

Shaun Fawcett - Interview Questions and Background Notes

Good day Mr Fawcett, my name is Wanda...Wanda Potrykus...may I call you Shaun?

Just a brief recap to make sure we both have the same understanding that we are recording this interview in English for public access and as part of the Atwater Library 2017 Living History project, the participants of which are interviewing Montrealer islanders, former residents and workers as well as those just passing through and asking for stories about the geographical area surrounding the Atwater Library.

Your own story is of great interest because I understand you currently live in Griffintown, which has a long history of its own, and I understand you moved there prior to its current 21st century resurgence as a young hip place to live (probably dating myself there with that description;-) Also you presently operate an online furniture store whose signature pieces are made from recycled materials and all named after streets in Griffintown. In addition, you seem to be somewhat of a renaissance man since you have reinvented yourself several times throughout your working life and have had a wide variety of careers, one of which was that you were something of an internet commerce pioneer.

"I think your story is interesting because you settled to work in an area not really knowing its history and then after learning more about it you incorporated it into your website as a way to help you market your products. I believe it is a story that is worth preserving as part of the fabric of this wonderful city we have both chosen to make our home. Part of what we are trying to do with our Living History project is collect stories on a wide variety of topics that will be of interest to future residents, students, demographers, and the general public, who might be looking for details of the area in which they are living, working, studying and playing. I am proposing to you that your story is of interest on a number of levels but especially as an 'older' entrepreneur and also as someone to whom history is important and it is interesting you have chosen to use it in a fresh way to market your products."

However, if it's okay with you, I would like to perhaps start at the beginning...

- 1) You were born where? Did you grow up there?
- 2) What did your parents do? Did they both work?
- 3) Do you have any special memories you would like to share with us about your childhood in (insert name of place)?
- 4) Which school(s) did you attend?
- 5) Did you have any favourite sports at school?
- 6) I understand you took what used to be termed "shop" in high school which included developing skills in woodworking and welding. What made you opt for that?
- 7) When did you move from ? Where did you move to?
- 8) Did you go to university? Which one? What did you study?

- 9) I understand you went to work for the federal government. Could you describe your public service career.
- 10) At some point in your career you opted to do an Executive MBA. What made you want to do that? I know having attempted it myself, it's hard to study, complete course work while working full-time. Did you have any particular impetus for doing that?
- 11) I understand you also married early? Who did you marry?
- 12) Why did that first marriage end? But I understand you and first wife eventually became good friends?
- 13) I understand you married again for a second time? This time in an exotic locale. Can you speak about that experience?
- 14) Did you and your second wife have any children? What is your daughter's name(Leyla)
- 15) Where did you live during your marriage?
- 16) How old was your daughter when you and your 2nd wife separated? What was life as a single parent like? Did you and wife... as the saying goes "co-parent" i.e. how often did you see your daughter? How much were you involved in her life?
- 16) What brought you to Montreal? How old were you when you made the move?
- 17) The world of aviation loves acronyms. Could you tell us what does IAMPTI stands for?
- 18) When your job at IAMPTI ended, what made you decide not to look for another secure job and opt to be self-employed by becoming a consultant? Had you always wanted to be an entrepreneur or was this something new to you?
- 19) Is there any reason you didn't do this before?
- 20) What gave you the idea to start earning money on the internet? What year would this have been?
- 21) Could you explain the concept of your various websites?
- 22) I understand you also ventured into publishing? And have how many books to your credit?
- 23) You were and still are a member of the Quebec Writers Federation whose offices happen to be next door/across the mezzanine from where we are doing this interview?
- 24) You were also a member of the (insert acronym)...
- 23) What happened to that online business and why did you move on from there?

24) If we can perhaps now speak about your present, I believe, relatively new business. I understand it's located in Griffintown and you called it Griffinworks, partly in honor of Griffintown's industrial past.? What fascinated you about Griffintown that made you choose to live there? Before you moved there did you know anything about its long history and the role its citizens played in the building of Montreal and the Victoria bridge, which was the first bridge built across the St Lawrence in (insert year built).

25) The sales end of your business is basically on-line. You don't have a showroom per se? I personally was fascinated by your website and how you use the history of Griffintown to help you market your furniture. What gave you that idea? Could you give us some examples of the type of product you make along with their names?

26) How did you come to decide to fashion handcrafted furniture?

27) I understand your daughter also lives in Griffintown? When did she move from Ottawa? To go to McGill? Why did she stay on?

28) What does she do?

29) Perhaps we can backtrack a bit...since I believe it was your daughter that was partly responsible for you dusting off your shop skills in order to make her a coffee table? Could you tell us that story please?

30) I understand you now do the actual construction in a St Henri non-profit workshop space called Helios Makerspace. Could you explain exactly what a Makerspace workshop is? If I understand correctly, it's an international movement and St Henri's Helios Makerspace is one of the first in Canada.

BACKGROUND NOTES ABOUT HELIO MAKERSPACE: Helios Makerspace is a non-profit workshop in Montreal dedicated helping the community materialize ideas by providing easy access to tools and training. We provide access to a wide selection of equipment, a great creative community and a broad base of expertise. We pride ourselves on always having trained staff on-site. (Mostly volunteer). Daily, monthly fees help pay the daily expenses such as electricity, internet, phone, etc

Membership helps the makerspace be sustainable. With your contribution, it helps us pay the rent, the internet, repairing and purchasing tools.

It also gives you access during the week to the workshop. Being a member also means that you can decide the direction where the makerspace is going. Thus, every member have a voting right during general assembly and annual assembly. And of course, as a member, you get to use the tools and equipment in the workshop. Check our membership options on our online store or under the helios basics sections. Membership can be purchased directly at Helios.

ACCESS: During our opening hours, Helios is open to for visits. Volunteers are always on location to show you around and answer your questions. We are located at 5 minutes of Saint-Henri metro.

Accessing the Makerspace is like going to a gym. You can get a membership which gives you access during business hours to the large set of tools at the workshop. By getting a membership, you are helping the workshop to pay the rent and maintaining the tools

You can come to the workshop and use the tools available at the Makerspace. If you have questions, volunteers are on location to help out and walk you through the process. After a few days at the Makerspace, you will know how to use all the tools without problem.

MEMBERSHIP PRICING:

REGULAR MEMBERSHIP:

75\$/month

50\$/month RECURRING(by VISA or MasterCard)

MEMBERSHIP PRICING

SPONSOR PROGRAM: You can contribute to make workshop sustainable. The contribution is used to improve the space and provide a wider range of services to the community. We have hundreds of people per month passing by our space which includes wood workers, artists, students, families and kids, hobbyists and entrepreneurs.

There is an excellent opportunity to advertise your brand in the Montreal community. Don't hesitate to contact us for sponsorship opportunities. (Sponsors include, Air Canada,

Source: http://heliosmakerspace.ca/#aboutus_2

32) Now to some perhaps more personal questions, if you wouldn't mind. I understand you are (almost) a life-long fan of the late Leonard Cohen. In fact as an adolescent you and a friend used to make trips from Ottawa to Montreal to search through the record stores to find LC records and that you were also "hoping to see the man walking the streets of the Plateau area of Montreal. Did you ever manage to catch a glimpse of him? When would this have been around what years?

33) Currently in Montreal there is an eclectic exhibition entitled "Leonard Cohen: A crack in everything" from a Leonard Cohen song where a number of different artists were asked to create a tribute piece to the singer/author/poet? It's currently at the Montreal Contemporary Art Museum, which is known by its French acronym "le MAC" i.e. Musee d'art contemporain and you are featured in one of the installations. Could you speak to us about that please? How did you get chosen to participate?

See: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/06/arts/music/leonard-cohen-montreal.html>

I'd like to read a paragraph from a recent NY Times article:

"the whole effect is simultaneously moving and very funny"

"...The reverence for Cohen reaches a crescendo at the museum in an alluring multi-channel video installation by South African artist Candice Breitz in which 18 older men are simultaneously singing - in some cases croaking - the words of the entire comeback album "I'm your man" accompanied by the (Shah Hashomayim) synagogue's choir. As the individually recorded men's voices merge and the men dance, sway or tear up, the reflection on aging and masculinity and superfandom is both comical and moving. "

How was that for you? What's it like to see yourself as part of museum exhibition?

34) Now we're spoken a great deal about your public life and your amazing career journey from construction work, to a truly commendable aviation public service career for 20+ years, to your transition in your 40s to the entrepreneurial side of life doing freelance consulting and then life as an internet commerce pioneer...and up to the present day as a craftsman, an on-line salesmant and a custom furnture manufacturer; however, I also understand you have a personal journey as regards

dealing with an alcohol dependency. You've been sober for 28 or 29 years? Would you speak to that please. Was it hard. Is it still hard?

35) Well we've covered a whole host of subjects...all fascinating...however, I called you a renaissance man and if that is true perhaps the one area we haven't yet touched up on how you stay healthy. Do you follow any kind of special diet and you have a sport you enjoy practising?

36) Squash...where do you play it? How did you start playing? (your 2nd wife)?

Are you an athlete?

Notes from telcon and emails: Shaun, first played squash at age of 35 at Delta President Kennedy Squash Health club... function of what hotels were in the 1970-1980s but in 1996 Delta closed the club or least reduced services drastically. It used to be run as an exclusive health club but over the years that type of service/institution disappeared. Started first by reducing member services at the hotel, so eventually I switched to the Y...a totally different type of atmosphere. I should have done it years before.

Learnt to play in mid-30s. His wife was Indian and she had learnt to play in India at the Gymkhana Club (exclusive sports clubs in India) and she got me in to SquashEgypt currently leads ranking of men's and women's top players men and women are Egyptian groomed out of private clubs...Montreal long a squash city and one a year the pros come into the city to play usually at the MAA. It happens to be this week MAA mid town....

Both the word *gymkhana* and the event it describes originated in 19th-century India. The word is probably an alteration of the Hindi "gedkhana," which describes a ball- playing area similar to a racket ball court, with the first syllable influenced by our word *gymnasium*. The first gymkhanas were displays of athletics and equestrian skill, and while those are still common, the 20th century introduced a new kind of gymkhana, designed to show off car handling. These newer gymkhanas are often held in parking lots, where contestants race over tight, twisting courses marked with cones or pylons.

37)???? Anything else you might like to add?

Background notes

Shaun Faucett lived in Ottawa but was well aware of Leonard Cohen and often carried his poetry books under his arm and sorted through Montreal record stores to find LC records. Travelled here from Ottawa as a young man with a friend hoping to "see the man wandering the streets" but he never did but hope always sprung eternal.

His career brought him to Montreal in his mid 40s. He had been working for the fed gov and had just completed a mid career executive MBA ...at the end of MBA, he came to Montreal to join IAMTI (International Airline Marketing Training Institute)....newly created- back in 1987 - its role was to train managers from developing countries. The Cdn Aviation Safety Board helped set up IAMTI, mandate was to train, kept in touch with students who took courses, lectured, undertook consulting contracts. SF was offered a full-time time Exec Direc Corpo Affairs position. In 1996, after 17 mnths, the Cdn Government no longer prioritized training over half fellowship grants paid the institution so much for training days but that all stopped 1996. ICAO and IATA took over the training. Was a shame as there is still a need; however, gov priorities changed.

Once that job ended I didn't look for another job. It was the first time I didn't have a job but I had always been entrepreneurial at heart. I had already done some part-time business consulting but marriage and becoming a father meant I needed full-time employment, so hadn't explored it effectively. When IAMTI disappeared I half-heartedly looked for another job. However, it was the late 1990s. The Internet was becoming ubiquitous. People were starting to earn a living online. I noticed that and started studying the trend. Since I had to keep up a stream of income as I still had commitments re my daughter, and myself, of course, since my wife and I had separated when I moved to Montreal (which I did with my daughter Leyla's blessing). So I did whatever came along...after two years consulting, I set up website...writing business letters, doing business strategies...Created a website called: Writing Help Central ... with 15 other associated but separate websites and did this for 15 years after that...generated a lot of traffic to these site; posted lots of info...how-to help mostly, as well as writing articles. Generated millions of free visitors, so started to study what people were looking and began writing "How-to" books. Finally published 15-20 how to books - relating to practical writing. Even "How to write How-to books". Had 15 other websites and there would be links to other websites concerning the product they were looking for and where they could download a pdf docs. Also most products also had an associated word template(s) that worked with the book. The books were also all available by Amazon.com. He was ahead of the curve, although he admits Amazon screwed him several times by changing technologies without informing their suppliers i.e. no concern for the "little guy". For instance, I had 10-12 books were available and which eventually led to Kindle, go-with-the-flow Kindle versions turned into Kindle POD versions. First he used company called Lightning Source. Amazon themselves had pointed me in the direction of LS, then Amazon unilaterally stopped using them since they had bought another platform called Create Space Pod Publishing. Unfortunately, I only made a 1/3 of the money with Create Space than I had with Lightning Source.

Those technology changes were the beginning of the end in a way. For 15 years did my websites and online publishing and for a good number of years I made good money i.e. from 2005-2012 my books generated a steady income, pod sales 40% of income also since I had millions of unique targeted individual visitors, which generated a lot of advertising money, especially prior to 2011-2012 when I had massive amounts of traffic to my sites.

Then in 2011-12 Google had big shake up with their search engine algorithms. Prior to that the search results got a lot of garbage since a number of lazy people had just generated rubbish web sites with key words that got noticed and so these garbage sites got high listings...i.e. they had learnt to game the search engines, these clicks hurt everyone body. With the new search engines i.e. Google Penguin and Panda there was a major reshuffling and clicks went down to 3 -4 million direct image ...so his income dropped as did his income from advertising. Google was just as bad as Amazon. Nothing... did it in a phased fashion given to it isn't aviation dad a pilot.

Things levelled off and published more books and optimized website then did an audio book but his income dropped to 30% of what it had been ...writing blogs with visitors from all across the world. Started to get tired...so I decided to sell my online properties.

Started to make my furniture three years ago. He and his daughter visited a high-end furniture store in Griffintown where they both lived. She saw a table she liked made of recycled wood and metal but it was expensive . He cheerfully and somewhat optimistically said: "I could

make you one of those". Since when he was young he had done welding and carpentry as school as an option. However, welding had always been simply a hobby...plus he lived in a condo apt in Griffintown where he was on condo board ... Still always resourceful he set up a workshop in his building's basement area, in an electrical room, which was okay as he was on the board, but not when had no knowledge of Griffintown's long history, or the part its residents had played in the building Montreal. His condo is in the Lowney 3 building, which is a new construct. Lowney 1 and 2 are in the old chocolate factory. always fa live in new build Lowney 3 doing centre of industrial revolution mid 1800 to 1900s recycled pallet boards plus industrial steel coupled these things all together and created Griffinworks....

Put concept together, tied it into my products and furniture...A year ago sold his web properties to one buyer and so was free to focus on his Griffinworks furniture business.

Had been approached to sell a few times they were buying websites and had a couple of authors but this was a year or two before I was ready to sell publishing editorial services and training company. they had contacting me saying...we'd like to place ads on your websites...so, at one point I researched them and they turned out to be a writing editorial training company based in Chatham, Ontario. I felt it was a sign (from the universe) i.e. the immediate sense I got from the website since in my early youth I'd a summer job in southern Ont in construction but I broke my back and spent 10 days in Chatham Ont hospital. Wrote her a letter. "My websites have millions of visitors, would you be interested purchasing them?" Sent her letter in Dec 2016 and by April 2017 everything was signed and sealed. I never actually met the purchasers in person. We did everything on the internet (and on the phone?). Used an online escrow company (name?) to handle the details of the sale - cost a few hundred dollars. Best money I have ever spent.

Never spoke to each other....on the phone....mostly related to amount of traffic you get. Network of 15 website fo 35,00 targeted subscribers...we managed to reach a deal and used a 3rd party broker to managed the purchase **Escow.com** money gets paid, it's the safe way for both sides to avoid getting cheated.

Learning how to earn a living online..it's a big thing about able to turn many different skills and able to identify a niche then build a business...

Started career studying Algonquin college in computer programming. er resitdnet Cana Transport Commission doing econometric reseach after 3-4 years didn't want to keep going. Then given project by Manager Transport Canada St Johns project team to do master plan in St Johns Airport primary authorority airport master plan joining Canadian Aviation Safety Board.Prior to that airplace crashes were investigated by Transport Canada...in 1970 crash in Cranbrooke 40 peopel killed. What was noteworthy TC was a liable party as the plane had come in execute runway and there was a snow plough on runway...series of events TC was a libable party and so in fact it was investigating itself. Haroeld Fawcettt (my father) was a searche and rescue pilot. Then got into aviation safety got job Chief of Aviaiton Safety dad was accident investigatior Dad and group of guys...witnessnesses, interviews crews, told them no matter what you tell us won't be used for litigation purposes ...talk to us freely, that way you can come at the truth of what happen. But it all came to a head over Cranbrook. TC wanted files and my father essentially refused "we aren't giving you this stuff. Led to the Dubbin commission, which eventually led to Cdn Aviation Safety Board, which eventually became multimodal safety i.e. all forms of transportation. Dubbin Commission exonerated his

father. The St Johns Airport project helped. Then helped set up and organized first public inquiry organization - TSB. Job first offered to my father but he suggested me for the job.

High School Shop Option Woodworking and Welding learnt basic stuff....also Dad was weekend warrior, a handy man. From 15-20 I had jobs as carpenter helper... over the intervening years I might have completed the occasional project but frankly I didn't do much over the years.

First played squash at age of 35 at Delta President Kennedy Squash Health club... function of when hotels were in the 1970-1980s but in 1996 Delta closed the club or least reduced the services provided. It used to be run as an exclusive health club but over the years it disappeared. Started first by reducing member services at the hotel, so eventually I switched to the downtown Y on Stanley St ...a totally different type of atmosphere. I should have done it years before.

Learnt to play in mid-30s. His wife was Indian and had learnt to play in India at the Gymkhana Club (exclusive sports clubs in India) and she got me in to SquashEgypt is now the world leader in both men and women's game = top 46 men or women are Egyptian, groomed out of private clubs....once a year the pros come to play in Montreal and this week is that time. Usually the MAA downtown, but for some reason this year it's at Mid town....i.e. le Sanctuaire sporting club.

I was a high functioning alcohol daily drinker escalated in my early to mid-thirties. Was able to do rehab while still working, so I kept my job. I was 39 when I entered rehab. Have kept sober by attending AA over the years. I don't go very often now but I attended an AA meeting in Westmount (St Mattias Church across the street from Shah Hashomayim) for years, now I do a maintenance meeting once a month. Reminds you where you are and that life is one day at a time

Alcohol is a lot less socially acceptable today; however, drinking was an big issue in my marriage; because I used drinking to deal or not deal with the problems in my marriage. Alcohol was one tool, the principal tool I used to escape the problems we had. Tools that I have developed in sobriety and in fact in an odd way, alcohol and ultimately rehab helped me leave my marriage ...I was a high functioning but daily maintenance drinker...you would rarely see me drunk. Ultimately though, I drank so much that I had to have alcohol to even function on the job. Luckily for me I didn't lose my job, however, recovery improved performance and one's IQ goes up 5010? points. Ability to cope.

Marriage was so bad that I drank myself out of my relationship and within a year of leaving it, I was sober.

After interview notes: Shaun Fawcett's story turned out to be one of the longest recordings in the ALCC collection, and Shaun even came back another time to "top up" his story with details on the part he played during his career in the aftermath of the Air India bombing and the creation of public inquiry methodology in Canada and in India. For further info on this

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