

Norm Walker: “Ballad of Alex Ronyk”

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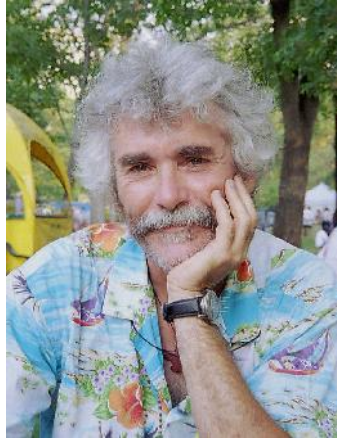


Figure 1: Norm Walker (courtesy Norm Walker)

Norm Walker is a “story-singer” (www.normwalker.com) from Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. In 2002, he released his first album, *T' Time—Time Tested Tales, Tall and True*, a collection of original story-oriented songs, many of which are based on urban legends and folk tales. In 2011, he released a new album, entitled *Dear Friends and Gentle Hearts*, which contains all but one original songs, including

“The Ballad of Alex Ronyk” featured in this issue. Norm has a broad range of musical influences, from British and Irish traditional music and old-time to cowboy and swing, and he has been a member of various Regina-based Celtic music groups over the years. Norm is a long-time member of the Canadian Society for Traditional Music.

The Ballad of Alex Ronyk

Norm Walker

Chorus

Some say that mining will get in your soul
The blood, sweat and danger, digging for coal
Alex Ronyk knew all this and how
But he's mining the miners' pockets now.

Bienfait, Saskatchewan, 1921
Alex only 14 years, a Polish miner's son
Started at the M&S trapping of the doors
Then later loading forty tons a day or even more.

Conditions at the mines and the mining camps were bad
Hunger cold and danger all they had
The bosses and the owners knew the situation well
They made life above and below a living hell.

Chorus: Some say that mining ...

The strike and the massacre of 1931
In home and work and politics, took a toll on every-

one
Alex had a plan and around him he could tell
Those miners needed after hours services he'd sell.

He opened up his pool hall in 1935
He ran bootleg and some gambling on the side
He learned to be a barber, with miners' lives engage
From haircuts and their vices made a wage.

Chorus: Some say that mining ...

So Alex lived in Bienfait for most of his life
Exceptin' for the time he went out west to please his wife
At Kitimat, Tabor, Hillcrest, he worked in the mines
But he went back home to Bienfait to finish his time.

When Alex died and got to heaven, but not by the usual rule
He hustled Peter in a game of pool
But it wasn't very long before he knew he'd have to

go
He said, "Most of my friends are down below."

Alex Ronyk knew all this and how
But he's mining the miners' pockets now.

Last Chorus:
Some say that mining will get in your soul
The blood, sweat and danger, digging for coal

Yes he's mining the miners' pockets
Mining the angels' pockets
Mining the devil's pockets now.

Ballad of Alex Ronyk

Norm G. Walker

Chorus A D A B7 E

Some say mi-ning will get in your soul. Blood, sweat and dan-ger, di-gging for coal

5 A D A D E A

A - lex Ro - nyk knew all this and how but he's mi - ning mi - ner's po - ckets now.

Verse D A E A D A B7 E

Bien-fait, Sa-ska-tche-wan, nine-teen twen-ty-one, A-lex on-ly four-teen years, a Po-lish mi-ner's son

13 D A E A D A E A

Star-ted at the M and S trap-ping of the doors, then la-ter load-ing for-ty tons a day or may-be more. Con-

17 F#min E F#min E

di-tions in the mines and mi-ning camps were bad Hun-ger cold and dan-ger all they had

21 F#min E D E

Boss-es and the own-ers knew the si-tu-a - tion well They made life a-bove and be-low a li-ving hell.

Transcription by Ian Hayes

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Please visit Norm's website, www.normwalker.com.