

The following transcript of
Richard Godfrey Dow's interview
on

Memories and Music

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pit to teach the men how to run the drills, and I became the first shift boss in the open pit, and from there I moved up about every two years, to foreman, safety engineer, general foreman, and then superintendent of Lawson Quarry, and in a total of fifteen years from the time I started as a "mucker" to superintendent. I look with a lot of pride on my days as a miner. I'm very proud of being a miner. I consider it a very happy time in my life and a very productive time of my life.

G.P. When you came to Sudbury, I think you had mentioned, it was 1935?

R.D. Right.

G.P. I assume, was the depression one of the factors that brought you here?

R.D. Yes it was. I had been in Kansas, I married a Canadian girl, went back down to Kansas, to drill oil wells, and that was during the dust bowl and the depression, and the lawless days of Kansas, and we didn't like the country so we came back up here, and I was told that if I'd come to Sudbury, and was willing to work, I could get a job which I did do.

G.P. What was this community like in comparison to the area that you came from during that latter part of the depression?

R.D. Well it was entirely different, of course Kansas is flat country, no rocks, and up here there were a great number of rocks. It was a lawless country. This place, this Northern part of our country was beginning to become a real lawful, abiding place, although Sudbury had a sort of a raucus name in those days, and was a....

G.P. Even in Kansas?

R.D.a lively town. Well didn't hear about it in Kansas.

G.P. Not quite that far.

R.D. I studied about Sudbury in College, in geology. It happened to be, Sudbury Basin happened to be mentioned, so I did know a little about it. There was a case of, the place in Kansas being so awful terrible and the opportunity for work being available here, and jobs being very scarce, I guess all that put together is why I arrived here.

- G.P. Now, there wouldn't be a place in this country that would not have experienced the depression. However, it would be in varying degrees. When you arrived to this area, - near the end of the depression, - would you say that the, that it was either turning around or were the people in fairly good shape economically? Do you have any observations regarding that?
- R.D. I would consider that they were just at the period of turning around. The company was beginning to hire more and more, and naturally as they hired why so went the business of the community, and the community started to develop and grow population-wise, and from then on it was more or less a continual improvement from that day to this.
- G.P. In terms of International Nickel at that time, salaries have changed over the years. Can you recall what you were earning at that time?
- R.D. I sure can. Forty-nine cents an hour.
- G.P. Forty-nine cents an hour? And what was your line of work again?
- R.D. I was a mucker at that time, underground, and later I got to be a timberman. I got a raise in pay with that. I got to be a driller, and got a raise in pay with that, and as stope boss, I got a raise in pay there.
- G.P. How many hours per working day, - at forty-nine cents?
- R.D. Eight paid hours, but it took me about ten hours to get eight hours work. It was a little different in those days than it is now. We were eight hours at the stope working minus the twenty minutes for lunch. Your travelling from collar down and back up to collar was on your own time.
- G.P. Your own time and you weren't paid?
- R.D. Now that's paid for. It's eight hours collar to collar.
- G.P. Talking about Willisville, what was the nature of your work there, I believe you had a (unintelligible).
- R.D. We were running the quartzite quarry, quartzite is used as a flux in the smelting process of the, - we were mining or quarrying the, one of the white mountains over on the La Cloche Range by the company village of Willisville right next to Whitefish Falls.

G.P. Did you live in Willisville?

R.D. No, a lot of the company, - that was the company town, - and a lot of the employees lived there in very comfortable homes of a very pretty setting. My house was right down by the quarry set in the woods all by itself and 'bout three quarters of a mile further away on the opposite direction was the village of Whitefish Falls. So we really were connected to both Willisville and Whitefish Falls.

G.P. Mr. Dow, when you retired from Inco, what was your job?

R.D. I was an administrative assistant to the president at that time, - had been for some quite time.

G.P. President being?....

R.D. The president when I retired was....

G.P. You said you were associated with a number of presidents.

R.D. Yes.

G.P. Was Parker¹ one of them?

R.D. He was the first one. He was the man that brought me into the executive wing of the company, from superintendent of the quarry. After Mr. Parker, there was Mr. Waddington², Mr. Gaetz³, Mr. Pigott⁴, Mr. McCreedy⁵, and, Mr. Taylor, Ron Taylor.⁶

G.P. That was quite a number.

R.D. And there was Ron Taylor, who was the last one I worked for before the present man, Wint Newman⁷ came.

G.P. So that's quite a shift isn't it, from mucker at forty-nine cents an hour to assistant to the president. That's quite, you've certainly gone the gamut.

R.D. I can't claim to be assistant to the president really, it's an administrative assistant to the president because there was an assistant to the president who well ranked me.

¹Ralph D. Parker

²Ralph H. Waddington

³T. M. Gaetz

⁴John A. Pigott

⁵John McCreedy

⁶Ronald R. Taylor

⁷Winton K. Newman

G.P. But it would be in advisory capacity.

R.D. Yes.

G.P. Far cry from mucking back in 1935.

R.D. Yes, it was quite a change, very enjoyable at that time in my life, 'cause it gave me a lot of free time to delve into public things that I enjoyed doing. Whereas when I was in production I didn't have as much time to spare for other activities, community activities.

G.P. Suffice to say you'd gain an altogether different impression or perception I should say, of the company. You'd be looking at it a little differently in that capacity.

R.D. Yes, it's quite an education to come up through the ranks from the bottom to the top because you get a very good insight into both sides of the question. I'm the first one to admit that, from the early days on, the union did an awful lot of good things to improve the working conditions, but from the days when I was underground to what it's like now, I certainly would give them credit for that.

G.P. You certainly recognize the two sides to the question?

R.D. Yes I do.

G.P. Alright, we're going to have to take a break now, we'll turn the program over to Doug McLaughlin, our music host. When we return, perhaps we could talk about, introduce at least your career in politics.

R.D. Fine.

G.P. First we'll hear from our music host.

(MUSIC)

G.P. Welcome back to the interview portion of Memories and Music, our guest today is Dick Dow, the former mayor of the city of, community of Copper Cliff, and alderman for the city of Sudbury, representing Copper Cliff and also employed by Inco for a number of years. Mr. Dow, certainly, - I first came in contact with you in association with your political involvement. I think you've been in politics for a number of years.

R.D. Yes. Actually in an elected office for twenty-three consecutive years but my interest started back in my days at Whitefish Falls and Willisville. As superintendent of the quarry, I ran the company village of

Willisville and had a great deal to do with the development in the little community of Whitefish Falls too. At the same time I had three teenage kids that were going to run out of a school to go to and I found out that the Espanola District High School was going to be built and I arranged with the government to get a bus to take the school kids over there for their high school years, and that was really self-preservation for our family if you want to put it that way. But it gave me an insight into some of the things politically that a person can do and it appealed to me, so that when I finally arrived in Copper Cliff and expected to stay here the rest of my life, I thought I would get involved in politics and I started out by being a councillor on the town council of the town of Copper Cliff and ah....

G.P. What year would that be?

R.D. That would be in 1957. That was my....

G.P. That would be your first elected position?

R.D.first elected position, and then I went on, - the gentleman who was mayor, Bob Saddington was, - had illness in his family, and his, - I think his wife was not well and he wanted to be on council but he didn't want to stay on as mayor. So, I was asked to run, and was acclaimed as mayor in his position and he in turn was elected to the council. I made one stipulation though. Both the company, - I worked for, - and in asking them for time off to do this job, I made a stipulation that I would only run for the job if I were allowed, or my council and I were allowed to run the town without interference from the company because I abhorred the label of company town which had been a fact for many years and was no longer a fact and I intended to see that it was less of a fact and I got that commitment and the company lived up to it all the years I was in office. But as mayor of this town, we had a good council, seven of us, five worked for Inco, and one was the druggist, and the other was the manager of the bank. And I think we ran it well, we kept our taxes down of course, we had a good tax base. We did the things that were necessary. Perhaps we were a little over lenient with things in this town. The people were, perhaps you might say spoiled, as they learned (out) when they later became a part of the city and didn't get quite the same private attention that they did previously. But everything went along very smoothly. We were able to accomplish everything we set out to, in the way of roads and buildings and things of that nature. We built the Centennial Library, the swimming pool, which the citizens petitioned and had named after me, which I appreciated very greatly. All of those

type of things we could do, because we could afford to do them, but then the spectre of Regional Government.

G.P. mmhh.

R.D. The ah, ah, - it was discussed here. We had town meetings. The people were a bit upset. They didn't want to see any change in the status quo, and we decided that we would argue and try to stay out of regional government. We didn't like it, we had nothing to gain, and everything to lose. We had everything we needed. But we lost that argument. We went to Queen's Park as a Save Our Town Committee, and with myself as spokesman we saw the Premier and we saw Darcy McKeough. We lost that argument. So the next thing we knew, we were going to be taken over by the city of Sudbury, and become a ward of the city of Sudbury, and that we didn't like either. So our same committee fought that, and we had many, many meetings and again we ended up arguing it out with Darcy McKeough and Bill Davis, and as everyone now knows, we lost our battle.

G.P. Now you were opposed to regional government?

R.D. Yes, I was opposed to it.

G.P. One of the frequent criticisms I have heard of, was that communities were concerned about losing their identity. Was that a factor?

R.D. That was definitely a factor as far as Copper Cliff was concerned, but it went much, much deeper than that.

G.P. Right.

R.D. We in Copper Cliff, as I had said before, had all the amenities that we really needed, and could supply any that we did need. And we knew that if we got into a larger form of government we would be the one's paying to help subsidize the rest of the other communities. Now as far as taxation is concerned, if there was any equitable way of relagating the taxes that went to the government back to the municipalities in the region, that would have been fine. We would have agreed with that hundred percent. But all we could see was the fact that we were going to pay out of our pocket to help somebody say in the Valley, or some other part in the region, to get their sewer and water and better roads.

G.P. Services that you already had.

R.D. Services of all kinds and we didn't think that was quite fair. That was really one of our main reasons for objecting.

- G.P. What was the logic behind the decision to have Copper Cliff designated a ward of the city? There are two distinct areas that historically they've always been that way.
- R.D. Yes, not only historically, but physically, with the slag pile between us. There is no way you could take any Sudbury street and continue it on into the town of Copper Cliff. You'd have to go through a mountain of rock or through a slag pile.
- G.P. Right.
- R.D. Far across Simon Lake.
- G.P. Kelly Lake.
- R.D. ha ha, Kelly Lake I mean. So we were physically separated from them too, but....
- G.P. But why did the government do that? What was their rationale?
- R.D. They said that the assessment, - when I had first started, the smelters weren't assessable and then the smelters became assessable, and on top of that, the government lost their nerve and instead of going to market value assessment, they froze all the assessment, so that the assessments didn't amount to quite as much as everybody expected they would. But they wanted all that assessment to go into the city so that the city would have a better tax base than it already had, and they could only do that by including all of Copper Cliff. In one of our arguments with the Premier, against it, I had our surveyor draw a line right down through the west side of the smelter, leaving all the houses intact, and the town intact, but the smelter on the other side of the line, and offered to give them, to give that to Sudbury, and itself let stay as a town, the way Capreol was lined up to stay as a town.
- G.P. Right.
- R.D. But that got thrown out too. So after we lost all our arguments at Queen's Park, why we just came back home, and I operated on the principle although we had tried our best, we had lost, we were into Regional government, let's try to make it work, and that has been my philosophy from that day to this.
- G.P. Right. It's the only positive approach. You were a vice-chairman, I believe, of Regional Council.

R.D. Yes, I was vice-chairman. There was a rather hectic time when there was a little dispute with the chairman, Don Collins, and he left us a little early, and there was an interim where as vice-chairman, I had to act as chairman 'til such time as Joe Fabbro was appointed to replace. We were still in the first four years which was an appointed job as chairman, appointed by the province....

G.P. The first year? Or the....

R.D.the first four years.

G.P. Four years.

R.D. Were appointed by the province.

G.P. That was standard throughout the province, was it?

R.D. I believe it was. I'm not quite sure of that fact, but I believe it was. I know Collin's appointment was for four years and he served less than four. So Joe was appointed.

G.P. When did you retire from politics? I suppose one never retires from politics but....

R.D. Oh I still quite follow them.

G.P. You still seem to have been....

R.D. I like to go to the meetings and listen but formally I retired. I didn't run in the last election. I had just received the Order of Canada which was the highlight in my life and I thought at my age, and having served for twenty-three years, it was the best time to get out at the top, and not before I started making mistakes.

G.P. That's quite a record, twenty-three years. We're going to have to take a break now, we'll turn the program over to our music host, and when we return, we'll continue our interview. First we'll hear from Doug McLaughlin.

(MUSIC)

G.P. Welcome back to the interview portion of Memories and Music. Our guest today is Mr. Dick Dow, and Mr. Dow has been talking about his career with Inco and as well, his involvement in local politics. Mr. Dow, I've noticed, - I recall rather, - that you've received a number of honours and awards through the years.

Certainly one that was in the news, back in 1980 I believe, was your appointment as a member of the Order of Canada.

R.D. Correct.

G.P. What's it like to receive such an honour? How did you react to the hearing of that?

R.D. Completely astonished, I guess it's the only way I can....

G.P. At a loss of words at the time I suppose.

R.D. I certainly was, because I wasn't expecting it. As I have said before to other people, I was very surprised to be honoured for doing things that I enjoyed doing. I like people, and I like doing things for people, and I've been involved in a lot of extracurricular activities in this community and in others and that apparently is the basis upon which they judge you for the Order of Canada.

G.P. Is this Order, - is one of the criteria community involvement?

R.D. Yes, ah, it's a very big part of the choice. They, in reviewing your life history, they check quite deeply into the various things that you've been connected with, organizations, or institutions such as the hospital, the university and things of that nature, which I have been involved in. That apparently is part of the weight that goes into the final judgement which is made by the Queen's Privy Council for Canada.

G.P. The award was presented to you by the Governor-General? Governor-General Schreyer?

R.D. Yes. Governor-General Schreyer with Mrs. Schreyer present. That's very formal and very lovely ceremony. I dressed in black tie. A short description of your work is read out by the Secretary-General and you step forward and bow to the Governor-General and then he motions you forward, you step up to him, shake hands, he makes the presentation, you exchange a few words, you back up one step and you turn half right to Mrs. Schreyer who is sitting off to the side, you bow to her, and then you go to a desk at the far side of the room, and you sit down and sign the book which records all the names of the people who have had these awards and then you go back to your seat. All in all it's a very lovely ceremony and it certainly is so dignified and so correct that you will never forget it.

G.P. This past year, you also were honoured I believe as a citizen of Sudbury?

R.D. Yes, I was very surprised there also. Both my wife and I were made honorary citizens of the city of Sudbury. According to the certificate, we received, I'm number twelve, and my wife is number 13 which is certainly an honour if there are only that number of people that have been awarded this honour. I would like to see it go to more people because I know many who have devoted their life to the betterment of the Sudbury district.

G.P. Yes, I would agree with you on that. At all too often, well it seems almost impossible at times to recognize everyone, but as you indicated there have been many actively involved people through the years.

R.D. Yes.

G.P. Mr. Dow, as mayor of Copper Cliff, one of your last decisions, I believe, was in association with the establishment of a museum out here.

R.D. It was. We were offered the last old log cabin that Inco owned which was sitting up here on a hill and the town council decided they would take it and have it moved down to the center of the town. We obtained a small portion of land from Inco upon which to place this building. We had it moved down there, renovated it in a rustic style so that it made it a better looking log cabin than it had been in its state when we received it and the assistance of three girls from the high school who were able to get a government grant, we got the building all scraped and cleaned up, fixed up, and started collecting artifacts and so forth to put in there, and it's a growing institution right now and each year it gets better and better. We hope that one of these days we will be able to enlarge it and have a larger display of pieces of memorabilia that had to do with Copper Cliff and its existence. Copper Cliff you know, is, other than the town of Sudbury, the oldest town in this area. Ah, we got our charter from the government way back in 1901, April of 1901 and so we were, until we ceased to exist, a very old town.

G.P. Yes, it has a rich history, and is it the intent of those associated with the museum to reflect the history of Copper Cliff? Can we say it is a community museum in that sense?

R.D. Yes. We hope to have community, but not too much emphasis on the mining or smelting. That will be of course in there and, in small pieces, but we're more

interested in the ethnic growth that we've had in this town. It started with the Finnish people originally and then the Italians and so forth and we have a great mix of people here who get along just absolutely beautifully together, no troubles of any description and we've got a pretty rich history that we can put on display there if we can get the right artifacts.

G.P. Are you on the museum board?

R.D. Yes, I am an honorary life member of the board. I was just elected that in the last year. I was on the board from the start, but....

G.P. You've chaired the board, I believe, have you not?

R.D. Yes, at one time.

G.P. Yes. Are more and more artifacts coming forward every year?

R.D. Yes they are, and as people are beginning to realize that we're taking care or are doing our best to take care, well the things that they give us to put in there, more people are coming forward with more important pieces of memorabilia because they know we're going to look after them.

G.P. Alright. We're going to turn the program back to Doug McLaughlin. When we return, we'll wrap up this section. However, first we'll hear from Doug McLaughlin.

(MUSIC)

G.P. Welcome back to the interview portion of Memories and Music, our guest today is Dick Dow. Mr. Dow, when you reflect back on, I think it was twenty-three years....

R.D. That's right.

G.P.consecutive years in politics, what memories come to mind? Obviously politics was good to you, you enjoyed it or you wouldn't have stayed involved so long.

R.D. Yes I enjoyed it. I think I have said it before, I enjoyed doing things for people and I enjoyed people, and politics gives you an opportunity to both meet lots of people and to be of service to lots of people. I can't think of any easier way of being, having this sort of a licence to help people and being in politics. But it's a most interesting occupation, if you want to call it an occupation. You work with a fine group of men

and occasionally a woman, and you get a very broad view of the whole perspective of a problem. Things come up that you never even thought of or heard of and it's really an education in itself and if you keep abreast of what's going on in your community, and what's going on in your province and what's going on in your country you've certainly got more than enough to keep you eminently busy....

G.P. mmhh.

R.D. and....

G.P. I should think so.

R.D.I find that most stimulating and most agreeable. I think that's why politics appealed to me.

G.P. You were associated with a number of projects as a mayor, as an alderman, and actually through your association with community groups, the pool itself, quite an important project?

R.D. Yes, I'm, most proud of that. Not because it's named after me, - that certainly was an honour that the people of the town conferred on me and I certainly appreciate it. But, my family have always been swimmers and I have been too, and there was nothing but a small swimming pool available here in Copper Cliff, and the one at the "Y", and then later on, the one at Laurentian and I didn't see any reason why we couldn't have one here in Copper Cliff that was half Olympic size. The Council agreed with me so we set money aside, and we built it, and completely paid for it, before we were taken over by the city, so that the city got it tax free, or cost free I should say. But I think I'm most proud of that because some good swimmers have come out of that pool. This young Campbell¹ girl that's starting to break all kinds of records right now, started her swimming career here in this pool. And there have been others. There are many very rewarding things that come out of a job like that.

G.P. mmhh. That would be one of many.

R.D. One of many. I enjoy my work at the university on the various committees at Laurentian University. I have been on the board there for years now, the same with Memorial Hospital. I'm past-chairman of the board there. I'm on several committees....

G.P. You're still involved with both of those organizations?

R.D. I am yes.

¹Jennifer Campbell

- G.P. 'Cause that ties in with my next question. What does someone do who was so actively involved for twenty some years? How do you spend your time now, and I gather that's one aspect of it, community, - committee involvement.
- R.D. Yes. Another thing that I am attending to do, I'm not accomplishing too much at the present time, but I'm working at it, is trying to correlate all the records of the old town of Copper Cliff which are in the basement of the Civic Square, and little by little I have hopes of getting them assorted into a more or less chronological business-like order so that they can be referred to when required.
- G.P. mmhh. I've also noticed, with interest, your attendance at coucil meetings.
- R.D. Yes....
- G.P. You still maintain that.
- R.D.I do, I attend not all, but most of the city council and the regional council meetings and I'm still interested in their affairs and how they're reacting and so forth. But, to me, is a very nice past-time to go in there and listen to the arguments on the points of view which I used to enjoy when I was sitting around the table, now I can enjoy them, although I have to keep my mouth shut.
- G.P. So you're seeing it from a little different vantage point at the moment.
- R.D. Yes I am.
- G.P. So it's really not fair to say that you really retired a year or so ago from politics, you're maintaining that interest except from a different, from a different view point.
- R.D. Yes, from a less active view point.
- G.P. mmhh. Well Mr. Dow, on behalf of our listening audience, I would like to thank you very much for contending to the be interviewed today. I've known you for a few years, and I've, - I think our paths first crossed in connection with the Copper Cliff Museum and certainly I've enjoyed my conversations with you over the years and I'm sure that our audience also enjoyed the interview. Thank you.
- R.D. It's been a pleasure, Gary.