

The following transcript of
John “Jack” Schaff’s interview
on

Memories and Music

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THEME:

D.M. Now folks we promise you a most interesting guest today today, Mr. Jack Schaaf. Now Jack, we want to start ~~at~~ from the beginning as ~~is~~ we always do. Where, when did you retire from Inco Jack?

J.S. Last year in July. A year ago.

D.M. And how many years of service ^{had} did you with the company then?

J.S. Thirty-two.

D.M. Well that's a fair number of years, and what were you doing when you retired Jack?

J.S. I was driving the () back at Claribell.

D.M. Well, now where are you from Jack? Where were you born?

J.S. I was born in North Dakota.

D.M. Whereabouts in North Dakota?

J.S. Mandan.

D.M. Mandan. That sounds like Indian, Sioux Indians or something.'

J.S. That's right. That's right, that's an Indian name. Sioux Indians yeah.

D.M. That's not too far away from () last end I guess. There must have been some battle or something out there at one time right?

J.S. I think there was, yeah.

D.M. Right. At what year were you born out there Jack?

J.S. 1909.

D.M. You were born, what, on a farm there were you? ^{? A}
farm in Mandan.

J.S. No, I was born on the farm. I was born on the farm. We
moved into Mandan.

D.M. Let's get this straightened out. Your father farmed
for a time but gave it up and moved into Mandan. ~~Was~~ Was
that, was that what happened?

J.S. That's right. That's right.

D.M. I gather your father sort of got jobs and worked where-
ever he could or did the best he can.

J.S. Yes.

D.M. He operated a pool hall and so on. Tell us something
about that.

J.S. Well he, when he moved into town, into Mandan, no he
moved into Flasher first, he had a pool room and he
~~brother~~ pool room. So they sold it, and then he worked
on the railroad, braker, a braker on the railroad,
worked in the rod house, worked in Miniapolis, St. Paul
on the streetcar. He had odd jobs, and then he came
up to Canada.

D.M. Well that's great. What year did he come out to Canada?

J.S. It was in the '20's anyway.

D.M. Right. Now what brought him up here? Did he come up.....

J.S. He ~~get-the~~ come up to thrash. He ran a separater....

MD.M. mmhh.

J.S.and from there he latched onto a farm.

D.M. He liked the look of....

J.S. Yeah, well being a farmer, you know....

.M. Yeah.

J.S.so he come back and found a farm.

D.M. Very good. Now whereabouts was this in Canada?

J.S. That's south of Moose Jaw. About a hundred south of
Moose Jaw. ~~Straight south~~ of Moose Jaw.

- D.M. For some of our former Saskatchewan listeners, what....
- J.S. Fythe Lake.
- D.M. Fythe Lake, eh?
- J.S. Fythe Lake was the town.
- D.M. Right. Now you would of course would be, by this time, you would be eleven or twelve years old, right?
- J.S. Twelve years old.
- D.M. What did you think of this move up into Canada? Were you excited about it?
- J.S. Yeah I did. I liked it, I liked it being a kid. I liked the farm.
- D.M. mmhh.
- J.S. Yeah, I really liked it.
- D.M. And moving into a new country ~~you-liked-it-~~ appealed to you eh?
- J.S. And the new country yeah.
- D.M. Well now, Jack, I know that you have quite a family, brothers and sisters and so on, so before we get, with your story, let's hear something about them. Now you have one brother right?
- J.S. One ~~broghat~~ brother, and he's out in Moose Jaw.
- D.M. What's he doing out there?
- J.S. He's the manager of a hotel there.
- D.M. mmhh. Now ~~what-eeub-~~ about your sisters. You ~~ave~~ have seven of them.
- J.S. Seven of them.
- D.M. Now, tell us about them.
- J.S. Well there's ~~two-e~~ two of them in town here.
- D.M. What are their names now?
- J.S. Florence and Willie.
- D.M. O.K.

J.S. And () in town....

D.M. Right.

J.S.and then I have three sisters in Moose Jaw. That's Evan Deloras, ~~new--~~ no I've only got two out there in Moose Jaw.

D.M. Two, I think you told me yeah.

J.S. Two in Moose Jaw, yeah.

D.M. Eva in Moose Jaw, and Deloras in Moose Jaw. Anne died you told me, and then there was a Dorene and Viola eh?

J.S. Dorene and Viola. There in, Dorene is in Great Deer, Alberta, and Viola is in ().

D.M. Well we have you pretty well represented out there to the west, and do you get out to see them once in awhile?

J.S. Yeah I do, yeah I do yeah. () it took me ten years before I got back the first time.

D.M. How do the old prairies look now when you go back to look at them.

J.S. I like the prairies.

D.M. Well ~~Jack~~^{now}, getting back to yourself Jack, you, you'd go to school in Fythe Lake ~~eh?~~ ^{eh? I guess eh?}

J.S. In ~~fight~~ Fythe Lake yeah.

D.M. Anybody that you went to school with who might be listening to this broadcast?

JS. No, I don't think so no.

D.M. None of them came down around here eh?

J.S. () is my sister and I, they're on holidays so I don't ~~hin~~ think, well they might, they might.

D.M. I know, I was thinking, it just occurred to me that you might have gone to school with some boyfriend of something or friends that you've gone down there with. Now, what did you do when you finished school?

J.S. Well I went on the farm. I mean I stayed on the farm.

D.M. Well of course you'd be the....

J.S. I was the oldest yeah.

D.M. Yeah, you'd be the oldest. You were a boy so you'd do some work. You helped your father around the farm right.

J.S. That's right.

D.M. And, but around the age of nineteen you got a new interest. What was that?

J.S. That's right. I got into boxing.

D.M. What got you ~~interested~~ started at that?

J.S. Well there was a boxer came to town and of course he started up a school really, so I went up there and that's how I got started.

D.M. I'll be darned. What was his name?

J.S. Fred Osball, kid Osball.

D.M. Kid Osball. Where was he from? Was he from this part of the world.

J.S. No. He's from down east area. I just, what part I don't know.

D.M. Well that's interesting. You know you just, how big was Fythe Lake at the time?

J.S. Oh it wasn't very big. It is just, well I don't know, about four or five hundred..

D.M. But you were a kid, and boxing appealed to you eh?

J.S. Oh yeah, it did yeah.

D.M. Well now, then you, after then you'd done some boxing around the area eh, where did you have your first fight there, or did you come back ()/

J.S. No, I had it there. I had my first fight in my home town.

D.M. Was this against another local boy?

J.S. No, it was an outsider.

D.M. Where from?

J.S. I think he was from Moose Jaw. Well the funny part about this first fight, I had only three lessons, and I didn't think I was going to box....

D.M. Yeah.

J.S.but ~~Fred~~ the fight was on, and one of the guys never showed up, so he says how about going on, you know just for exhibition bout you're on. So I went on and well I was in exhibition with this guy was really mad at me, and I seen stars. In the first round, boy did I see stars.

D.M. Right.

J.S. So then it was the next round, I come out, and I guess I was lucky and I knocked him out. So that was my first fight.

D.M. That was your first fight eh? That would be what weight? What weight were you?

J.S. Then I was about a hundred and thirty-seven.

D.M. That would be around welter-weight eh?

J.S. Well it was light-weight.

D.M. Light weight yeah.

J.S. But then I did fight welter-weight. I was a hundred and forty-two.

D.M. So this is sort of what got you started then eh?

J.S. Yeah.

D.M. () first fight eh?

J.S. Yeah.

D.M. So, what year you came, then I think down, we're talking now in the '20's, and on to the late '20's I guess eh?

J.S. It was in the late '20's yeah.

D.M. You came down to Toronto right?

J.S. Well I came down to Toronto in '29. '29 and....

D.M. It was the start of the depression eh which is....

J.S. At the start of the depression.

D.M.there weren't too many jobs anyway I suppose eh?

J.S. But before I came down to Toronto, I fought locally, and I fought some of the boys out there. In fact, at (), that was for the Junior Welter-weight for Western Canada, and I ~~wend~~ won that, and then I fought Kid Yorcky. Like Kid Yorcky and Kiddlies.

Kiddly was the Welter-weight champion in western Canada. He came down to Toronto and he said that Kid Yorky had fought twelve rounds with Kiddly to a draw, so they picked him and made a fight for the welter-weight.

D.M. mmhh.

J.S. So for ().

D.M. mmhh.

J.S. So I won that.

D.M. Very good.

J.S. So I won that.

D.M. O.K., well we've got you down in Toronto.

J.S. You've got me down in Toronto, in '29.

D.M. Managed by? Who was it?

J.S. Willy Warsee.

D.M. mmhh. So you fought around what, Toronto and Hamilton eh?

J.S. Toronto and Hamilton yeah.

D.M. Name any of the fellows, the fellows you fought?

J.S. Yeah, ~~there~~'s Chap McGregor, he was from Toronto, and then there was Jack Sharky, of course he's from Detroit, and I can't think of the other guy's name ~~right~~ now.

D.M. Now when we were getting ready, you mentioned a Jacky Porvovous.

J.S. Jacky Porvovous, yeah.

D.M. How about Jacky Phillips? Now there's a pretty big name isn't it?

J.S. Yeah, well, he was welter-weight of western Canada.

D.M. Right.

J.S. I didn't fight him but I boxed many rounds with him, spat with him you know.

D.M. mmhh. And did you mention Frenchy Belanger?

J.S. Frenchy Belanger yeah. He was, he was fly-way champion

- D.M. of the world just before I came down, but he lost it you know while he was there.
- D.M. You sparred with him too I guess.
- J.S. I sparred with him too, Frenchy Belanger. They call him Frenchy Belanger.
- D.M. Yeah, yeah that's right.
- J.S. ~~Yeah~~- And....
- D.M. I was just ~~thinking~~, just while we're on the general subject here for some of our western listeners, you mentioned another name, Lori Pepin.
- J.S. Lori Pepin, yeah.
- D.M. Lori was of course, was about a middle-weight wasn't he then?
- J.S. Yeah, he was middle-weight. In fact....
- D.M. He fought down in Winnipeg did he not?
- J.S. Yeah, Winnipeg and Regina and ^{then there was} ~~there~~ ^{(while were on the west} there was Tiger Fisher. He was from Saskatoon, and there was Ernie Search from Edmonton, and of course Kid York we mentioned him.
- D.M. Yeah. It's pretty hard to recall these names up eh?
- J.S. Yeah that's a long time ago ~~eh~~ yeah.
- D.M. We had another fighter on the show, and I guess you know him ~~pretty~~ well. Henry Dunn eh?
- J.S. Henry Dunn yeah.
- D.M. I was talking to him some time back.
- J.S. Henry Dunn yeah.
- D.M. Well now, you wouldn't make a fortune with these fights. You'd pick up what, a hundred busks.
- J.s. About a hundred bucks, or sometimes a little more.
- D.M. And so you also, you got some ^{other} jobs on the side eh?
- J.S. Yeah, that's right, that's right.
- D.M. Even through the ~~depression~~ eh?

- J.S. Even during the depression yeah.
- D.M. Do you think maybe your fighting helped you to get some of these other jobs?
- j.s. I think so.
- D.M. They must have eh?
- J.S. Oh I think so yeah. Well I mean, through my fighting I moved around the country....
- D.M. Right.
- J.S.you know....
- D.M. Got to know people.
- J.S.I went up to Peace River. () Peace River country, all them towns along the line....
- D.M. mmhh.
- J.S.and then I went down to () St. Paul Miniapolis,. Did I mix it up there?
- D.M. No, I don't think you did.
- J.S. No. Well I went down there. I came back from Peace River, stayed around my home ~~One~~ town and done some boxing, ~~in~~ and I went down to St. Paul, Miniapolis.
- D.M. Some good fighters came out of St. Paul, Miniapolis.
- J.S. Oh yeah. Tommy Gibbins....
- D.M. Alright.
- J.S.there is, talking about sharkies, there was another Jack Sharky who was a light-weight. He was a real good fighter.
- D.M. People may not remember him. They'll think of Jack Sharky the heavy-weight () light-weight sharky eh?
- J.S. And there was Art Laski, Big Boy Peterson, course this was ~~along~~ a long time.
- D.M. These are a long time but these are for old-timers, but the show here, is an old-time show.
- S.S. That's right.

- D.M. So, who were some of the big names. Tell us about Jimmy McLelland. I guess you've never fought him, but you've seen him.
- J.S. I've seen him yeah. I've seen Jimmy. He was big. He was in the welterweight. Billy Petroli, he () he, I sparred with him. He was a good fighter.
- D.M. mmhh.
- J.S. And of course Jimmy, er Jackie Phillips.
- D.M. Well now, when you get into with Billy Petroli and spar with him, it would be understood that you'd make it a little bit easy in a sparring match like that?
- J.S. Well, they say that if they have you in trouble, they don't take advantage of it.
- D.M. Oh that's what they do.
- J.S. They won't tag you eh.
- D.M. They'll tag you but then....
- J.S. () charge and if he's a reasonable guy, I know I never did.
- D.M. Yeah.
- J.S. If I hurt a guy, back when I was sparring I wouldn't take advantage of it, and most of the guys won't.
- D.M. Yeah that makes sense.
- J.S. That makes sense yeah. I know mean I know....
- D.M. Now Billy Petroli was a pretty good fighter.
- J.S. He was a good fighter. He fought Jimmy McLelland three times.
- D.M. Right.
- J.S. He won the first, well he lost the rubber. The fubber mathh.
- D.M. You, you never got to break to get up into that class. Too bad.
- J.S. Why, it is too bad. I think I would've made it because seeing that I worked out with him, like Tommy Bland, he was another, he won the title after I left, but him and I were bouting in the same class. That was in ~~Toronto~~
Toronto.

- D.M. Sometimes you get ~~you~~ a break, sometimes you don't eh? Well that's, well now, now that we've got, hopefully we've got some boxing fans tuned in here, now let's go back to that era. We're talking about '29. Now this is, ~~this~~ is just after Tommy beat () I guess isn't it?
- J.B. mmhh. I remember that.
- D.M. Who were some of the big names around that time? '29, '30, '31.
- J.B. Well it would have to be Maxi Beere, Jimmy Braddock, Art Laski, from St. Paul Miniapolis...
- D.M. Mac Smelling about that time?
- J.B. ...Mac Smelling yeah. Mac Smealing.
- D.M. ~~Emo~~ ^{Primo} Cryner.
- J.S. Primo Crynero, YEAH.
- D.M. Big Primo, he never really, could he really fight, or was he just a box office attraction?
- J.S. No, no. I think that's what he was. In the first place, he couldn't hit very hard, so how he ^{even} got the title I don't know.
- D.M. It was Max, Maxi Bear who cut him up pretty bad eh?
- J.S. Oh he did yeah. I don't know how many times he knocked him down. Was it seven, eight rounds, seven, eight times in the first round.
- D.M. Right.
- J.S. Oh he really, he really....
- D.M. ^Y Bear, thinking back as I recall it, would be a near view of a pretty brutal fighter eh?
- J.S. He was yeah. He was. He was a heavy hitter and if Bear knew he could, he wasn't afraid of anybody....
- D.M. Yeah.
- J.S.he could really fight.
- D.M. ha ha ha.
- J.S. Bear he beat Maxi, or Smealing and well he gave ERnie Schaaf-~~ca~~ an awful beating.

- D.M. Yes he did.
- J.S. An awful beating, and of course I forget some of the fights here.
- D.M. But finally when Bear lost it, who finally beat Bear? Lewis wasn't it?
- J.S. Yeah, but it was Jimmy Bradlock that took the title from....
- D.M. ~~Maxi~~ From Bear.
- J.S.Maxi Bear yeah.
- D.M. Do you think Bear was in shape when he fought Bradlock or did he....
- J.S. I don't think Bear was ever in ^{good} shape, really good shape.
- D.M. ha ha ha.
- J.S. He's really a playboy.
- D.M. Yes.
- J.S. Oh I don't know, I think he was scared of Joe Lewis.
- D.M. () he didn't want to be, fight Lewis.
- J.S. Lewis said, the hardest blow he ever took was from Bear.
- D.M. I think ~~when~~ Bear, when he....
- §J.S. Yeah, he did, I, he did hit him once. I think it was four rounds or something, he knocked him out. I think Bear did get in one blow and according to Lewis, that was the hardest....
- D.M. Hardest one he'd got eh?
- J.S.one he ever got yeah.
- D.M. Well Jack, you're a man who has mingled with some fighters. Some world-known fighters. In your view, who'd the number one heavy-weight of them all?
- §J.S. Jack Dempsey.
- D.M. Now why do you say that?
- J.S. Well he was a () fighter. I mean he wasn't a slugger. He was a () fighter. He could knock you out with either punch. He was a hard man

to hit and I mean he was on top of you all of the time.

D.M. You were telling me, that you didn't think that our friend Mahamad Ali would be using the rope or dope against Dempsey.

J.S. No, I don't think he would, no.

D.M. ha ha ha. Dempsey moved in there eh?

J.S. He would've really liked that.

D.M. ~~That wouldn't~~ would've been something eh? Dempsey at his peak. against Ali.

J.S. Oh yeah.

D.M. Mind you, Ali's pretty smart.

J.S. Why....

D.M. Ali, if he can out box you eh.....

J.S. Oh I don't ~~take~~ want to take anything away from Ali. He's, well he's the best we've got around here now.

D.M. No question about that.

J.S. Yeah, there's no question about that.

D.M. Well how about ()?

J.S. Well I would, ~~put~~ I'd have to put him second because Tommy, he was an awful terrible fighter, smart boxer. Very seldom, Tommy, I always called him Tommy....

D.M. Yeah.

J.S.very seldom he had a man in his corner, and he knew what he had to do.

D.M. He knew what he had to do and did his own thinking eh?

J.S. Yeah. I mean if he could go out and fight a man in his own style you know. If the man had an odd style, he was smart enough to know ().

D.M. Well Jack, when was, when and where was your last fight?

J.S. Well I think it's around '38, and that would be in Bengulf. That's....

D.M. Bengulf is in Saskatchewan.

J.S.is in Saskatchewan, yeah, about three hundred miles I think from where I lived.

D.M. (And who was that against?).

J.S. ().

D.M. And who was Ames? Was he a local boy out there?

J.S. He was out there yeah. A local boy yeah.

D.M. How did you do? Did you win or lose that won?

J.S. Well I fought him twice. In fact, I won the both fights. But of course the last fight, he clipped me, and I went down for the count of two....

D.M. Yeah.

J.S.and I guess maybe I'd like to win that fight, I did win eight rounds out of ten, but I don't remember give him any many of the rounds.

D.M. o.K., well now, is that, you said was around about '38, or '39 or something eh?

J.S. Around that yeah.

D.M. And then, you did, what did you do then for the next two or three years? Were you working for the west then?

J.S. No, I was working in my own town. I was trucking, travelling truck. That's like hauling grain into the elevators and hauling coal from the coal mines to the people in town.

D.M. But you packed that in and you came down to Sudbury. What brought that on?

J.S. Well I had three brother-in-laws at the time, and they were all working in the pits at the Frood open pit, so that's what brought me down.

D.M. Well it's a good reason as any.

J.S. They were doing pretty good.

D.M. Lots of sisters. That's what gets you lots of brother-in-law eh?

J.S. Yeah.

D.M. And I guess you'd never regret it you ~~me~~ moved down here?

a little travel, even before that. Where are some of the places you've travelled. Tell us something about it eh? Have you been east, west, or where?

J.S. Yeah, I've been out west that is () Origin. That's south of Vancouver, and I was up at Dawson Creek. That's at B.C.

D.M. What got you up there? You just wanted to see the city?

J.S. Yeah, well I have a sister-in-law up there.

D.M. ha ha ha.

J.S. That's where mile zero starts. Going to Alaska.

D.M. Oh indeed that's right.

J.S. And I was up north part of Saskatchewan and I was down to Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Eabot Trails, and I just come back from Niagra Falls.

D.M. Well that, what about other things, Jack. Do you do any gardening or anything like that....

J.S. ~~Yes.~~ No.

D.M.or any other hobbies like that?

J.S. No.

D.M. I guess you like to watch the old fight movies eh?

J.S. I do, I do, yeah. I do.

D.M. They ~~don't~~ don't show, there was a time, a period when they showed a lot of them. You don't see them as often now.

J.S. Not as often no.

D.M. The, and speaking of fights there's one thing I've, we forget to bring up, and it's a name that's well-known around here, Cliff Becket.

J.S. Cliff Becket, yeah.

D.M. Cliff Becket was a pretty good fighter right?

J.S. He was a good fighter yeah.

D.M. Who did he fight?

J.S. Well he fought all the local boys around here and he

fought Sugar Ray twice, and he fought Bull Dog Harris and I think he even fought Jack Tibault. Now a lot of people know Jack Tibault here.

D.M. Oh do they? Now Jack Tibault is another western is he not?

J.S. Another western yeah.

D.M. But he's a heavy-weight.

J.S. He's a heavy-~~with~~ weight. In fact, it's Tibault and Beckett they come from the same town.

D.M. Where's that?

J.S. That's ()).

D.M. Oh I see.

J.S. That's in Saskatchewan. That's north of Regina.

D.M. Oh I see. Well ~~this~~ is getting to, is going to be a real western show Jack. Now you haven't thought of starting a boxing club or getting involved in boxing around Sudbury or anything like that eh?

J.S. Ah, no, no I didn't. I did, while I was here, () he got me to, the boy scout's, yeah, the boy scouts here, they got me to train the boy scouts for awhile, so I done that. Here ~~for-awhile~~ in Sudbury at the Holy Trinity Church.

D.M. Ah ha. Another thing to have fun, heading back to the old days, but you figured you've had just about enough of that now eh?

J.S. Yeah. Of course I did mention, I did have a boxing school in my home town though, before I came down here, and I used to put on local fights.

D.M. Now Jack, you fought alot. You fought not because you had to but because you kind of liked it.

J.S. Yeah that's right, that's right.

D.M. What do the fighters think about out there in the ring when he's up against somebody that's pretty good. Is, he's not afraid of getting hurt eh? Is he keyed up? Is he kind of having fun depending on whether he's winning or losing, or tell us something about it?

J.S. Well it never bothered me. Some ~~boxer~~ fighters are nervous. I know when I was in Toronto, in the dressing

room some fighters just paced up and down, up and down, they are nervous, but it never bothered me, and I never got mad when I fought. I mean, maybe it's because I liked it, I don't know.

D.M. Well you get out there though and you're not afraid that this guy's going to belt me one, and it's going to hurt.

J.S. No.

D.M. You never had that fear eh?

J.S. I never had that feeling no.

D.M. Well, it's interesting to talk to somebody who'd beally been in there and as you say you never got mad, you never tthought that much about getting hurt but you....

J.S. I never even got mad at Amis when he knocked me down.

D.M. Alright. Well ladies and gentlemen our guest today, a most interesting guest, Mr. Jack Schaaaf who retired in July, in July the thirtieth, 1974, after thirty-two years with Inco. Thank you Jack very much for coming and being our guest on Memories and Music.

J.S. You're welcome.