

Interview: Vi Cordoni (VC)
Interviewer: Sean Griffin (SG)
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Transcription: Pam Moodie

SG [00:00:05] Okay Vi, maybe you could start by just telling me where you were born, when, and any siblings and that sort of thing.

VC [00:00:12] I was born in Drumheller, Alberta, [...] 1938. My parents were Hungarian-Canadians. My dad came to Canada in the early '30s, my mum came in '33, and eventually that's where they ended up in Drumheller. My father was a miner, coal miner, in that town.

SG [00:00:38] Had he been one in Hungary as well?

VC [00:00:41] No, no, it was just a small village, a rural community, I'm not sure what he did. Farming.

SG [00:00:49] But I guess if you came to Drumheller, that's what you did, worked the mine.

VC [00:00:51] That's what you did, yes, yes. He first went to a place called Carbondale, just outside of Edmonton, which was a mining town which had a small Hungarian community and there was also quite a large community in Drumheller.

SG [00:01:06] But even at that time, going from Edmonton to Drumheller would have been a bit of a trek, wouldn't it?

VC [00:01:11] Yes.

SG [00:01:11] It's not exactly next door. So how did he come to go to Drumheller?

VC [00:01:16] I don't know, I just remember my mother saying that when she, it's a valley, you're driving along the prairie and then there's a big hole and she says, she came to this big hole and her hair rose on end.

SG [00:01:33] I'll be darned, eh? And so did you, what was the state of your family when you were born, did you have siblings at that time?

VC [00:01:40] I had two siblings, I had my brother closest to me, Les, he was four years older than me, and I had an older brother, Dezo (known as Zak), later on, who was eight years older than me. He was born in Czechoslovakia.

SG [00:01:58] Oh, I see.

VC [00:02:00] Was seven when he came to Canada. Later on I had a younger sister who was born in Creston, BC.

SG [00:02:08] That's quite a spread for your family at that time, eh? So was growing up and having your father working in the mine a pretty hardscrabble existence, I'm sure?

VC [00:02:21] No. Well, I didn't feel it was. It was for my father, I'm sure, because it was hard work, but I never felt any sort of lack of having anything. We ate well. My mother was a seamstress. She always made me nice clothes. I didn't feel any need. It was pretty happy, actually.

SG [00:02:48] Right. And so, was the mine organized at that time?

VC [00:02:53] Yes, it was the United Mine Workers of America.

SG [00:02:56] Okay, so they had made their way back into the industry after, because they were kind of frozen out for a period of time then.

VC [00:03:05] I don't know that history, but I just remember the bushy-haired, mustached John L. Lewis, who was the head of the Mine Workers Union. There was a magazine that came out every month that would have his picture in them.

SG [00:03:20] He's the famous guy that slugged the leader of the AFL.

VC [00:03:23] Oh, did he?

SG [00:03:25] When they created the CIO with that. So the story goes.

VC [00:03:28] Yeah.

SG [00:03:31] So when your parents came from Hungary, or the Czechoslovakia, actually, I presume that they were, some had come from a place that was close to the Hungarian border?

VC [00:03:42] Oh yeah, very close. Very close to the Hungarian border.

SG [00:03:45] So, they brought with them, I would presume, a kind of a culture of Hungarian culture?

VC [00:03:49] Oh yes, it was Hungarian culture, for sure, because it was so close to the border. The—Czechoslovakia at that time, they allowed the Hungarians to keep their culture. The schools were actually Hungarian in that area. It wasn't until much later that they had Czech schools, Slovak schools.

SG [00:04:14] And so what prompted them to leave that, was...

VC [00:04:18] Well, my dad, I guess, didn't have any property or anything. My mother, they were living with their in-laws. So when my father came to Canada, my mother lived with her in-laws. And he came to make some money to go back and buy property or build a house. It wasn't uncommon for that to happen. I remember reading a book about that, that the people did that. Actually, my grandfather, my mother's father, did that a couple of times going to the States and then coming back. He actually died in the States.

SG [00:04:54] Is that right?

VC [00:04:53] Yeah, in a mining accident.

SG [00:04:56] Well, I mean, certainly there's a bit of a mythology that people coming here to Canada at that time were settlers. 'They've got a land grant,' but in fact, the vast majority of them did not. They came here and found whatever work they could.

VC [00:05:08] Yes. Yeah.

SG [00:05:10] And, I guess in your case, they brought their wife over if they had one or brought the rest of their family.

VC [00:05:16] Well, my mother said that she wasn't ready to come to Canada. She was going to stay there, wait for my father to come back. But he had younger siblings, and they were getting married. So they had to have somewhere to stay. So that's why she came with my brother.

SG [00:05:33] So when you were, when they were first began working in Drumheller, was the Depression was sort of waning down at that point?

VC [00:05:42] No, well it could have been but I just remember my mother telling me about it was really hard during the Depression. They were on Relief. My dad had to work, you know, making roads or whatever for 25 cents a day.

SG [00:05:55] So he was laid off from the mine for a period?

VC [00:06:02] Yes, at that point. Yeah. And they were trying to buy a house, and somehow or other, they lost the house and lost money, whatever money they'd put into it. I don't remember the exact details, but it was pretty tough.

SG [00:06:17] I gather at some point your dad decided that he wanted to leave this and buy a farm.

VC [00:06:21] Yes, when I was in grade two, so I was eight years, seven years old, he decided that he wanted to get away from mining, so he bought a farm in Creston, in the Creston Valley, and forty acres; twenty acres alfalfa, twenty acres, maybe it was twenty acres altogether, ten and ten, fruit trees and berries and alfalfa. And that was pretty hard. I remember having to pick berries. Les, he picked the apples and had to make the crates to put the apples in to take to the plant. And there was a board that had holes in it and he had to grade the apples. All the apples fell through the wrong holes. So it wasn't a very good venture for my dad. So we left there, in December in, I guess what year, would have been '46. My sister was just a baby. And we traveled by train to Lethbridge and stayed with family friends. And my dad stayed behind to finalize the sale of the house. And we stayed with this family for, I don't know how many months. During that period of time, Les and I didn't go to school because it was temporary. And then we ended up in Calgary, where my dad still didn't want to be a miner. He bought a dump truck or something like that. And that venture didn't work either. So he ended up going back to Drumheller, working in the mine and coming back to Calgary on the weekends. And then, we finally ended up back in Drumheller. So I left when I was in grade two, and I came back when I was in grade four, my same classmates.

SG [00:08:23] Oh really. But you managed to reintegrate back in.

VC [00:08:25] Oh, it didn't take any time at all.

SG [00:08:28] I guess that was the nature of trying to find work in those days and especially moving around. That would have been a fair distance to move from Drumheller to the Creston Valley, Calgary and so on.

SG [00:08:41] Yeah.

SG [00:08:43] But many of those communities, especially the mining communities and whatnot, were made up of a lot of immigrants, particularly from Eastern Europe, Ukrainians and Finns, and in your case, Hungarians and so on. So you brought this culture with you to some degree, and did you find yourself as a young girl sort of falling into that culture?

VC [00:09:07] Oh, for sure. For sure, yes. There was a, there was quite a large Hungarian community in the, in the valley. Drumheller being the central point. And just outside of Drumheller, in a little place called Newcastle there was a Ukrainian, AUUC [Association of United Ukrainian Canadians] Ukrainian Hall, and that's where we had all our cultural events. We had dances, we had plays, weddings, everything. That was at the Ukrainian Hall.

SG [00:09:36] And so other sort of cultural ethnic groups used that same hall [unclear]?

VC [00:09:41] Yes. There were other, I think there was a Yugoslav Hall too, but it was much smaller, the Ukrainian Hall was quite large, yeah, nice dances.

SG [00:09:51] Really? So did you, did you take sort of folk dancing?

VC [00:09:54] No, I never did folk dancing, no, they didn't have a folk dancing group, but they had the Hungarian instruments for our dances, the cimbalom.

SG [00:10:06] Right, right. Tsymbaly is how the Ukrainians call it.

VC [00:10:10] Yeah.

SG [00:10:12] That's interesting. And so, is that where you began sort of singing and whatnot?

VC [00:10:18] Yes.

SG [00:10:18] Yes. Tell me about that.

VC [00:10:19] Well, my brother, Les, had a beautiful voice, soprano voice, my parents actually paid to have him have lessons, he was such a good singer. And so, we would sing together, we'd stand on the stage and hold hands and sing some songs or we would be given some poems, Hungarian poems. Half the time I don't think I knew what I was talking about, but I had them all memorized and I would get up there, in Hungarian, and then of course we would be singing Hungarian songs. Yeah.

SG [00:11:00] Did you sort of practice at home? Did you go over a lot of this?

VC [00:11:04] I think we did. I don't remember that part, but we must have, because we had to get up there and recite a poem without reading it. Of course, I couldn't read very well. I did take some lessons in Hungarian reading and writing, but not very much.

SG [00:11:21] So Hungarian isn't a language that you speak, or?

VC [00:11:25] Oh, yes.

SG [00:11:25] Oh, do you speak that now?

VC [00:11:27] Well, as much as I can, I have no one to speak to anymore.

SG [00:11:31] No, I guess that's true. I didn't realize that about you.

VC [00:11:35] No, we always spoke Hungarian at home.

SG [00:11:39] So what kinds of songs were they? They were sort of typical folk songs. They didn't really have a lot of—

VC [00:11:44] Well, Les sang one song, this was his signature song about being the bad boy of the village.

SG [00:11:51] Oh.

VC [00:11:55] Not even the dog would bark at him or something like that.

SG [00:12:00] I was just curious how some of those folk songs had really obscure sort of connections.

VC [00:12:06] And then there was poetry, there was this older fellow that every time we had a concert he would do this poem that was very, very revolutionary. I think it's called, I looked it up, I think it's called The Poem of Hungary, actually. And he would be talking about rise up Hungarians and he'd always end up with his fist in the air at the end.

SG [00:12:36] So that would have gone back to the 1848 revolution or something.

VC [00:12:40] Yeah, yeah.

SG [00:12:41] So a lot of those folk songs, too, actually were, you know, not what we would necessarily recognize now as workers' songs, but many of them were songs that workers sang.

VC [00:12:51] Yes.

SG [00:12:52] Were any of them in your repertoire, or were you aware of that sort of connection?

VC [00:13:00] No. I just sang the songs. [laughter]

SG [00:13:01] Just sang the songs.

VC [00:13:04] I was pretty young.

SG [00:13:05] But nonetheless, it was part of what you did.

VC [00:13:08] Yeah, yeah.

SG [00:13:11] So what was the name of this poet? I think you'd mentioned it to me.

VC [00:13:13] His name was Petőfi Sándor.

SG [00:13:15] That's right. And he's known as the revolutionary poet of Hungary, a very famous figure.

VC [00:13:22] Yes, yes, yeah.

SG [00:13:30] By and large, today, people get songs from CD's or whatever, then pick it up in the internet or so on. Where did you get a lot of these songs that you were singing? Where did they come from? What was their provenance?

VC [00:13:44] The Hungarian songs?

SG [00:13:45] Well, whatever it was you sang.

VC [00:13:46] Well, there were Hungarian songs. I don't know. There was a Hungarian organization, and when it came time to have these concerts, we would get the songs and we would get the poems. So I don't really know where they came from, but it was from the organization, probably Hungarian Communist Party.

SG [00:14:15] So was there sort of a counterpart to the— the AUUC was the Association of the United Ukrainian Canadians? Was there a Hungarian equivalent of that? What was it?

VC [00:14:26] Yes, yes. I don't know. You know, I was young. All I remember is we would go to these meetings and someone would get up and say, say, workers, something about workers, welcome workers to this, at the beginning of the meeting, and then they would have their whatever, and we're kids, we're playing around. I'm not paying any attention, but there we were.

SG [00:14:49] You're just taking the song and singing it.

VC [00:14:52] When I got the song, I sang it.

SG [00:14:56] I presume this was an enjoyable experience, you weren't just doing this because it was—

VC [00:15:00] No, no. It was a happy time. I mean, it was a nice time to be growing up in that atmosphere.

SG [00:15:08] How was it like to sing with your brother?

VC [00:15:10] Oh, that was fine. That was great.

SG [00:15:14] And he was an older brother too—

VC [00:15:16] Yes, four years. Four years older.

SG [00:15:17] Which is often, an older brother-younger sister is a great combo. You also said to me before that you had a whole lot of sort of ideas that were talked about at home that you didn't really kind of put together until much later in life and whatnot.

VC [00:15:37] Exactly

SG [00:15:38] So what were those things then?

VC [00:15:40] Well, the main thing that I remember is my father saying to me on May Day that I shouldn't be going to school today. Because it was a workers' holiday and because it was the mine workers, they did not go to work. They had a march on that May Day.

SG [00:15:58] And they didn't go to work, eh?

VC [00:15:59] They didn't go to work, yeah. The head of the union was actually, he was actually a communist. He ran under, well, not a communist, Labour Progressive Party. He would run in the elections.

SG [00:16:15] Oh, I see. But he was the president of that local UMWA [United Mine Workers' Association]. Okay. Remember his name?

VC [00:16:22] Art Roberts.

SG [00:16:23] Art Roberts, huh, okay.

SG [00:16:25] So, a good anglophone by the sounds of it.

VC [00:16:29] Welsh.

SG [00:16:30] Welsh, okay.

VC [00:16:31] I just found that out.

SG [00:16:32] Probably an orator than often, the Welsh were.

VC [00:16:34] And a singer, apparently.

SG [00:16:36] And a singer.

VC [00:16:37] I just met—I just hooked up again with his daughter, who I knew in Drumheller.

SG [00:16:43] Oh, I see, isn't that interesting? But that often was the case that people who were known as singers and whatnot in the community had a special place in a lot of those communities. I'm sure that this guy that did the poems of the Hungarian poet was probably similar stature, eh? Because they tapped him all the time to present this. Interesting. So did you sing, just sing in your own community or did you go around to other communities as well?

VC [00:17:22] Well, particularly in 1948, which was, I guess, the anniversary of the formation of Hungary, the split from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. That was a big year,

and we had a troop of us who went to the other small towns around Drumheller and did our little performance.

SG [00:17:47] Oh, I see. So, but you're still just singing with Les, there's not a choir.

VC [00:17:50] No, there's no choir, just with Les.

SG [00:17:56] So when was it you came out to the coast then?

VC [00:17:59] We came out in 1955, my older brother Zak had been living in Vancouver for many years because he had been a sailor and was part of the Merchant Marine. So he was out there and then when my brother Les graduated from high school, although he was a butcher, he worked in the butcher shop and he had that, but there wasn't much else to do. So it was decided that he would come out to Vancouver to be with my brother. And then we all moved out in 1955.

SG [00:18:36] So the whole family came and settled in Vancouver?

VC [00:18:38] Yes, yes, yes.

SG [00:18:42] And what did you do at that point? You must have been—

VC [00:18:45] I had just finished my grade 11 and there was a, I knew I wouldn't be going to university but there was a commercial program in the school, for two years, and I took that and I got a job right away after finishing that course. I got a job at the Unemployment Insurance Commission.

SG [00:19:08] Oh really?

VC [00:19:09] But it didn't last long because I finished in June, got started working, and then we moved in September. So when we came to Vancouver, I thought, well, if I don't get a job, I can always go back to school. But I did get a job, working as a steno for Phillips Industries, which was a television, making the television, and I worked there for three years and then got a job working for a lawyer, Elspeth Gardner.

SG [00:19:40] Oh, right, right.

VC [00:19:42] Elspeth Munro at the time. So that was a good change for me, working as a legal secretary. I worked that for many years after that.

SG [00:19:51] And so I understand when you came out to the coast, you joined the Vancouver Youth Singers, who had already been established at that time?

VC [00:19:59] Yes, yes, it was established by Cyril Friedman, who was an active member of the UJPO, the United Jewish People's Order.

SG [00:20:09] Oh, right.

VC [00:20:10] And he, his brother, Perry, was a banjo player. And the group was already going. My brother, Les, had joined the group, so when I came, I joined as well.

SG [00:20:23] So this was very much a natural inclination for him as well as for you, right?

VC [00:20:27] That's exactly.

[00:20:28] Yes, how many people were in the group?

VC [00:20:31] I guess about eight or nine.

SG [00:20:34] Yeah, I understand you have a photo there of that, and that's from what year? 1957?

VC [00:20:40] This would be 1957, I think. Nine, ten of us.

SG [00:20:47] Yeah, if you could just show that for the camera. So that was the whole group at that time.

VC [00:20:54] At that time, yeah. That was actually when we were going on tour. We went on tour to Vancouver Island.

SG [00:21:02] So how long had the group been in existence at this time, was it 1957?

VC [00:21:08] I'm not sure. I'm not sure how long.

SG [00:21:08] When did you first join?

VC [00:21:10] When I came in '55.

SG [00:21:12] In '55. So, somewhere, and Les was already a member at that time, probably at least three years or so then. And so, tell me about this tour, what—

VC [00:21:23] It was with the Kobzar dancers of the AUUC, they danced and we went to a number of different places and in those places they also had people that took part in the concert as well. I remember we were at, I guess it must have been Nanaimo, there was a group of people from Cowichan Lake where there was an East Indian community that were logging. One of the Elders from that group came and played the, I don't know what that is, that squeeze box sort of thing and sang. That's an Indian instrument.

SG [00:22:05] And so, I understand this was a fundraising tour for Champion Paper, which was the old National Federation of Labour Youth.

VC [00:22:14] Yes, that's what I understand, yeah.

SG [00:22:17] And so you went to various places where concerts had been organized by them for this fundraiser, right? And I recall reading in a very obscure little clip in the Old Pacific Tribune files that this group had come to Cumberland at this time and was singing Miner's Lifeguard. Is that, can you recall doing that?

VC [00:22:41] Well, I remember singing Miner's Lifeguard, but I don't really remember Cumberland. I just remember, you know, that we were there on the island at different places, but I don't remember it was necessarily Cumberland.

SG [00:22:54] Presumably there's enough veracity in that.

VC [00:22:57] Yes, yes, yes

SG [00:22:57] Yeah, no, they've they mentioned the tour and the Vancouver Youth Singers said that they'd come to Cumberland. And I guess it was it was a story written by some some miner up there that had gone to hear them. Interesting. And so you continued to to be a member of the Vancouver Youth Singers.

VC [00:23:16] Yes.

SG [00:23:17] What other kinds of things did you do. Did you sort of have gigs around town or—

VC [00:23:22] Yeah, we sang for trade unions, we sang for the Mine Mill, we sang for the Fisherman's Union. I remember singing for, I'm sure, I think it was the Fishermen's Union invited some, I think they were fishermen from Japan, and in commemoration of the dropping of the atomic bomb, and we learned a special song for that and sang that for them.

SG [00:23:51] Oh, that's right, and you showed me the lyrics to that song, that was right, yeah, and was it not also recorded?

VC [00:24:00] It was recorded, yes.

SG [00:24:02] But we have no idea what happened to that recording, I guess.

VC [00:24:05] Well, I gave it to my brother who never gave things back to me.

SG [00:24:09] Well, it's as simple as that, eh? That's too bad. But it was interesting, because a lot of, particularly left unions, like Mine Mill and the Fishermen and the Marine Workers and whatnot, included music as a regular part of their sort of programs and conventions and even meetings. And were you invited to Mine Mill to sing at their convention as well?

VC [00:24:40] Yes. I have a picture here. with Harvey Murphy, who was the head of the Mine Mill for many, many years. Well known. He's the one that brought Paul Robeson to the Peace Arch.

SG [00:24:59] Right. I just discovered our old friend Steve Gidora, his father was the one who donated the use of his flatbed truck from his farm so that Robeson and his piano could sing from the back of it, so the connections are everywhere.

VC [00:25:16] Everywhere.

SG [00:25:19] So what was it like singing for a convention? I mean, that must have been a different experience for you, though, compared to sitting up on, standing up on a stage holding your brother's hand.

VC [00:25:31] Oh, yeah. No, it was very uplifting, you know, that people appreciated that we sang for them.

SG [00:25:38] Remember anything of what you sang there?

VC [00:25:41] Well, mostly labour songs, like Miner's Lifeguard, or I do remember Don Savien did the Talking Atomic Blues.

SG [00:25:56] Oh right.

VC [00:25:59] So he was very good, and then we sang with that. So we, yeah, Sixteen Tons, you know, things that were, that the folk revival was coming around at that time. And so we sang modern folk songs. And Don Francks, I don't know if you know him.

SG [00:26:22] Yeah, on the CBC.

VC [00:26:24] Yeah, but he used to be on the CFUN. He had his own program, Late Night Show. And somehow or other, we got to sing with him.

SG [00:26:35] On his show?

VC [00:26:37] On his show.

SG [00:26:37] Oh, that's interesting. Again, doing labour music, I presume?

VC [00:26:40] Well, I can't, I don't think it was Labour that we sang. Did we sing calypso? He was, it was calypso time and we sang with him.

SG [00:26:51] It's like Sloop John B and things like that, eh?

VC [00:26:54] Yeah.

SG [00:26:55] And I would presume that a lot of your influences were the same as they were for the folk, The Weavers.

VC [00:27:03] Yes.

SG [00:27:04] And Pete Seeger and so on.

VC [00:27:05] Yep, going to Pete Seeger's concert you had to sing.

SG [00:27:09] Yeah that's true. Did you and so you took in a Pete Seeger concert?

VC [00:27:12] Oh yes, a couple I think.

SG [00:27:14] And where were they?

VC [00:27:15] Well, the first one that I went to was at the Marine Workers' Hall on Pender Street.

SG [00:27:24] OK. Well, and I think that's the example, you know, that the Marine Workers were often—my first union meeting that I went to in 1963, I think, of when I was a marine worker. There were folk singers, including your sister, on the stage, singing 500 Miles I think. It was nothing, no labour songs, but it was beautiful. I was inspired. So, I mean, obviously, that was a real stage for a lot of people. And so fast forward to a few years hence when you were raising kids, I guess, during a lot of the time in the '60s and '70s.

VC [00:28:05] Yeah. My daughter was born in '62 and my son in '64 and Alfie, my husband, decided he had been a labourer, a marine worker as well, and decided to go back to school. He went to night school, got his high school and then went to UBC. And I worked. So he became a teacher, he started teaching in 1965. So, that period I wasn't doing much but working and raising a family.

SG [00:28:36] And so I guess the next sort of iteration of your singing was with Solidarity Notes when they were formed.

VC [00:28:45] After Al retired in '96 and I retired in '98, we did a lot of traveling. We had a fifth wheel trailer and we'd go down and spend the summer, or two months, couple of months in the desert in California and come back. And I think it was 2000, my sister-in-law, Jo, told us that there was a choir starting. So Alfie and I went, and it was sponsored by the Vancouver and District Labour Council, and it was Earle Peach that they'd hired to do the conducting. And so we went and joined, and that was the start of that, our comeback.

SG [00:29:32] So how did that compare in your sense of, you know, kind of musical purpose and whatnot?

VC [00:29:37] Well, that was it. That was what we wanted to do. We wanted to sing and we wanted to sing songs that we believed in. So it was a great feeling to be back in that sort of milieu of doing those kinds of things again.

SG [00:29:54] And both you and your husband, Alf, who joined as well.

VC [00:29:58] Yes, my sister-in-law as well, Jo.

SG [00:30:01] Well, Jo, that's right, yeah, but not your younger sister.

VC [00:30:06] No, no.

SG [00:30:09] Well, no, it's this generational thing, certainly. That's for sure. So how long were you in Sol Notes for?

VC [00:30:16] Well, we were in until, I guess, I can't remember how long, when did Left Coast come along?

SG [00:30:24] Well, it was in 2014.

VC [00:30:26] Okay, so until that time, we were in 2000 and we went to Cuba with the Sol Notes, that was a great tour.

SG [00:30:38] Well, tell me about that.

VC [00:30:39] Yeah, well we sang at different venues. It was sponsored by the Vancouver District Labour Council and it was a labour tour so we sang for unions and we sang at schools. Just all over the place. We sang for Fidel at a conference. I remember looking over and his feet were tapping time to the music.

SG [00:31:03] That's a good sign.

VC [00:31:04] It was good.

SG [00:31:05] But that's a bit daunting. I mean, Cuban musical culture is incredibly complex and they're good.

VC [00:31:12] Yeah, and we sang the song about Che Guevara and they didn't realize what the song was until we really got into it because of course our rhythms were not their rhythms.

SG [00:31:26] I can imagine. Yeah, that's interesting. But I didn't realize that tour was sponsored by the VDLC as well.

VC [00:31:35] Yeah. What's his name? Well, who's the head of the—

SG [00:31:40] Bill Saunders?

VC [00:31:41] Bill Saunders, he and his wife were there, they came with us as well.

SG [00:31:45] You know, certainly Bill Saunders was very instrumental in the formation of Sol Notes. He came back from the big demonstrations they had in Seattle in 1999, and where he'd heard the Seattle Labour Chorus.

VC [00:31:58] Yeah.

SG [00:31:59] And he said, why don't we have one of those in Vancouver?

VC [00:32:01] Yes.

SG [00:32:02] Set the ball rolling, so now we have two, so. And you have continued on from Sol Notes, singing with the Left Coast Labour Chorus.

VC [00:32:13] Yes, yes. There was some—what's the word I'm thinking of? Tension in Sol Notes because of some of the things that were happening and a number of us decided that we were going to leave and formed the other group, Left Coast Labour Chorus, and found a very, very competent professional director who teaches us a lot.

SG [00:32:51] So what's been your sort of sense as looking back over all of that? I mean, you're still singing with Left Coast Labour Chorus and still standing up with the altos and whatnot doing that. What's looking back over that whole long career? Because you certainly go back farther than most people. What's your feeling about it?

VC [00:33:12] Well, it's always been a part of me, you know. Singing has been a part of me for a very long time, but to be with a group of people that feel the same way that I feel and learning a lot. I don't know what I'd be doing otherwise. It's keeping me going.

SG [00:33:38] Well, that's good. And so when you think about it and you look back at how you first began singing, you obviously had some talent for it, a sense of doing it and whatnot, but there must also been something that gave you inspiration as you went along too. Was that the case?

VC [00:34:01] Yeah, well, you know, I always had a good voice, I could sing, but when it came to harmony and that sort of thing, that's been really, really interesting for me to be

able to do that, to feel that I can actually sing in harmony and sing with other people to make a lovely sound.

SG [00:34:27] Yeah, I think for all of us who sing in choirs, that's a big part of it, singing with others and creating something really different.

VC [00:34:35] And then having concerts, when we've had concerts that have been, to me, that are fulfilling and showing what we can do, but also teaching people about labour, that's been important.

SG [00:34:53] Well, what's your sense of that with, you know, labour music definitely doesn't enjoy the same popularity that, say it did in the '40s or even in the '60s to a certain degree. But it still has a lot of charisma, if you will, for a lot of younger people who are working. Do you feel it has a future?

VC [00:35:16] Well, I think that we're doing a lot of different songs now that are not necessarily labour, but they're certainly socially, socially conscious songs that, they're giving a message too. So whether it's labour or whether it's the ecology or just human rights, it's all important.

SG [00:35:41] And Left Coast often frequently sings on picket lines for rallies. What's your feeling when you go and do that?

VC [00:35:51] Yes, yes. Well, you always feel good because you feel that you're being appreciated when you're doing that. I haven't been doing that too much because I have problems getting around, but yeah. No, that's important.

SG [00:36:07] Okay, I think that pretty much wraps it up with what we, unless you have something particularly from your notes here that you'd like to add.

VC [00:36:17] Nope, that's good.

SG [00:36:21] OK. Thanks very much, Vi. I appreciate you doing this. It adds a dimension that we haven't had really before.

VC [00:36:28] Okay, thank you.