

SCYP Profiles

An Interview with **Roger Herman**

*Former SCYP Program Officer,
now working at the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives at the UofS.*

Where do you live?

I live in Saskatoon with my wife Vicki, two children Lindsay and Sarah, and our dog Carl.

What do you do for work?

I am a Research Officer at the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives at the University of Saskatchewan.

What kinds of skills and knowledge do you use in the work that you do?

The most important skills in my job include: written and verbal communication skills; analytical skills; organizational skills; and, a broad knowledge of co-operatives and similar types of organizations.



Roger chillaxin' at the Lake

How were you involved in SCYP?

I was the SCYP manager for about 5 years (from 1992 – 1997).

How did your involvement in SCYP influence you?

My SCYP experience helped me to realize what can be accomplished by a bunch of people working together toward the same goal. I am always amazed by how groups have been able to, and continue to, improve their well being by simply helping each other out a bit. This approach is a nice counter balance to a view of life that suggests that you can only get ahead by competing with others and that your personal success can only come at the price of someone else's failure.

What influenced/led you to do the work that you are doing now?

The central part of my job, when I was the SCYP manager, was about education. The summer seminars were/are a great opportunity to learn about co-ops, but also a chance to gain some important skills and to start thinking about the world in a slightly different way. One of the underlying principles of co-operatives is "education". My work now is at an educational institution. The type of teaching we do might be a little different than what we did in SCYP, but it still includes many of the same concepts, and the reasons for learning more about and teaching about co-ops remain the same – to help others become aware of and to understand the role of co-operatives in our world and to use them as a tool to improve people's well being.

(continued on next page)

What do you find inspiring in your work?

Hearing stories about how people have overcome what might seem like impossible challenges in life. I will always remember visiting a co-op in South America where very poor families living in a large city used to have to scavenge a garbage dump to find food and shelter. Those same people began to work together and were able to form a recycling co-operative that now provides housing, schooling, and medical services to its members. It was by working co-operatively that such an amazing change was able to occur.

What else inspires you?

Young children and elderly people. I think these are the people that stop and think about what is really important in life. Too often, the rest of us get caught up in the business of life and forget about what matters – family, friends, community. Unfortunately, we are so busy working, consuming, and generally trying to get ahead, that we lose any appreciation for what we already have going for us.

If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?

I have been very lucky to travel a fair bit in my life. First, on my own exploring various parts of the world and more recently as part of my work. While this has been fascinating, and I wouldn't trade that experience for anything, I have come to realize how lucky we are to live in Canada and how much I love this country.

So, as strange as this might sound, the place I would go is to my wife's family cabin on Lake Winnipeg, in Manitoba. It may not sound too exciting, but it has become the place where I feel the most freedom to be myself, to relax, to act silly, and to really enjoy my time with my family. It doesn't matter what clothes I put on in the morning, what time we eat, when we go to bed or get up, or if we do nothing but play all day. My favourite times out there have included: watching storms roll in over the lake; lying on my back in a grassy field in the middle of the night watching a meteorite shower or the Northern Lights; trying to catch fire flies; being tossed and turned by huge waves on the beach; and, of course the countless hours sitting by the camp fire.

Last book you read?

The last book I read is "The Poisonwood Bible" by Barbara Kingsolver. It's not the greatest book I have ever read, but it wasn't too bad either. Reading is one of my favourite pastimes, but I find that recently I am pickier about what I read. I think that there are so many amazing books out there that I need to spend what time I have reading the books I enjoy most. I used to "never not finish" a book that I started. Now, if I am a quarter of the way through, and it feels like work to keep going, then I think pretty carefully about whether it is important enough for me to continue.

Anything else you would like to tell us about yourself?

I am always impressed by people who give unselfishly for no other reason than to try to help others. It isn't for the glory or the recognition. It is simply about doing what is right.
