

The following transcript of
Henry Dunn's interview
on

Memories and Music

(broadcast in 1974)

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Summer Canada Project

in 1982.

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ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWEE: Henry Dunne
POSITION:

TRANSCRIBER: Bonnie Savage
TAPE NUMBER: 035

DATE:
INTERVIEWER: Don MacMillan

DATE OF TRAN: July 1982
SUMMER CANADA PROJECT

THEME:

D.M. And now friends and neighbours, we have another guest with us on Memories and Music. Our guest is a man well-known in Sudbury and Copper Cliff and throughout the north, Mr. Henry Dunne. Mr. Dunne retired in 1969. He is now sixty-eight years of age. He was twenty-six years with Inco as assistant steward in the Inco club. Well now Mr. Dunne, you're not, obviously ~~On~~ you're not from Sudbury originally, where are you from? Where's your home town?

H.D. I come from Bon~~ne~~field.

D.M. I must confess, I don't know where Bon~~ne~~field. Where is it and how big is it?

H.D. It's east of North Bay about eighteen miles on the Ottawa highway.

D.M. And what did your father do there?

H.D. My father was a bush ranger ~~in-the~~ for the government and a fire ranger in the summer time.

D.M. Oh I see. What would his duties as a bush ranger?

H.D. Checking on timber and that would be a winter job and in the summer time was a fire ranger.

D.M. How interesting. Where was he from? Was he a native of that area?

H.D. No, he come from around Ottawa.

D.M. Right. And your mother?

H.D. My mother is a native of Bon~~ne~~field.

D.M. Oh, did you have any brothers ~~and~~ ^{or} sisters?

H.D. Yes, I have two brothers living and a sister.

D.M. Oh, and where are they now and what are they doing?

H.D. My sister lives in Falmouth, Nova Scotia. She's Mrs. Bob Brown. He was well-known here in Sudbury. He's superintendant of that Crane Hill, and one of my brothers is right here in town and the other brother is in Timmins.

D.M. Henry, I've, see if we can get a little information on growing up in Bon~~ne~~field. What did a young fellow do for fun and entertainment growing up in Bon~~ne~~field?

H.D. Oh we used to play with the boys, we played a lot of ball, hockey, ~~swimming~~, there was a lake right there.

D.M. Alright, and you'd go to school and you'd learn reading writing and arithmetic, *I guess eh.*

HD. Right, right.

D.M. Something happened about the time you were thirteen. What was that story?

H.D. I lost my leg the day after my birthday, thirteen years old. Jumping on a freight train trying to get a free ride.

D.M. Henry, ~~I know~~ that's a long time ago and I know that you've, in a sense, overcome this problem, but it was certainly not a very wise thing to do eh? Maybe there'll be some young fellows listening to this program. What do you mean? How did you do it? Did you miss your hold? Tell us about it, as you remember that incident.

H.D. Well ~~some~~ there was some of my relations going away that morning and the station was about a half a mile ~~aw~~ from town and a freight train pulling ~~e~~ in on the siding and me and a couple of my friends went to jump on, and I ~~lost~~ missed my hold and fell on the rail and cut my foot off.

D.M. Well there's a moral there friends and you young people although I don't suppose Henry that there are as many boys and young men hopping freights as there used to be say in the '30's.

hd. Oh no, no there isn't no.

D.M. Nothing like that.

H.D. I wasn't hopping it. It was just for fun, that's all, fooling around.

- D.M. Right. Well now that would be a tragic thing to happen a thirteen year old. A thirteen year old ~~that~~ liked athletics, but you didn't let it beat you Henry, is that right.
- H.D. That's right.
- D.M. Well what did you do? How did you react to it? You kept playing ball and hockey or something? Tell us about that.
- H.D. Well I never gave up. I loved hockey and baseball and I kept right at it. I played in the nets in hockey, I played second base, I was pitcher and I pitched in baseball.
- D.M. Henry, I find that fascinating. Did this, this would hamper you to some degree but could you still hit and you could still run eh?
- H.D. Oh yes I could yes. I, in fact I think I'd have made pro ball if I hadn't lost that leg, ha ha ha.
- D.M. Well ~~maybe-you~~ I think maybe you might have with that kind of spirit, but then as you got a little older you moved I think to Montreal. Is that right.
- HD. That's right. I spent five years in Montreal.
- D.M. What were you doing there?
- H.D. The first two years I worked for my uncle in, he owned the Standard Broom and Brush Company and in the meantime I took up the barber trade.
- D.M. Well that's fair enough. Did you work for someone or did you have your own shop or what?
- H.D. No, I didn't believe in working for anybody else. I always had my own shop.
- D.M. Good. Then you returned to, back to the old home town at Bon~~ne~~field.
- HD. That's right.
- D.M. What did you do there?
- H.D. I opened a billiard room and barber shop and confectionary stand there.
- D.M. Well good for you. And something else I believe. A young ~~lad~~ from the Sault you met. Something transpired around about this time, right?

H.D. Yes, 1932 I left for my wife and we got married in Montreal.

D.M. () we're talking about the middle of depression. Times were tough, but you managed, you made a living eh?

H.D. Oh yes, a pretty fair living. The trans-Canada highway was going through at the time and there was a camp two miles out of Bon~~ne~~field and I was timekeeper on that camp. And I had my business in the evenings.

D.M. You can't complain eh? This ~~ea~~ would be, there'd be a lot of unemployed men from all over the province.

H.D. Yes.

D.M. They got board and room, and how-much well did they get paid?

H.D. Five dollars a month, ha ha ha.

D.M. ha ha ha, well that's better than no dollars a month.

H.D. That's right.

D.M. Around about, you left Bon~~ne~~field around '33 or '34.

H.D. It was '34 when I come up to Sudbury, yes.

D.M. What prompted the move to Sudbury?

H.D. Well to better myself. Things were pretty quiet after the trans-Canada was finished down there.

D.M. So what did you do in Sudbury?

H.D. I opened a barber shop right off, when I come to Sudbury.

D.M. Well that figures. Where were you located?

H.D. On Beech Street, just across the street from Demarco Brothers.

D.M. Is the shop still standing?

H.D. No, the building is tore down now, and then later on I took over the Nickel Range annex and I had a barber shop, billiard room and boxing club in there.

D.M. Well now let's not get ahead of ourselves here now. I, operating a barber shop and a billiard parlour, you'd get to know some people, some athletes around town eh? Who were some of the fellows that you got to meet? Who

were some of your customers in there?

H.D. Well Jim Dewey was better known and oh there was Spike Bowl, a lot of ball players, Don Price. Different ones, Joyce Hasty.

D.M. Were they pretty good pool players? ()/

H.D. No, they weren't pool players, they were athletes. Hockey players and ball players.

D.M. They came in to get hair cuts?

H.D. Right.

D.M. Fair enough. Then as you say, you opened up behind the Nickel Range/ Now you took quite an interest in boxing. What got this ~~stared~~ started Henry?

H.D. Well I started that down in Montreal when I was there with the Exelsier Anderson Club(?) and I handled quite a few fighters there, trained and provoked, and then when I come back here to, when I came to Sudbury I got right back into it.

D.M. Just sort of got it in the blood then. Is that right?

H.D. That's right.

D.M. Now you had the, one or two more pretty good amateur fighters here in Sudbury. Can you remember some of the names?

H.D. Oh yes. There's one of the best that, come right here from Sudbury was Dewly Boa. He's a welter-weight and they called him the Sudbury Wildcat.

D.M. m mhh.

H.D. He was terrific.

D.M. mmhh. Anybody else that sticks in your mind?

H.D. Yes, there's Cliff Beckett. He hailed from Winnipeg and he went on to fight Sugar Ray Robinson ^{twice} and Tony Zao once.

D.M. Well anybody ~~is~~ who stayed in there with Robinson and Zao, must have been quite a fighter.

H.D. He was terrific. He....

D.M. Well now you'd get to know him pretty well when he was starting out. What did he have that nailed him to do that?

H.D. Well, one thing he had, a lot of courage and he was very fast, he wouldn't back down from Joe Lewis.

D.M. Alright that's going to be a good fighter. That's the, all I'm trying to get at Henry, is that you'd get to know him pretty well. Was he a pretty good boy? Did you get fond of him?

H.D. Yes he was very nice. A very nice man. Nice boy.

D.M. He took off from here to go to the States to earn a living in the ring. Is that, is that what happened?

H.D. That's right, yeah.

D.M. Do you think maybe he got over-matched a little early in his career, ()?

H.D. Well he did. He did, but I, the only way ^{I guess} he could get in there, was, significantly he was connected with, and they pushed him a little too fast.

D.M. That happens eh, in the fighting.

H.D. Yes.

D.M. We were getting ready here for our little talk, you I think, did you heard you mention Battleen Brannon, or Branning...

H.D. Oh yes.

D.M.who was he?

H.D. ^{Elmer} Ever Branning, he hailed from the west too, and the train with the, oh....

D.M. Now just think now, we can't remember back.

H.D. He trained with Jimmy ^{McLarnin} McGram out west.

D.M. Now there's a famous name in boxing. What, ~~he~~ you must have some stories to tell about Jimmy. What are some of the stories he's got to tell us about Jimmy?

H.D. Well he used to tell me about Pop Foster and ^{Angeline} Angeline McLarnin. The sessions they had in training and the running five miles every day. He claims that Jimmy was terrific, a good, very good fighter, and easy to handle, very easy to handle.

D.M. I think so, and McLarnin was a hard hitter and in good shape when he did his fighting in the States there.

H.D. Yes, yes he was. He ~~wone-the~~ won the title over there twice I think. Jimmy McLarnen.

D.M. I think he did.. I don't remember, he fought somebody down there, a famous name, it was either Tony Zale or Tony Santenneri or some name like that, that he fought two or three famous fight with.

H.D. Yes he did. Off hand I can't remember the guy's name.

D.M. Does Branning ever hear from McLarnen?

H.D. Not that I know of no. I was ~~at~~ talking Branning last night, and reminiscing about the old lamp fights.

D.M. What are some of these fights that you reminisced?

HA.D. Well there's one fight that he fought here in Sudbury against Johnny Ross at St. Ann's Hall and he had Ross just out completely, out on his feet, and Ross let go with one punch and knocked him out, ha ha ha.

D.M. ha ha ha, that can happen I imagine, and I'm sure they are the best fights eh? Well ~~what~~ was Branning, he was welter too was he?

H.D. Yes.

D.M. And did he work with Inco?

H.D. Yes, he just retired here a couple of months ago.

D.M. Well I know we're pushing on to around '38, '39, and '40, and it seems to me that Inco, Inco management took quite an interest in athletics or local things, and you got yourself hired. Is that right?

H.D. That's right.

D.M. And you have quite a distinction so far as being hired by Inco is concerned.

H.D. Well I think I was the first man that Inco ever hired with an artificial leg.

D.M. I think so. ↗

H.D. 'Til somebody dispused that. I think you've got that distinction. Alright, now, Inco supported baseball. Of course, times were a little different in those days. This was before there weren't quite as many cars and television and what not. You got yourself, first of all into softball. Is that right?

D.M. That's right.

H.D.

D.M.

H.D. Tell us something about the softball.

H.D. This started in 1939 or '40 and I had a team that won the Ontario Northern Ontario Championship three years in a row.

D.M. That's not bad. Now, who was doing your pitching for you?

H.D. In softball there was Oscar ~~Clutche~~ ^{Cloutier or Clouthier} and George Jenkins.

D.M. What did they have? A nice hard one that they ~~oul~~ could (unintelligible)?

H.D. Oh yes. They had pretty near everything. They were good.

D.M. And did you have a ~~Frank~~ ^{Hank} Erren on your club?

H.D. Yes, we have (~~Spike Bowl~~ ^{Spike Bowl?}) IS ONE of our heavy hitters.

D.M. Yes. Are any of these people likely to be listening to this show now?

H.D. Oh yes, they will be, yes.

D.M. Do you want to say hello to Spike or....

H.D. Right.

D.M.Clouthier or Jenkins?

H.D. Yes. Yes I'd like to.

D.M. I hope that maybe they'll get a kick about thinking back in some of those days eh?

H.D. Yes.

D.M. Then, interest in softball went, and you turned to hard ball.

H.D. In '45, we turned the whole softball team into hardball. All we did was pick up a couple of pitchers, the rest was all the softball team.

D.M. And how about your friend Bowl? Did he hit hardball pitching too.

H.D. Oh he was a hardball player before he ever turned to softball. He was good.

D.M. Fine, and how did your hardball club get along?

H.D. Well we did something like the Expos the first couple of years. We didn't do too good.

D.M. mmhh.

H..D But in '47 we won the championship, Nickel Belt Championship.

D.M. Very good. Who were these pitchers that you had with you?

H.D. We had Morris Saynomore, Doug Perry, and ^{Harry}Howey Haddo.

D.M. Some of our sports fans will get quite a kick out of these names. Any of them with Inco, or were they with Inco or what?

H.D. They were all with Inco at one time. There's two of them still there. Haddo and Perry are still with Inco.

D.M. Still with Inco, eh?

HD. Yes.

D.M. But we don't want to go into too many details, but I think that you got yourself bounced out of the league round about this time. Is that true?

H.D. Yes that's true, in '48. A misunderstanding, the players and myself we just refused to play so we were out.

D.M. Sews that one up. And your club then carried on but folded in, around in the mid '50's. Is that right?

H.D. That's right, yeah.

D.M. But did you not manage another club?

H.D. Yes. I managed the Frood hardball team for three years after that.

D.M. How about some names from that Frood team that you remember.

H.D. Oh there's Billy Demptule, Bert Cliff, Smith Brothers. There were four Smith brothers, no, three Smith Brothers....

D.M. ()

H.D.and another Smith, but no relation.

D.M. I see. They didn't sell the cough drops eh?

H.D. No, ha ha ha.

D.M. How did that Frood club go?

H.D. Well it was all local talent that we had on our team, and the other teams had imports so we just held on our own and didn't get no place though.

D.M. Oh well there's nothing wrong with that.

H.D. ha ha ha.

D.M. And, 'course you're with Inco and you're promoting sports. You got yourself on a ~~horse-pitching~~ horse-pitching sort of, right?

H.D. Right. We have a horseshoe league.

D.M. And....

H.D. ~~We~~ Every year it's going pretty good.

D.M. It's still going well right?

H.D. Yes it is, yes.

D.M. And, wrist-wrestling.

H.D. Wristwrestling, we started that just lately but it's going over big.

D.M. Wristwrestling is something I don't know much about, now, when I don't ~~say~~ know much about it, I've seen it, I've tried it, usually lost, but is there a Canadian champion?

H.D. Yes there is, yes?

D.M. Is there a United States or American champion?

H.D. Yes.

D.M. Do you think that some day there will be a world champ or something like that?

H.D. Yes I would say there would. Last year, Tallens, ran the Canadian Championships up there and they're running it again this year, and there's one gentleman from Chelmsford here, Mr. Vailleneourt Rancourt, Rudy Rancourt, he was runner up last year. He's very good, a very strong man, and he's going back to the championships again.

D.M. Well now, do these fellows go into training for wrist-wrestling?

HD. Yes they do, yes.

D.M. Well now, they might lift weights, but do they do any other special training. I mean would they sort of pull out on some weights to strengthen, what muscles do they use in....

H.D. It's all, it's all arm, but I know Mr. Vaillancourt, he has a machine that he built with weights and it's just like twisting a man.

D.M. Pulling and always adding a few more ounces to it.

H.D. Yeah, and he's been doing that all winter. He'll be in good shape.

D.M. He'll be in good shape eh, when this thing comes up. Henry, incidently folks, we're having a chat here with Mr. Henry Dunne who retired in 1969 after twenty-six years with Inco, in which, during which time he was assistant steward with the Inco club. He's always been interested in sports, with baseball, softball, boxing. He, we've just been talking, he got horseshoe pitching going. We're talking about armwrestling. I think Henry, that you got honoured by the Kinsman Club not too long ago. Is that true sir?

H.D. Yes, in 1969 I was given the honour of being, put in the hall of ~~the~~-fame by the Kinsman Club. ^{Yes}

D.M. That's very nice, and () about the Canadian Boxing....

H.D. Yes just recently at the eastern Canadian championship, I've been given the honour of Canadian Boxing Association.

D.M. Very nice. Very, very nice. Nice recognition. Now, Canada has not done too well in the Olympics as I remember them, but it seems to me ~~that~~ they didn't do too badly last time around. Do you remember anything about that?

H.D. Yes I do. There was one chap, Morgan from Nova Scotia, a heavy-weight. He put up a very good showing.

DM. I remember that. He was a little unskilled but he put up quite fight as I recall

H.D. That's right yes, he's....

D.M. In your view, who is the greatest Canadian fighter, professional?

H.D. Well the greatest Canadian that I saw was Clyde Gray and.....

D.M. We'd have to include McLarnen^{is he} somewhere along the line too eh?

H.D. Well if you put it that way, yes. McLarnen^{is} is in there. Oh definitely first.

D.M. I think first.

H.D. Oh yes, first, and then, but the ones that I saw, ~~was~~^{would} the Grey- Clyde Grey and Anchelato.

D.M. Right.

H.D. Yeah.

D.M. Anchelato is ~~at least~~ a tough man.

H.D. Yes he sure is tough.

D.M. He's fought some of the world's best.

H.D. He's fought Clay^{twice}. He fought Clay in Toronto when he fought him out in West Coast.

D.M. Right.

H.D. Well you've, boxing has been an interest of yours. You've got to know some fighters, some promoters, who do you pick as the, who is your pick as the all-time great. Heavy weight.....(unintelligible)

D.M. ^{Is} My opinion I'd say Joe Lewis.

H.D. Well friends, how do you think he would have fought against Marciano for instance.

D.M. Well if Marciano wouldn't knock him out, he'd win the fight.

H.D. That's fair enough. That's pretty hard to call that one isn't it?

D.M. Yes.

H.D. Marciano is a tough man.

D.M. Yes.

H.D. And, well as a matter of fact, now that I think about it, Marciano did knock out Joe Lewis didn't he and well of course Willis was well past his feet. ~~past~~^{past}...

H.D. Yes he did.

D.M.at that time. Well how about Marciano and, ~~put~~ you on the spot now, Henry, you're in the business as it were, how about Marciano and our friend George Foreman?

H.D. ha ha ha, well ~~there~~ they're both hard hitters, both of them.

D.M. Yeah.

H.D. I ~~think~~ think I'd have to go with Foreman. He's- I think he's the hardest puncher I ever saw.

D.M. That's, you really think so eh, ~~that~~ guy?

~~H.D.~~ There are a lot of people that would agree with you. Now we've got Clay verses Foreman coming up. How do you call that one?

D.M. Foreman in five, ha ha ha.

H.D. ha ha ha, O.K., all you people listening in, you make a note of that. You'll get Henry Dunne has given his call and if it doesn't work out like that, you'd know who to phone.

D.M. ha ha ha.

H.D. If it does, why he'll probably phone you. Friends our guest, a most welcomed guest, Henry Dunne, a native of Bonnefield who retired from Inco in 1969, twenty-six years with Inco, and in the time he was assistant steward in the Inco Club, he interested himself in all types of sporting activity from horseshoes to boxing. Mr. Dunne it's been a pleasure to have you as a guest on our show.'

D.M. Thank you.