

## Stefan Sykut biography

In the 1952-53 Primary 3B photo, I am on the left end of the second row from the front. Note the great hair style and my old friend Ivor Renwick sitting right next to me, with Mrs Wardrop standing proudly behind. (*the editor is third boy from the left in the back row*)

My last name was a bit of a curse. My father was a Polish soldier and my mother was in the land army during the war and met him and fell for this handsome Polish gentleman. It is a short name that nearly everyone has trouble trying to say when they read it the first time.

I was told that he was well liked by his men and that he was a wonderful fellow. My mother was a Wallace and her family did not approve of their marriage. I never lived in the same house with him till I came to Canada in 1959. That visit did not go well, and I returned and finished my schooling in Scotland. My parents remained in Canada and I lived back in my grandfather's home at Greenend Garage. Two of my cousins still live in the same house.

When I finished school, I had not heard from my parents so I started out as an articled clerk with a CA firm on Castle Street. During my last years of school, I worked around the family business which was the garages at Palmerston Lane, the Pleasance and Greenend. This gave me enough cash to feel independent.

One year into that stint I eventually got a letter from my parents asking me to return to Canada and attend the University of British Columbia which I did.

Back to my father and the name. He had been wounded during the war and it wasn't until 1956 that he was able to have the last piece of shrapnel removed as it had then moved to an operable position in his brain.

His family was from Ciechanow in the south of Poland and he was the strongest and angriest person I have ever known – (to say the least). We were like oil and water and that unfortunately never changed. Fortunately, my grandfather and my uncles were outstanding mentors and they were my family strength growing up.

Probably a wee bit more than you bargained for but that is the story of my name. Funnily enough I learned to like it and my three daughters have all kept it when they got married.

As you may remember I left school for Canada in 1959 to go and live with my parents in Vancouver. They had been separated all my life up till then so this was a dramatic change. Also going into a co-educational school was quite a shock to me.

The experiment living with my father did not go well and I returned to Scotland and the Royal High. I lived with my grandfather then and finished school. I then became an indentured clerk in the Chartered Accounting profession. Not long after starting my mother contacted me and said I should come back to Vancouver and in 1964, August 8<sup>th</sup>, (a date I will never forget), I left Scotland bound for Vancouver. I then enrolled in the University of British Columbia and put in three laborious years on a BCOM program. I was granted entry at the second-year level when I started. During these years I worked in the summers in a pulp mill on the west side of Vancouver Island, miles from anywhere and a pretty large polluter. The money was good but it was a tough place with all sorts of wild folk working there. I learned quickly and I did have a lot of fun.

I did not graduate and found a job in the north of the Province with an Acceptance company. I made loans on logging equipment and all sorts of financials stuff, and also drove all over the far north collecting money and even repossessing stuff that people had not paid for.

I got married to my present wife in 1969 and we have three daughters and nine grandchildren.

From the north we transferred several times and I joined The Bank of Montreal. even becoming a manager. This took the family to our present home of Cranbrook BC. We arrived in 1975 and are still there.

In 1978 I left the bank and went into Real Estate. I did that for twenty years, some very good and others so so. I ran a Century 21 franchise for a year or so but then went back to working on my own.

In 1997 I was getting bored with the whole thing and answered an ad for Canadian Customs as a Border Guard. Shock of shock they hired me. I was the oldest person hired at 52 and off I went to Montreal for three months training. Suffice to say I passed the training and put in an exciting thirteen years at the Port of Kingsgate which is at the end of the Idaho panhandle; so many strange and wonderful stories and no two days the same. My kind of work. It kept me super fit and able to joust with the young lads in their twenties during our use of force training. My wife and I retired the same year and since then we have down-sized our homes twice and most of the time we are travelling either in our RV or pet-sitting round the World.

We are both so fortunate to be healthy and have no medications and we have energy to burn.

We winter in Yuma Arizona, and have just purchased another park model home there. This will be the fourth one we have bought and made our own. We sold our last one right after Trump was elected and the moment he was turfed out, we started looking for another and here I sit in Yuma writing to you today.

My life has been awesome with like everyone some ups and downs but I would re-visit it all anytime.

Thanks for asking. I have very little contact with anyone from my schooldays and it feels good to know I have a shared past with people from back then.

The price of Immigration.....childhood friends and the shared memories we could talk about. Hope this does not bore you and finds you well and in good spirits.

## Photos

You are welcome to publish my wee story. I have searched the old photo bin but have come up short of school photos. I have a few, some in our back garden when I was younger and some on our many caravan trips to the north of Scotland. For fun I enclose a few from our current travels. That is Ronnie Walton in the picture of me and the two girls.

There are several photos of the camper van, because it was such a part of my growing up, enabling us to see virtually all of Scotland. You will note it goes from a small homemade trailer in 1927 to a 34 foot fully self-contained motorhome by the mid-thirties, and was updated annually right up to the late sixties. It was all hand built by my grandfather and he maintained it up until his eighties. When I was young, we travelled all over Scotland and attended the Aboyne and Braemar Highland games annually.

It was one of a kind and I was so fortunate to have been able to experience it. It was painted every year and when I was fourteen it became my job to hand sand it pre the new paint job. Now that was hard work.

[Click here](#) for more photos of the caravan and its travels.



*RHS Prep school form 3B 1952-53  
Miss Wardrop in attendance*



*Stefan and his cousin camping in  
their back garden*



*Stefan and his cousin on the  
camper van*



*The splendid original camper van (reg.  
no. S 6616) leaving the Skye ferry*



*Ronnie Walton and Stefan with two  
un-named young ladies*



*Stefan at Horseshoe Bend, Paige,  
Arizona*



*Stefan in Yuma, Arizona*