- D.M. Well Sam sounds like he must have been a pretty good ball player, is that true?
- G.H. Sam was an all around athlete.
- D.M. Well Gordon once in a while we say hello to people listening in, we said hello to Harry Heale or somebody or another.
- G.H. Charlie Heale
- D.M. Charlie, what Sam? Would you like to say hello to him?
- G.H. Hi Sam.
- D.M. You haven't got any secrets you want to give away after all this time on Sam.
- G.H. Well no it's getting too late for that now, is it Sam?
- D.M. Now I believe that you used to bowl, you started off setting up pins but you bowled . . . Gordon, is that right?
- G.H. Yes I used to bowl quite a bit. Both in 10 pins and 5 pins. But 10 pins was the original game then the five pins came in and the majority switched over to five pin.
- D.M. Right well now another thing I gather and what interests me is that you're an English boy coming over from Plymouth there. That you played softball, that you were a pitcher, is that right?
- G.H. Yes I used to play shimmy hockey in, I played junior baseball. But then I took over into the, used to be a pitcher

on the softball and I played for Copper Cliff. I played for the engineering team and I also played for a Sudbury team known as the Bannon Brothers and we won the Northern Ontario Championship in 1931.

D.M. Well very, very good. Remember some of the, the people or men that were on that club with you at the time.

G.H. Yes there was a, George Rooney, there are several that I remember but who are not living in this area. Pat Roberts was the coach of our team and is down living down south some place, I could not say the exact place.

D.M. All right Gordon now we're in 1931 and a, I think that this is sort of known not very kindly or with great warmth is the second Depression, is that true?

G.H. Yes that was the, be the second Depression in my time. I thought that 1921 was bad enough but 1931, let me think, was a, was as bad.

D.M. I think that things were handled a little bit better or you, in the '31 depression.

G.H. Yes.

D.M. Is that not true?

G.H. We were given part-time employment in 1931 which helped out the situation.

D.M. Now . . . through the years Gordon have you belonged to any oh, local service clubs or groups like that.

G.H. The only order that I belong to is the Masonic lodge, the Algonquin Lodge in Copper Cliff.

D.M. Now I gather that you've been a mason for a few years, how long is that?

G.H. I had been a mason oh, for 43 years.

D.M. That's, that's tenure at the very least. Now ah, I've also been told Gordon that you've been kept active in other areas. That in, in church work and one thing or another like that. Would you tell us something about that please?

G.H. Yes I've done quite a bit of church work. I started out and had the president of the Young People's Society for three years and through that work I'm, was a member of the session in on the official board, the regular board and I was treasurer in the various organizations in the church for a good many years.

- D.M. Well now that's a fine, a very fine record now ah, ah what about ah, as a sports fan through the years, what are, what are some of your favorite sports?
- G.H. I enjoy sports almost of any nature especially baseball, hockey, or football.
- D.M. What did you think of the Grey Cup that we saw here a couple of weeks
- G.H. I thought it was an excellent game, it was really a hard hitting but a real good game. There were some mistakes made but that's always natural in lots of sport
- D.M. I guess you were cheering for Ottawa.
- G.H. I was cheering for Ottawa.
- D.M. All right. Now curling ah, Gordon I believe that you were representative or represented at least in spirit or something at a recent Brier, is that true?
- G.H. Yes I was a very . . . proud father and made the trip with my two sons to the Brier at Edmonton this past March and it was a very exciting experience.
- D.M. Well now Gordon we get into another area here and, and that I think is a very interesting one and, and I'm, I thank you very much for talking about it. I've gathered that you've, like a lot of people have been bothered with arthritis for a number of years. But you have learned to live with it. Now what's your ah, what's your philosophy about that?
- G.H. Well it's a, I guess maybe perseverance mostly because I've tried everything under the sun and I never gave up and I kept after in anything that I was, would like to do, which I still do to this very day. I have a very active morning by having er, going for a real walk from 2 to 5 miles every morning.
- D.M. Well now if I may say so also Gordon that you and I have had a lot of fun in our little talk today and, and you have smiled a lot. You look like a happy man that ah, that the person with this arthritis problem that we haven't licked yet. You think that you, you just, you just don't give in to it. Is that, that your view on it?
- G.H. That is quite correct I give a lot of, a lot of credit to my good wife.
- D.M. Well now ah, have you ah, an overall philosophy of life. What, what is your philosophy of life?
- G.H. Well that's, the way that I look at it is that life is what you make it. So to make it good be active.

- D.M. Well now you, you lived that kind of life from what you have told us right here. I, I take it that you ah, as you told us you walk in the morning, that you ah, I think do you visit the sick which are things you can do and that you have some hobbies at home, is that true Gordon?
- G.H. Yes and I also am a what you call a goodwill ambassador for the International Nickel Company at Christmas time in going to visit other pensioners like my sick, like myself to get them their Christmas bonus cheques.
- D.M. Wow so (unintell.) if I may say so.
- G.H. It's greatly . . . received at all places.
- D.M. I guess they are. Well Gordon how many, how many visits would you make in a day?
- G.H. Well if I would start out early in the morning around about 10 o'clock and if I would work 'til 4 to 4:30, it would some times I would be able to get in 12 visits in that day or sometimes 14 to 15 at the very most.
- D.M. All right you do 15 or 14 in a day. So . . . how many visits would you make over a season?
- G.H. Well during that, I'd try to do it in one week which would run between, around 75 for the week.
- D.M. Well now I guess on these trips . . . Gordon you'd meet some people who have been around here quite a while too, eh. They'd know you'd been with the company 46 years.
- G.H. Yes and I was very well received at all places.
- D.M. Well now Gordon this has been a, very fine but ah, it occurs to me that we haven't talked about Mrs. Harry and, and we don't want to get me into trouble or you into trouble here. So I'm going to put you on the spot as it were and ask you when and where you met your wife ah, . . . some of the places you went when you first dated and ah, some of the things that you and she have done together through the years.
- G.H. Well I met my wife in 1927 in the famous Five and Dime Store, Woolworth's. That's why I've always said, my million dollar baby in a Five and 10 cent store.
- D.M. Beautiful, just beautiful Gordon.
- G.H. We were married in September the 24th, 1931 which was the Depression year.
- D.M. Where did you go on your honeymoon Gordon?

G.H. I went to Toronto, Peterborough, Niagara Falls then Ottawa.

D.M. That was the place to go Niagara Falls in those days I guess.

G.H. Correct.

D.M. Did you go by car, by train there or how?

G.H. We went by train and by car.

D.M. And the company had a nice surprise for you when you got back.

G.H. And they sure did. On my return home I received the welcome news.

D.M. Through the years Gordon has your wife, has she been active at all in sports? Has she been involved in any kind of ah, sports or at least in church, club or ah, activities like that?

G.H. In the early days my wife was an ardent sportsman, she loved to play. She played softball, as an ardent skier, an excellent skater and during the years later she was a very hard worker in the church work and she likes playing bridge and various games which we do and now enjoy in my retirement.

D.M. And ah, how long have you been married now Gordon?

G.H. We've been married 42 years and they've been real good years.

D.M. Friends and neighbours we've had ah, we've been chatting with . . . Gordon "Sparky" Harvey, 46 years with Inco who retired about 4½ years ago at which time he was in charge of the reproduction depart, department with engineering