



Musicians of the Midnight Sun

Thank you for visiting the Musicians of the Midnight Sun website. Even though these blogs are being posted many weeks after the launch of the Musicians of the Midnight Sun website, my hope is that they will remain as a document along with the website itself with the intention to give a little bit more of a personal story of my relationships with these featured artists.

Wilf Schidlowsky: (1930 – 2016)

I missed out getting to know or play music with or to be taught by him, academically or musically. Wilf taught at the Catholic school and I attended the public school. Some of the other musicians I played with who did get a hit of Wilf in their youth were at least 2 years older than I. I really didn't get to meet Wilf until I took the family bicycles out for their annual tune up to the K&W bicycle shop on Kam Lake road, a bicycle service shop he started after he had retired from teaching and playing music.

I knew he had been very active in the earlier years of the live music scene in Yellowknife, again from the musicians I played with. They all had their favorite Wilf stories and most of the time, were playing a guitar or through an amplifier that they had bought from him. It was not until I talked with Alex Czarnecki and shortly after, got to interview Wilf at his bike shop that I would learn how active and instrumental he was on the local scene in the 1960s and 1970s.



Wilf Schidlowsky with 'Two Hands and Forever' community theatre production. Yellowknife, 1978 (photo from 'Two Hands and Forever' LP insert)

When we finally got around to do an interview, I learned that he was from the same area of Saskatchewan where I was born and spent the first 3 years of my life. He gave me a musician's perspective of life in the 1950s before he moved his family to Yellowknife. I really enjoy hearing these stories from the musicians of that time that come from some off the beat town besides Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver. Wilf and upcoming MMS musician Elsie Justus (Berger) both paint beautiful pictures of the rural, grassroots music scenes from that time. All that even before his stories of playing music in Yellowknife in the 1960s and 1970s.

Wilf was a no bullshit, pragmatic, common sense, straight up, no filters kind of guy. The kind they can only make in Saskatchewan. He reminded me so much of my own father in that way, both young men who grew up in the midst of the depression and post Second World War rural Canada. I think he was among many others with that same shared experience, who had bet the house, literally and figuratively, when they moved their families to the north. The young men of Yellowknife benefitted from those no bullshit, pragmatic, common sense, straight up, no filters men like Wilf who would look out for and look at the strengths and talents of their young charges, guiding them towards a vocation or career path where they would do well.

I guess the one last word I would use to describe Wilf is "Humble". You can hear it in the way he talks about himself in the interview. Another testament to that is the fact that I have had little success in finding photographs or any articles on Wilf and his years of playing music here. In the photographs of the band's "Alleycats" and "Easy Street" supplied by Aex Czarnecki, Wilf is either out of the frame or standing immediately behind another band member, almost as if he were doing it on purpose.



Wilf Schidlowsky