



Passion Over a Lifetime

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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When I heard that Ian Tyson was coming to the city, I thought it would be fun to buy an extra ticket so my daughter could attend the concert with me. Her first word after I issued the invitation was "Who?" I explained that when I grew up we would look forward to the "Ian and Sylvia" show. That didn't shed much light on the situation but Kristal stated that I should go ahead and buy the tickets and she would turn to Google in preparation for the event.

Sometimes I kind of forgot my own age and the fact that not everyone has had the same experiences - especially my children. Ian Tyson debuted in a rock and roll band way back in 1956. He is now 84 years old and still singing!

Attending the concert and thinking about Ian's life has helped me to recognize several things:

1. We need to take advantage of opportunities - Many people have dreams that are never fulfilled as well as times when life isn't going the way that they planned. If you really want to do something you will make time for it and learn from others who are skilled in that specific area. Ian learned to play guitar when he was recovering from a fall!
2. If you want to get good at something, you need to practice. Ian told the audience that he plays his guitar every day! Throughout his career he has recorded almost twenty albums and dozens of singles. He performed for Queen Elizabeth II, was inducted into the Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame, and received the Order of Canada, Alberta Order of Excellence as well as a Governor General's Performing Arts award.
3. Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Throughout his life, Ian had several careers including rodeo rider, commercial artist, television personality, writer and rancher. He told me after the concert that he still runs his neighbour's cattle for them!
4. Honesty draws people closer. After his first song Ian confessed that he remembers how to play and sing the songs but can't remember the key to play them in so has to ask his bass guitarist. Once during the show he started a song and then stopped saying "That isn't it". When a request was shouted out from the crowd he told about how his mare had recently knocked him down and as a result he was having cramping in his left hand so probably couldn't perform the request well enough.
5. It's okay to ask for help when you need it. Besides asking his bass player for the right key, Ian often would wait for the younger musician to choose and attach the right capo or clamp to his guitar before beginning the next song. I admired the patience and kindness shown in this way while we quietly waited. We all need help at times as well as ways to give.
6. Keep things simple. You don't have to be sophisticated to connect with people. The stage had three simple stools, one for each guitarist. Tyson's well-known tune "Four Strong Winds" was written in twenty minutes. Many of his songs are about animals, the weather and relationships - the things that all of us can relate to.
7. People like to hear stories. Ian talked about the reasons why he had written each song and told about the characters that were described in the lyrics. Giving us insight into the origins of the music provided context and better understanding. People around us need the same things.
8. Troubles can be overcome. Tyson has faced physical challenges that have changed his sound and threatened his career but he just kept on going. The most recent was when he had open heart surgery in 2015. He states that now his heart is good but his voice gives out.
9. Loyalty is a virtue. After the concert fans waiting in line for almost an hour to greet Ian. He sat at a table and signed every single one of the CDs that had been purchased. My daughter remarked that this was way above and beyond what she would have expected. After a long concert he was likely very tired but still fulfilled the wishes of his fans.
10. Age is just a number. How many people do you know who can fill an auditorium at over \$50.00 a seat at the age of 84 years? Or run cattle for the neighbours? Or commit to a schedule of shows for 2018?

I believe that one of the keys to Ian's longevity and popularity is that he found something that he was passionate about and just kept doing it over and over again.

What about you? What will you be doing at the age of 84?