

1970 TAPE FROM JOHN SPENCER TO SIDNEY COX

Editorial Note: See background regarding this tape in the Editorial Note to the 1967 tape from John Spencer to Sidney Cox.

John Spencer's personal audio letter to Sidney is contained on Side 1 of the reel-to-reel tape. Side 2 is the Sidney Cox Musical Program of the Northampton Central Corps. The quality is excellent.

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

Well hello cousin Sidney, this is England calling, especially from Northampton from Lilly & John. This is a 2-track tape playing at 3 ¾ speed. I'll explain more. This also is what we call a 3-play part tape affording 600 feet, which gives you quite a good amount of tape for the size of the spool. Actually, I believe it is an American tape. I was just trying to look upon the box. I thought somewhere I saw it was USA. Oh yes, in small print I see on the box- the Ampex Corporation, Redwood City, California, USA. I thought it came from your direction.

A friend of mine has recommended this tape to me. We are buying them actually at 5 schillings a piece, which is not dear for 600 ft. As a matter of fact, very kindly, I sent him some tapes he was anxious to get, and he sent me ½ dozen of these as a gift, which was very, very kind of him, and very much appreciated. He's a businessman. I've spoke to him, not a lot, just a little bit, but to me I really appreciated the kind thought behind it.

He is anxious, and this man himself may be taping to you. Although he is a man of good intentions, in the sense that he intends to do these things, but business commitments rather tie him up, and he's inclined to leave til the next day. You know what I mean by that, don't you. Actually, I think he owes me a tape now for over a month. He kept one tape that I asked him to let me have back within a week. He kept it for like 7. But, it doesn't give other people much chance to get to hear a tape if one person keeps it for 7 weeks. But there we are. That's how people are. But he did say, "would I send him your address, that he'd like to contact you direct." But, he just finalized his letter. Oh, of course I've got your address in the roster. His name is Mr. Norman King, and he lives in South Croydon [an area in the south of London]. That's a little by the way.

Anyway, I'm trying these tapes out to see how they react. I have found this, that this tape, played at 1 7/8 speed gives you nearly an hour's play for each track, so on a 4-track machine, this little tape could give you 4 hours of play, which I would consider excellent and also good for storage.

Now I don't know how my recordings are coming out on your side. Of late, I've been very, very disturbed about them. In fact, feeling rather low the other week, I decided I wouldn't do another recording, but I shouldn't do that. It is a blessing to me, and helps

me. It helps me think spiritually. In giving out to others, we get back ourselves, as you very well know. But my 3 machines are being rather erratic. One, the laser is not working. Another one, the drive belt is gone slack. I have a _____, and I think the other one is wearing well on the motor when I get quite a hum and kind of a double _____ if I can explain that in the sense of hum, hum, hum back of the playing, which I don't like.

So, as I'm saying this, Lilly's out for the moment, gone to get her hair done. We're going to my sister's golden wedding on Saturday and so she's gone to get a little tidied up. Of course naturally, with Lilly being ill for so long while, she hasn't been confined to bed, don't get me wrong. She had a growth in the back passage and they closed her there. That was nine years ago and brought it through the side, colostomy, so all motion and anything else has to be cleaned up like a little baby quite a number of times a day sometimes. So, you know the Lord does work in mysterious ways, we say. It came at an age that I was able to leave off work. For the first 2-3 years of course that wasn't possible. But, I blocked off work and was able to be with her, and clean her up. She prides herself, but she lives in fear a lot over this, which is only natural. At that time in 1961, the doctor said she could not possibly live more than 6 months, 9 months at the outside, and that would be really a surprise. Well, 9 years have gone. It does mean of course that she's nine years older, which of course has its effect.

But we have managed very comfortably, but I'm honest about it. I'm not complaining. I hope you won't think that. But we lived for the first 5 or 6 years well beyond our income, and the bank balance has gotten low, and I've got to be very careful now how I spend, as far as buying new machines. I thought if she only had a few months to live, or 1 or 2 years, well what we had we'd share together, and that's how we've gone on.

Now a days, Lilly goes to the meetings on a Sunday evening. A friend fetches her in a car. We have by the way transferred to the Central Corps. One or two reasons for that. The Citadel Corps, we began to be unhappy. We didn't feel it was our spiritual home. And then we had a young officer came in, he'd got his BD, and he's now sitting for another qualification for another 9 months. The poor Corps gets neglected. He preaches rather some stuff that we refused to accept from a professor when I took social science at Glumbercourse(sp?) some many years ago. In fact, I think he's the only officer where I got to go to him and say, "Look, we believe that your appointment is God given, but I don't think God intended you to talk like you're talking." There's no such thing of his worldliness, we all note so allowed adultery in his explanation. You see, he tries to do a Bible class in about a 10-minute Holiness talk. Well, to me it was a lecturer, just walking up and down between the desks of his class room, saying this is one side of it, and there's the other side - think round about it and write a thesis on it, and say what your views. Well I don't think that's possible in a meeting, and so people came away very, very confused. He then formed a Corps Council and put all the blame for things going wrong onto the Corps Council which meant the songster leader left and there has be a real upheaval in the Corps.

So I thought that it was my time. I'm 70, Lilly's 75 come her birthday. I couldn't afford to have my spiritual experience destroyed by quibbles, etc and after very careful studying

and praying about it, and going to the Central Corps for some time to know that I think it would be OK, we have transferred and we are much happier, but it was one more thing.

We have a mic in the Citadel Corps, but no one would use it. One of the reasons of course was it was the wrong type. It was a closed mic instead of the open mic that picks up the sound if people moved to one side. We're getting a little older, we get a little deaf I suppose, or more hard of hearing, and so that meant that we were going to the meeting, going to the table, and there was nothing on the table for us. Well of course there are people in the Army you know and churches, who are a quite prepared to accept that. So long as they've attended a service, well that's all right. But no, I went to the Lord's house for spiritual refreshment. It is of course possible to get this at home in your own private Bible study and your own prayer, but we are commanded to meet together for corporate worship, and it was most annoying to go to a meeting and Lilly would say "I haven't heard a thing."

Now I bought a hearing aid to amplify and set it half as loud again as normal hearing. That meant that it wasn't me that was deaf, if you can understand what I mean. They said, "Well, you're deaf, that's why you never heard". I'm not deaf; I'm just slightly hard of hearing. And I think that hard of hearingness (is that the right word), and is on the top register. My high notes are difficult they tell me by the test. So this little instrument just pulls it up a bit. Well now, even with that, it was most difficult to hear what was being said. And one of the things that I have loved from the early days of the Army is that freedom of expression in prayer. When one comrade prays, they were praying for us, with us and for us, and we were able to "Amen Lord, Amen". Almost you know explosions, I was going to say, of faith, that we used to do, which sad to say are dropping from the SA in England anyway. We're not so evangelical as we should be.

Now, I'm not an old man moaning. I hope you don't think so. In fact, they've educated me when I mentioned about transferring, "Oh, you're against change." Now that is the very thing I'm not against. And my last position was as Corps Cadet Guardian, where I was forever trying to energize the young people into action. And I will say this, that given the right leadership (now this is not blowing my own trumpet), given the right leadership, young people will respond. There is some joy in service. There's greater joy in evangelical service. And so I used to try to take the Corps Cadets out for, with the officer's permission, certain week-ends at nearby Corps, which not only blessed them, not only made them depend upon God, but gave them the insight of working. And, I never came back from one weekend without the young people have said, "When are we going again?" Proof. And, they got rather excited in the meetings. They were shouting "Glory", and I'm afraid some of them afterward got rather set upon by the elder ones.

I think a lot of the danger in England of this... I hope you don't think I'm preaching, I'm just opening my heart to you. The present leaders, the 40s & 50s years of age, who are now your locals in most Corps, and their teenage and 20s, which are the formative years as far as working for God, and having an appetite for spiritual things and also for doing... I think you'll understand what I mean. They were clamped down because of the war years. And this is now 25 years later, is having its reaction. They've no fervor, because

those years when they should have been really getting the fire... Well at least that's how I found it, I was thrust into the open air meeting at 13 years of age, and had just got converted... I went to the week-night open air, and they tapped me, "now John, you tell the people," you know the old idea, you were pushed in at first. Whether it was wise or not, now as far as the separation... but we used to believe that if you opened your mouth, and the Lord will fill it. I think that is all right when you are young. But, when you get older, then you should use your intellect and brains to prepare, and also the power of faith of God to prepare something good, and some meat for the people to understand.

I was saying earlier, I'm not against change. Not by any means. And I still believe things that are not just so, as far as the other people are concerned. I find Northampton people are not keen to make a show of things, "You're being a fool." Well, let's be fools for Christ if we can win souls.

It was rather strange. No, I won't say strange. When some 2-3 years back, the Jehovah's Witnesses are getting very strong in canvassing. Well Lilly wasn't well one Sunday morning, and I hopped off to the meeting, and one came to our door and he put his foot in and kept it there for nearly an hour. She was just fit to drop. So about 4-5 weeks later, going to the open-air service, I saw a group of these canvassing on the street nearby at an open air. So I stopped, and I walked up to one of the gentlemen and mentioned this incident. "I don't think you'll win souls by being rude and putting your foot in a door, and not seeing the person's point of view, etc." He said it wasn't done, etc. But after a little talk, I said, "Well look, never mind, brother." You have a word with your leader when you get back, and I'm quite prepared to come and have a little talk to you people, and give you my point of view, and the way the Lord has helped me. But I said "we will shake hands, we're all aiming for the same place." And he said, "Oh, I don't know brother. I don't even know myself. You don't know whether you're predestinated." And I said "Oh, you'll excuse me." You know, I mastered on my hind legs and I don't know, but I said, "You'll excuse me. I know the Lord is telling me, and I don't allow you to detract from that. When the Lord tells me he's got a place for me, I'm OK." And I said, "Not only will I tell you that, I'll tell these people here." So I just stepped back in the middle of the road, it is an open air you know, they were only 2 or 3 streets from where we were having our open air, and I said "Good morning friends, comrades, listen to this for a moment will you. My friend knocking at your door said that I haven't a hope. I want to tell you, and I want to tell him, I have a hope." And then I quoted, "In my father's house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if Jesus said so, what right has he to say that I have not. I have a hope for heaven. You have a hope for heaven." And you know, there were more people came to the door than when I went out to the street where our band was.

Am I talking to quick? I'm sorry. I didn't mean to preach laddie, but there we are. The Lord understands our hearts. Now that's what happened. People don't want to shout it - I haven't a band, I haven't anyone to do my singing for me. I just quoted a scripture, and my belief. And I'll finish with a thought: I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded, that he is able, to keep that which I've committed, unto him against that day.

Well, just a little testimony by the way. A witness. So I'm not afraid to do anything... strange.

We're quite all right. We're settling in. We're being made welcome. And quite a number of people have come, "Now you've come down to our Corps, we hope you'll be happy. Are you enjoying yourself in the Lord?" And so on. The previous Corps, the officer changed all the meetings around and open airs. No, I'm not against change. But when a man cuts his meetings down to one morning and one evening, also at the time say that only one open air in the morning, and that's at 10 minutes to 12 when the people are going home to get their dinner, and the open airs dropped down to about 7-8 instead of about 20 odd, it hurt my spirit and I did go and speak to him about it. Not nastily. I think it was the first time I've ever had to speak to the leader in this way concerning his government of things. There we are. I think we're justified when we see things not going quite right. Having said it, well then it's up to him. Then, he said something about, "maybe I shouldn't be an officer?" I said, "You are destroying the very tenants of my faith or would do but for the power of God that holds me." We did not quarrel? I went quietly to the Corps and talked to him.

Now, why I'm opening my heart to you like this, to you, thousands of miles away, I'm not sure why. Only that the fact that I was really have not have not been a guilt upon my conscience. I was very disturbed about it because you see the Citadel Corps, which is now off the Clipping Road, Brunswick Place, was the Corps when they were in the Vernon Hall in Wellingboro Road, where Louie was dedicated, and there is something of attachment isn't there. I still loved my little Corps, where I answered, that little room which was no bigger than a bedroom, where I knelt and gave my heart to God. Oh, many times I've failed since then, but I still remember that little spot. It was a little bedroom, an upstairs room that we used for a week-night holiness meeting, and my Dad had given his testimony. And you know, I don't think it was anything to do with God that made me first decide, only that it was something that I wanted to be like Dad. What a revelation, what a change would come upon the world if all children of Christian parents, I mean that, would say, "I want to be like Dad and Mom" and step out from that.

My sister was a year older than I, and was sat by me, and I said "I'm going up to the front, Clara. Would you come?" She said, "No, not me". But I went. And you know, my own father came and spoke to me. And he said, "Now John, this is going to make a difference at home." Well now that was something I had not bargained for. He said, "You've got to show this change in home with your little sisters." Well I was very small for my age and I was sometime picked on. I thought, I got the blame for everything that I did, and some for what I didn't do, you know, and when Dad said it, I thought it meant I'd have to give way every time. Oh, was I mad about _____, I can feel it now. Oh, no. And yet I've come to be like Dad. The inspiration was there, and I found the power that would help me to be like my Dad.

In fact, I'm often quoting when I speak in the open airs, and the other Sunday I was giving out a song. I'm able to go to the open airs at the moment. And I still want to work for the Lord, although I'm not supposed to do anything. But I do. I get a pain, but a little

white pill and off we go again. Well now, I was saying, the open air, I was giving out the song the sergeant major ask me to give out that speak to the wrongs of the flesh. What must it be to be there. And I quoted my dad again when he used to say “you know I’m not very bad darling. That doesn’t concern me because I stepped from the kitchen into the power, into the sunshine of God.” I often remember some of these things in my boyhood days from 13 to 16 or 17 when my Dad was Corps Sergeant-Major of the Corps, and being a small, well it was the opening in 1914 of this Corps, Coventry/Coventry, Coventry #3, Coventry/Stoke now, when Dad went to help with the opening. Sent officers straight from the training college, and “There, you build your own Corps.” Well the lovely experience, great joy, for those early days and I’ve always been grateful for the opportunity that came my way to work for the Lord. I’m grateful now. Sometimes the devil comes at me, you know and says “Well now you’re free and able to do it and look what the Lord’s done to you, he has stopped you” He said these things I believe, and I know you do A personal devil that we have to battle everyday.

I was rather amused, and I must stop these rambling remarks, by an article in our Corps magazine, which spoke of one of our early day Salvationist. I know the woman. She was a recruiting sergeant. And, I think she put the fear of God and the devil in most of the comrades when she went fishing. She was the old type. And when Mrs. Whitmore came, I don’t whether you know the Northampton family, well they were afraid. But when someone spoke to her about fishing She said, “I know that the devil is in our prayer meetings. And if he’s in our prayer meetings, I’m going to be one step ahead of him, to beat him to it” and she used to say, “win ‘em to God.” And the Northampton talk as a matter of fact I find is rather abruptly shortening of their words. Now, The Northamptonians, you will perhaps disagree with me, but I find it so.

Well now, on the other side, here I’ve been running away...God bless you. It’s been great to open my heart to you, and may the Lord strengthen you. It might be a little blessing and some little points, when your talking, well for passing on.

I want to say thank you for the tapes that you sent, and also for the tapes you are sending. They haven’t arrived yet, but already I’ve got a que lining up for them. What I do, I try to do this way, a little tape like that I’m doing this on a.....2 track.....I say “Here is the actual tape that....dub off and let me have back and then you can use your part and share it and the Gospel.” It works so well – one tape comes over, we can make 10 or 12 tapes spreading around the country. It’s wonderful.

So we’re eagerly looking forward to the tapes on the songs, and I can honestly assure you, not just that it goes out, we want something that belongs to you in that sense, to be, what shall we, I was going to say selfish about it, no, not to be the only ones, no, we don’t want to be the only one. We want your message to spread. Here is the way I see. I do have quotes in the open airs, in our meetings, one being welcomed the other week down at the Central, I said “A number of you probably know that I am a tape fan, but if and when I get the message over, when confined to the house (I’m getting a bit tight), I can still go on working for the Lord.” Oh it’s wonderful.

And then I have a blind friend, or one or two that we talk to on tape, and I have seen this man's spiritual growth on tape. I think, I know you'll understand what I mean by that. Discouraged when I first contacted him. He'd got to give up work completely. They said he'd never work anymore because his eyesight was failing, something in his back, that was getting worse, and putting black patches across his eyes. Well now, we've been to his home, shared fellowship with him, a holiday with him and his wife, and they are a lovely couple, and he's been down to Lemmington Spa for training for a guide dog this last month. And he tells me how he goes to a little Corps in Lemmington. He felt he's got to thank God for his goodness to him. He said "I stood up and gave my testimony. Oh, God is good." And he said "In this little room where I have to be while I am here has become a real battle because I've had to depend upon God. Separated from the wife for the month, you know, and he was worried about his wife down in Kent, and so on, and said "I'll tell the Lord all about it." Now that tape's precious to me, and it will be a little extract taken from it. A man's testimony of his trust and confidence in the Lord It's wonderful. As I said, when I first met him he was rather disgruntled. He couldn't play in the band, a good cornet player, etc. I don't mean nastily disgruntled, but feeling that he'd had a raw deal. I think that is how the devil gets at us. We look forward to certain times, or we think we're doing OK. We. And I think that's the way it is. We become too personal, what we are doing for the Lord, instead of what the Lord is doing for us. And he is the same, and Lilly felt he was willing, but we put a blame on the Lord. The Lord wouldn't let him. Oh how we blame the Lord and discourage our own selves, don't we.

Well now, I think I better stop kind of sermonizing. I think you'll understand how I feel.

Lilly is a little better now. As I say, she has her back spasms. And, then we have rather trying times, but the Lord does help us, and we're glad that we know him. It's the certainty of the gospels. I love them, and I love to expound. Our life would have been a bit rough the last few years without a God to depend upon. But you know I have to remind myself many, many times that I've said in the open airs, or lined out that song: Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged. And I tell the people that they shouldn't be, just take it to the Lord in prayer. And I've had to come back and say, "Now John, you tell those people, now you tell yourself." It's nice to talk to you sometimes this way. I'm talking to you. I'm telling you just how I felt in the service of God.

Now on the other side of this track is the Northampton Band and Northampton Central Band and Central Songsters singing and playing one or two tunes. I've waited a long while for this, but I'm having to put them back on to this little 3" tape, first because of the size, and the bandmaster didn't do as much as I'd waited for. He's a very busy young man. One of the busiest men of the town, and he seems to have so much on his mind. But, anyway I think he's done the march "Celebration", one or two of your songs, the songsters are singing one and the male voices as well in the band. He did it on a 5" tape, and he also did it to the speed of 7 ½, so the quality of the music should be OK in the original recording, but I felt it was too big to get across the waters. That's one of the troubles of the distance.

We do hope you are keeping as reasonably well as age will allow you, and that you are finding a nice blessing to your tape recording and your ministry, week by week. Now I think it's nearly time that we went on to the other side, track 2. This will be only 2 tracks, and you'll find that the tape lasted rather long, longer than one anticipates - a wonderful little tape, at least I feel so, and there will be a blessing. There really not too dear to buy a dozen. So we've got plenty to go on with. Well now, I think I better...I don't know how much we've got. Before we spoil it, we'll switch over to the other track.