

1967 TAPE FROM JOHN SPENCER TO SIDNEY COX

Editorial Note: This tape was recorded in 1967 by John Spencer. John was married to Lilly Smith Spencer, a 2nd cousin to Sidney's sister, Louise, and the three of them were good friends.

John & Lilly Spencer's address was 7 Ardington Road, Northampton, England. This address coincidentally is only a few blocks from the known addresses at which Sidney Cox lived with his family in his youth. John is 67 at the time and Lilly is 72.

Sidney's sister, Louise lived just north of Northampton in the village of Naseby, in a residence known as Rose Cottage. Louise married a man from Naseby early in her life (John Halford) resulting in her residing there.

John & Lilly appear from these tapes to have been life-long Salvationists. They were long-time residents of Coventry, England and attended the Foleshill Corps there, the corps in which Lilly had been dedicated as a child. In 1955, 12 years before this recording, they moved to Northampton, reason unknown. They share many insights into their lives as Salvation Army soldiers/adherents. Their being Salvationists is a bit of a coincidence, as the Cox family in Sidney's youth was not known to be Salvationist, but rather parishioners in the Church of England.

The origin of the relationship between Sidney and John Spencer has an interesting background which Sidney later told in 1969 to a group of Salvation Army officers when describing his new found fascination with a "tape ministry":

Let me tell you a story. And you'll hardly believe this. It'll only take a moment or two. But the folks in Australia, two or three years ago, maybe longer than that now, they wrote to me and they said, we want you send us a little three inch tape, because that's the kind you have to use when you're sending overseas. And you can't use these cassette things because people overseas haven't got the machines for them. They will have after a while, but now they don't. But they said we want you to send us a three inch tape, and on one side put your testimony. Tell us how the Lord saved you. Tell us the story of your conversion. And then on the other side put the story of two of your songs. Well, I did that. And I sent it to Australia.

And after some of those folks had heard it on that side, they started moving around the world. And it eventually landed up in Seattle, Washington. And there, a friend of mine who is also interested in tapes, Major Lloyd, got hold of this, and I'd been at his corps two or three months before, so that he recognized the voice and all the rest of it. And after he'd used it in his corps he sent it to a corps officer in England, with whom he was in touch. And this corps officer in England used it in his meetings. He said, "Now, we're going to sing so-and-so, and naming the song. But before we do, I want you to hear the voice of the man who wrote it.

Here's the story back of the song, and it's being told to us by the man who wrote the song." Well, you can imagine what that did with that song, can't you?

And a strange thing about it was, that seated in that audience was a distant relative of ours - a man who I've only seen once, and then only for a moment or two. But he was sitting, strange to say, in that audience. And when he heard this, he went to the man who had the tape and said "I want you to let me have this tape because the man whose been talking to us is a distant relative of mine and he has a sister who is 91 years old, and nearly blind, living in a little English village, and I keep in touch with her. And I want to take this tape so that this woman in the little English village can hear the sound of her brother's testimony. And that's exactly what he did. And he took that tape that was started around the world and it eventually landed up in a little home, in a little English village. And my sister, 91, she's 93 now, and nearly blind, heard the sound of my testimony. And it went around the world like that.

The man to whom Sidney refers in the above story is undoubtedly John Spencer. From Sidney's references to the age of his sister, we can date the origin of the above story to about 1967. Thus, the below audio obviously grew out of the friendship that was spawned by this coincidental circumstance. Sidney also refers above to the fact that he had only seen this man once, and then only for a moment or two. That meeting would have most certainly occurred in the summer of 1960 when Sidney and Violet made their only trip to England and indeed visited Sidney's home town of Northampton.

The below audio was recorded in 1967, again determined by Spencer's reference to the fact that Louise was "soon to be 90" – she was born in 1878. Louise died in late 1969.

In this and the other similar tapes from John Spencer one can gain an interesting insight into the life of the Cox family, the life of Salvationists at that time, their abiding faith in God, insights into Northampton and into the matters which were important to them. While Spencer is a bit of an eccentric, I found his commentary to be interesting and amusing.

J. Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney and Violet Cox. January 2009.

Side 1

Hello cousin Sid. This is John of Northampton, and I'm speaking from the home of your sister, Louie, Rose Cottage, Naseby. Ah, we've a bit of snow outside. Cold, but nice and comfortable inside, and Louie is sitting in her chair by the fire. Now you can picture her there, can't you? And she has listened to your little message to us. We wanted to share the blessing. We were thrilled at home, and so have come out today to let her listen to it and she has enjoyed your message. Some of it was for her I felt and so, we brought it to her. She's thrilled to hear your voice. Oh, it's great. We enjoy it every time.

Before I go any farther, I want to say thank you for all your messages, your letters, your music. We feel very proud and privileged that you've passed these on to us.

Now I don't want the tape to run on too far. I'm going to ask your sister if she'll just have a word with you. So hold on a moment won't you. I know you will. OK, off we go...

Louie: Hello Sid. I've been oh so pleased to hear what you've said. We were always friends, weren't we? I was delighted when you were born you know. A baby brother! And I loved you all the time. We didn't like you going away, but we full know that it's been for the best. I'm so glad you were able to go about, and preach and do things.

I had a letter from you yesterday. You say you still don't understand the relationship between you and John. Well, you remember Aunt Hannah don't you, Dad's sister? John's wife (Lilly) is her granddaughter. So John himself is not cousin in a way, he's a cousin by marriage - a second cousin. And we like him very much.

But, I'm not very good at talking to people who are not here. Of course, I always pray for you, and I say "God bless you" always, and dear John and Philip, and all your children and grandchildren.

God bless you all.

There we are. That was your sister talking to you. Wonderful, isn't it. Now if she thinks of anything else just before we go, we'll still keep the machine here for her to say something to you.

Of course, the first time, it is awfully difficult to know what to say, but I've nearly got to the stage where I never have enough tape to say what I want to say. Anyway, I suppose that is the joy in the heart and the sheer thrill of it, that makes one lose the thoughts of what one wants to say. But, I'm going to just switch off for the moment while perhaps your sister thinks some more of what she'd like to say to you. So for the moment, bye bye. This will be a bit of rather broken tape in that sense but I want it for her.

Louie: When I spoke before, I forgot to tell you anything about meself. And you're always interested. Well, I feel fairly well for an old one. I shall soon be 90, you know. I'm very comfortable, and have everything I need. And Mary¹ and Andrew are very good to me - better than I deserve sometimes because I get irritable. But, on the whole I'm really happy and contented. And you needn't worry anything about me. I can see fairly well to read with my reading glasses, and read large printed books. And, I manage very well. But of course it's not perfect, the sight isn't. You can't expect it to be.

¹ This is a reference to Mary Hathaway, a lady who for years had been a caregiver to Louise. She lived in Rose Cottage with Louise. Upon Louise's death, and in light of the fact that she had no heirs in the area, she bequeathed Rose Cottage to Mary Hathaway. I believe that "Andrew" was Mary Hathaway's son.

I don't think there's anything else. Good bye dear. God bless you.

John: Well now, here I am, back in Northampton, after a little trip out to Naseby. (Louie lived in Naseby) It was snowing when I came back but it cleared when I got here. Well now I enjoyed this morning's little outing. In fact I think I got the bigger, better thrill than Louie although she was thrilled to death to hear you speak

There was a little kind of a hitch in her voice as you would notice because she was full, it wasn't full of any regret, she was full of joy and the thrill.

By the way, she (Louie) was telling me a little of her ancient history as it were. She said to me, "You know, I know more about the Army in England than Sid does. Mother used to send us off to the Army in the old jail when we were children in a sense because we could run up and down the aisle, and we could be a bit more noisy than in chapel. We used to go," and she went on telling me, "We used to buy the little folded _____, and I used to sing the songs and even stand up give my experience." Well you know that was a thrill to me to hear that. That was her testimony that she gave about the days of long ago. And Lilly just said to me "Well, I didn't know that." Well, we live and learn don't we? Wonderful.²

Now, as far as the tape is concerned, I shall go on just having a chat about the little things, and then on the other side, we'll perhaps try and get a little duet over. Lilly doesn't sing really now, she was only piping in in the background. Years ago, just after we were married, we were always singing duets, always, either duet or quartets, etc, mixed quartets, enjoying ourselves in the work of the Lord.

Now, as I said earlier on, we were really thrilled to hear you speaking, and also your, in a sense, testimony, cause our testimonies are of our love for the Lord aren't they, and we enjoyed the explanation of that song, "His Very Own." I think it's a wonderful chorus. We don't know the verses. I'll be quite honest about this. The first time I heard it was when I had that tape and you'll remember you and Mrs. Cox were singing that in the meeting. That's where I picked it up. I then I looked at this Christmas card, I've got about 10 or 15 probably, or I better say we have, they really belong to Lilly, but they're ours you know, and I saw that there was the song, so I sat with my little tape recorder singing over and over again until I got it all pat. I hope I have anyway. Then, I've written it out on a big sheet of paper and that's how I'm going to use it. I'll have the words in the front, and they're not very hard to remember. Of course, you've given me the added material, if I might use that word, of how the chorus was formed, the thought that came from it.

² This is a wonderful little story. As I have previously mentioned, when Sidney and Louie were young children, their family were parishioners of The Church of England. Louie attended The Church of England for her entire life. However, here we find that their mother would occasionally take them as young children to services conducted by The Salvation Army in the old jail because the children would be less disruptive in that setting.

By the way, I'm not correcting you, you said Phillipians. It is in Ephesians, as you said afterwards when you were talking about the officer. Just one of those little slips of the tongue sometime when we're speaking ad lib, but nevertheless I've looked it up and found where your references are, and I see clearly it's carefully scriptural.

Now I hope you enjoyed the little talk of your sister, more than a talk, a conversation heart to heart, with her heart throbbing with delight at the thrill of being able to speak. The mystery of it all, she can't quite understand exactly. But as I said to her "It's marvelous, your voice is going now will be heard in America just as you've spoken it. And he will imagine you sitting there in your chair talking to him." That's the beauty of tape recording.

(The tape speeds up here and becomes almost inaudible)

Now. I've only been a member of tape fellowship about 12 months, just over, hardly 12 months yet. I bought a tape a year last Christmas just for amusement and then when your first tape as I had from this comrade in Cambridge or Lexworth gave me a more serious thought.

When a comrade, Mrs. Braddock(sp?) sent me one through the post, she said she saw my name on the roster and saw that I was trying to help small corps, she sent me a message of cheer and we have built up a real connection of encouraging one another. From that, someone else sent me another one, a comrade in Lincolnnamed Gordon Hammond. Now on to the other side.

Side 2

This is the afternoon toward the evening of Tuesday February 6, the afternoon of the morning I visited Louie.

I thought perhaps I'd just say a little about ourselves, and we know who's who and what's what. I think Louie explained where the relationship came in. It's distant, we know. But we have a firm relationship in the knowledge don't we that we're joint heirs with Christ. But just to say who we are. You met us. You were right in saying, actually it was at the Central [Corps], the Central is in the central of town you see, and we came and saw you after one of the meetings.³

But, I am an old, a now retired local. I'm 67 years of age, and Lilly is 72, a little older than I am. In 1961 Lilly had a very serious operation. We had fairly good health until then. While we appreciate God in this sense, Lilly is a miracle. After her operation, back passage, cancer, etc and they put her colostomy in the side, I think you'll understand what they are. They fetched me into the room and said "Sorry Mr. Spencer, but Mrs. Spencer will not last another 6 to 9 months." Well now, she's gone 6 years over. Her doctor all he said when I questioned him about the whole thing, is that it was a miracle. Well, we know of course we know it was a miracle and prayer. And up to a couple of years ago I

³ This reference would be to their initial meeting in 1960 in Northampton when Sidney and Violet made the only return trip to England that they made during their lifetime.

suppose I was as healthy as any young man could be. I'd had the usual illness one takes their notice of, etc.

But, all last summer, I was helping out at the corps where they had no officers. The divisional commander sent me an appointment, would I go, and I was quite willing to do something, because in the Corps where I am, I don't do a lot now. I'm a new retired local, and the youngsters do most of it there. I say, youngsters 40 to 50 years of age, etc. I go to the open air when I can. Then, in October the doctor just gave me a _____. Apparently, I strained my heart because the arteries are tightening up in me chest, and it's put a strain on my heart, so I have to go halfspeed. So for the winter, I'm really recharging my batteries, as it were, hoping that with the better weather, as did happen last year as well in the summer, I was much better and that I can go out and do these corps, the work at the corps.

Well, we just say that we're in the Lord's hands, and we're leaving that to him. So we do understand something of, at least I've had to fight this battle, as to why, when I was so willing – I'd looked forward to retirement you see and then I'd be able to do so much. But I was so willing, there came a stop. Ours is not to reason why. Ours is but to do or die. But, through tape fellowship, I've found a wonderful opening. I send off little talks, or songs, or messages of cheer to other people, to comrades who I'm trying to build up my missionary tape service. You've perhaps have heard, or perhaps not of Gordon Herman in England who sits at his little tape recorder about 7 hours a day, just building up tapes for missionary officers. These are supplied free by different companies, people giving the money to buy tapes, or corps do, and he makes them into meetings, and so some of us try and supply some of the little items that would help in this way and we're getting a real blessing. The old saying, it is more blessed to give than to receive, really stands on its real feet when it comes to the question of doing something for the Lord. Never did apply to cash, although we always used it in the idea of self-denial. When I say "never did", I mean the original meaning was much more deeper than that, which we approved.

So, you see we have a lot to thank God for in his goodness. How long we live? Well, that's in his hands. You know, I'm a funny chap in this way. At the memorial service, if they ever have one for me, I want it to be happy. You see, it means that I've at last achieved and gained my reward and I shall welcome to sing sweeping through the gates of the new Jerusalem, washed in the blood of the lamb. Oh, it's a wonderful thrill I think to _____. As Apostle Paul tells us about being conquerors and achieving or running a race, and we press forward now to the mark, well when we've got that mark and should be rejoicing. Yes I know that is the feeling of the flesh to those that are left behind, but there is that compensatory balance of a soldier hearing his Lord's "Well done." I know everybody doesn't quite agree with me on this, but that is it.

Now, I'm going to leave off for a minute because I'm going to try a little later on to see if Lilly will just sing with me. As I said, we don't do much now but there might be a little change and it might bring her out and I want to leave space for her to talk. So, just hold on a minute. I know this is a broken tape, but you'll understand, won't you.

Lillie:

Hello cousin Sid. This is Lilly having a few words with you. I'm very pleased to have this privilege, as I have often wanted it years ago, when we used to sing your songs in the Songsters, I used to long for the time that I should be able to see you. But I did have that privilege, but not very long did we, when we was at Northampton. But still, perhaps we may be able to see one another again soon. We hope so anyhow.

And I must say that we have been in Northampton for about 12 years now. We were in Coventry for about 40 years, 44 years perhaps. And we went to a corps at Foleshill. And I was in the Songsters for about 40 years, and I was _____ treasurer for about 35 years. So you can see I've had a busy life, but still I've enjoyed every minute. And that now we're having to take things easy, we can only think about the times as we did have and enjoyed, and that is a delight, isn't it? John was the young people's sergeant-major while I was the treasurer. And I've got my retirement certificate. So, I have something to be proud of.

I don't know whether you'll remember my Dad, he used to play in the band in Northampton. And his name was Smith. I don't know whether you'd remember. Because my name was Smith before I was married. My mother was your cousin. So I am second cousin. That's where my relation is. But still, that doesn't matter does it?

We were so pleased to hear from you. We've talked about you many times, and we've enjoyed singing your songs because they were so lovely and so enjoyable to sing. And we've talked about it many times. And I do hope that while your doing you little bits now as your able to do, I hope that you'll have a good time and see many souls for your labor, for that is our aim, isn't it? And I do pray that you may still have the strength to carry on with the good work.

Hello, this is John coming back. I just wanted to say that we did remember Tom Flint. We had him at our meetings some many years ago before he died, and we've got one of his old songs that we sing so much, "Free, Free, Free." "There's a word, a wondrous word. Free, Free, Free." I don't know if you ever remember hearing him sing that.

But look, I see this tape going along faster than we can catch up with it as it were, and so I persuaded Lilly to sing a verse with me. We haven't sang together for years, so it's a real trial. I hope it won't be too much of a trial for you. A friend of mine who sends a tape to us, any music, he always finishes on the end with the wonderful tune of Hindon. I suppose you know it well. And this is we're going to try and sing.

Take my life and let it be,
 Consecrated Lord to thee,
 Take my moments and my days,
 Let them flow in ceaseless praise,

Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Another verse...we trust this would have blessed you. Now, we want to assure you we shall pray for you and, and we know that you'll be praying for us. We want to wish you well in your campaign for God, and souls shall be saved, as Lilly said.

Well, here we are. We say good night and God bless you.