

The following transcript of

Art Carr's interview

on

Memories and Music

(broadcast May 9, 1982)

was created by

Videoplus Transcription Services

in 2013.

00:00:00

Track starts.

SCOTT TURNBULL: Welcome to Memories and Music on CIGM-FM, I'm your studio host Scott Turnbull, and I'll be providing some music for you a little later on, but right now, an introduction to today's guest, and here's Gary Peck.

GARY PECK: This week my guest will be Art Carr, and we'll be talking about what it was like to grow up in the Donovan area of Sudbury during the early 1920's. Art Carr is our guest today on Memories and Music. Mr. Carr is-, has been on the program a number of times talking about, or discussing the newspaper industry in the Sudbury area. Today, Mr. Carr, we're going to be focusing on your memories of early Sudbury, what it was like to grow up in the Donovan area. To begin with, I believe you were born September 17th, 1912?

ART CARR: Right.

GARY PECK: What was it like as a youngster to grow up in Sudbury, at that time?

ART CARR: That, Gary, is a difficult question to answer.

GARY PECK: It's a-, it'll take quite a while, I'm sure.

ART CARR: Because you have no yard stick by which to measure it.

GARY PECK: Mm-hmm.

ART CARR: That was where you grew up, so it had to be beautiful. Now, you used the term Donovan area, that was probably a little too broad. Let's reduce it to the area of Sudbury, where all the streets took feminine names, such as Eva, Mabel, Kathleen, etcetera. And I was born where Eva junctures or dead ends with Kathleen. And so my memories are, basically, of that little area and the people that lived there. Fred Davidson, the GM dealer, lived across the road, and his right hand man, Ernest Loney, lived across the street from him. But of course, dominant in my mind are the boys my age. The little gang that went around and together built forts, or huts up on the hills. Dug dugouts. Raided new buildings for a stock of nails, and so on. And of course, in the fall, we raided the neighbours' gardens and made horrible vegetable stews. And of course, to mention a few names, there's

Clifton Butler, Elvin Mantle, Eugene Cole, Jim Scott, and George Simpson. I think they're still active in Sudbury.

GARY PECK: Those people were raised in that general area?

ART CARR: Oh yes. They were members of what we would call the old gang. And of course, then there were the other, the men, the adults, that as a small boy, impressed you right away. And coming to mind is a chap who, well, for the purposes of this story, had better be nameless. I'm sure those that lived in that area will remember him, he was a carpenter, he was Irish, and a very droll, puckish sense of humour. And a modern word, I think, is empathy, this man certainly had empathy with the youngsters, because we would all flock to his place. In his garden we could select the largest cabbage.

GARY PECK: Were you invited or just would flock to it?

ART CARR: No, no, we didn't have to swipe...

GARY PECK: No?

ART CARR: ...cabbages in that garden. We could do-, if we were talking to the man, we could walk out and have a carrot.

GARY PECK: Mm-hmm.

ART CARR: And enjoy the carrot and knew that he enjoyed watching us eat it. I think he was a blessing. Many years later, when I was still in my teens but now covering police court, I looked at the docket for the day and strangely enough, there was this man listed on a charge of indecent exposure. Now, I hadn't had any personal contact with the man for a number of years, and he had aged. He was old when I first knew him, at least we felt he was very old. And I couldn't understand this charge. But as the case was heard, it became evident, that neighbourhood ladies had looked out of their kitchen windows on a beautiful spring, bright, warm, summer morning, and her-, at their horror, they saw this man spading his huge garden. Now, that didn't affect them, but on a sudden, second glance, they noticed that this man was wearing his work boots, his vests, and his battered old derby hat. Of course, someone, very self-righteous I suppose,

called the police, the paddy wagon came, and my aged friend was hauled off to the hoosegow. And now he stood before Magistrate McKessock. I'm happy to tell you that the Magistrate only registered a suspended sentence on this man, but looking down at this chap, I'm having difficulty not naming him.

GARY PECK: I'm sure you are, but I would prefer it if you didn't.

ART CARR: He looked down rather sympathetically and he said, but tell me, sir, why would you just wear your shoes, and your vest? And of course, the shoes were to protect his feet from the sharp edge of the spade, the vest, he explained was, well, a man has to have somewhere to keep his pipe and matches. And I think that's a cute story.

GARY PECK: That's an excellent story. How old were you, at the time?

ART CARR: Well...

GARY PECK: You were working for the Star?

ART CARR: I would probably be approaching 16, at that time, when I was sitting in police court and heard this story. Of course...

GARY PECK: But you had a sense of empathy for that man, at that age.

ART CARR: Oh, I did, I did indeed. He had a very kind heart, he must-, and he kept pigeons. And the pigeons did what come naturally, and they multiplied, and this vast cloud of pigeons flew around, and around in great circles above his house every day of the year, summer and winter. And it was a point of fascination with us small boys, we would assemble there, talk about the pigeons. And as we got a little older, we noticed that every Saturday this man would load up a little hand wagon that he had with pigeon crates. And these would be piled three or four decks high, and he'd away off to the farmer's market to sell pigeons. And of course, some of these pigeons wound up as squab, I guess, on dining tables of Sudbury, but most of them would be sold to young mothers, whose little boy wanted to start keeping pigeons. She would buy a pair of pigeons, the lad would go home, work all day Saturday and Sunday with packing crates, building himself a little pigeon loft. He would install his new pets in this loft and

of course, they immediately flew back home. And this man would point to a pair of pigeons and he would tell you, quite openly, that he had sold that pair three or five times. I don't think he was being dishonest, he was merely capitalizing on the ignorance of the purchaser. I guess, was it a case of caveat emptor?

GARY PECK: I think so.

ART CARR: And...

GARY PECK: Expensive lesson for some.

ART CARR: Yes. Oh, I think they sold for about 25 cents each.

GARY PECK: Mm-hmm.

ART CARR: Of course, 25 cents would buy five bottles of pop, in those days it was still a lot of money. But I suppose the young mothers could well afford it. And it helped the old aged gentleman in feed for his pigeons.

ART CARR: Mm-hmm. And I suppose he could justify it in his own mind.

GARY PECK: Looking back, that's one of the stories that sticks in your mind, and that individual. I think you-, he was a special type of person for the youngsters in the area.

ART CARR: Well, Gary, I could go on about Jimmy Newman, the old captain of the sailing ship and his little boat zip on Lake Ramsey when he used to come and say, I need some live ballast. And that was a great day.

GARY PECK: That was enough of an invitation?

ART CARR: Oh yes, and we would bluff down Lake Ramsey going with the wind very slowly, and then we would tack back and forth on our way back. Oh, that was a thrill to be remembered.

GARY PECK: One never had to be invited twice?

ART CARR: Oh, to be invited to be live ballast, that was a marvellous...

GARY PECK: That would make your day. We're going to have to end this portion of the interview. Today on Memories and Music, our guest is Art Carr. Mr. Carr was born in 1912 and raised in the Donovan area. Mr. Carr, what was that-, what were the various forms of entertainment for a youngster, at that time?

ART CARR: On Saturdays, if you had 11 cents, you went to the Princess Theatre to see Tom Mix, or your favourite comedies, or...

GARY PECK: Eleven cents?

ART CARR: Eleven cents, which was an awful lot of money. And if you didn't have 11 cents, you found other ways of amusing yourself. Now, of course, the Donovan area, as you know, is relatively close to the Frood mine. That paved road that winds over the hills didn't exist in those days. But we could walk, in fact, we went so frequent through the Frood mine we actually had a path. And we had our blueberry buckets with us, lard pails. And the Frood mine wasn't as it appears today, there was no great fox wire fence around it, with barbed wire on top. That was sort of the gateman's shanty. And as the men filed into work, there were rows of, I supposed 25 gallon metal drums filled with calcium carbide. And nobody told us not to do this, we didn't consider it theft. But we would fill out blueberry pails with calcium carbide, and to a small boy, that was a marvellous substance, you know. We could use it in our own miner's lands, to hunt dew worms. And we could also use it for-, well, we devised many ways. One of the simpler things to do with calcium carbide was to take some of it to school, usually in a little tin, tobacco box or something of that nature. And dump a little bit into-, the girl behind you in school, into her inkwell. And the inkwell would froth, and bubble, and boil out onto the girls' books, this was marvellous way to attract attention.

GARY PECK: That's the way to make an impression.

ART CARR: Oh yes. And then the steam radiators in the old classrooms had large vertical cylinders on each end, about the size of a tomato juice can. The caretaker kept these filled with water, the heat of the radiator evaporated the water, adding to the humidity of the classroom. And handful of calcium carbide dropped into one of these when the teacher was busy at the blackboard would will the room with the most delicious stench of garlic. That was another thing. A trifle more spectacular, you could get an old wine bottle with a good cork, partially fill the wine bottle with

water, throw in a couple of lumps of calcium carbide, ram the cork in, and point it at a chum. Of course, the expanding gases would expel the cork with terrific force, and a delicious bang like rifle. And if you were lucky enough to hit your chum on the shoulder blade, it would about near bring him to his knees. That was one way we used it. And then again, you could steal your mother's precious Crown sealers that she used for preserves, practically fill them with wet sand, add a few lumps of calcium carbide, frantically screw the top on, and chuck it into Ramsey, or Black Lake, or any one of the little lakes that were so readily accessible to us, and there would be a muffled thud, and all the poor little perch, and shiners, and sunfish in a radius of about 20 feet would float up to the service, you would kill them and you went home with a terrific string of useless fish. I suppose, looking back on it, it was rather horrible (inaudible).

GARY PECK: I would think so. Are you suggesting that that was the typical form of entertainment? When you didn't have 11 cents, I suppose.

ART CARR: Well, it was entertainment that we did use, there were many, many forms. We had street games that I never hear of today. We had run sheep run, which was an organized hide and go seek game. We played a game that certainly was hazardous, known as duck on the rock, it was the entire group competing with a player that happened to be it, he was the duck on the rock, and it employed watermelon sized boulders that you threw-, there was always danger of being clunked on the head with one of these. And it was vigorous and exciting, trying to get from one end to the other, trying to knock the duck off the rock, which immobilized the guy that was the duck, until he'd replaced his rock, because he couldn't tag you until he had. Another variance of that was swat the can, which was glorified type of hide and go seek. And then we made kites. I remember Clifton Butler was the best one of the gang in making round kites. I considered myself the best box kite maker of the gang. And there are others that made triangular kites. Kite flying was a marvellous way to spend an afternoon.

There's nothing more gratifying than feeling the gentle tug of a kite string, and watching something that you created defy the law of gravity. I've been asked to judge kite flying. I refused. Because there won't be a homemade kite in the group, they'll all be store bought. Then again, back to calcium carbide, and this almost approaches vandalism. We would run up a water filled rut, when we saw a car approaching, and we would fill 20 to 40, or 60 feet of that rut with a sprinkle of this carbide, and the chap posted at the end of the rut would light a great, huge wooden match and throw it into the rut, and the oncoming motorist would be confronted with flames four feet high from this rut, and he usually wound up on somebody's lawn. I can't remember a car ever being damaged, but then of course you must remember, that my father told me, boy, if the police were chasing you, don't run home, run the other way. And this was it. And of course, we had huts, forts we called them, built in the hills which didn't have houses on them. We also had dugouts where we dug holes and put roofs on. And the-, I suppose it was theft. We went to new construction sites for a stock of nails, the nails were always there in wooden kegs, and the wooden kegs, when they were nearly empty, we'd dump the nails out, because the wooden kegs made wonderful stools in our forts and huts. We even had cook stoves in some of them. When two of my sons were approaching their teens, I took them for a walk up the CPR track out of Sudbury heading west, took them back onto one of the hills to show them where we had built a hut when I was their age or younger. And lo and behold, there was the remnants of the old cast iron kitchen stove, and the sheets of corrugated iron that we had gathered here and there to form a watertight roof. And I can remember my two boys being absolutely thrilled at having found the spot where their father had played when he was younger than they were.

GARY PECK:

Back in the days when the youngsters really had to organize their own entertainment.

ART CARR: Yes, we had a swimming pool in that little creek that flows down in that cleft of the hills. We made a dam with old railway ties. But I think we're coming to the end of their time, aren't we?

GARY PECK: Yes, we are, in terms of that aspect of the interview. Welcome back to the interview portion of Memories and Music, our guest today is Art Carr. We've been talking about entertainment in Sudbury during the early 1920's, and what it was like to grow up in the Donovan area as a youngster. Mr. Carr, I believe you were involved or associated with what was known as the Star League? A hockey organization, or a hockey league, rather?

ART CARR: Yes, we talked earlier about Bill Mason and things that he did for the town. Organized hockey for small boys was absolutely unknown, and the Star League was organized by the Sudbury Star, so the impetus had to come from Bill Mason. And every ward of the city had its own boys' hockey team. They were centralized in wards, not at schools, so you see, we would have separate school players, usually Irish and French Canadian, on our team. And these teams were named after animals, I can't recall them all, I think there was the Fournier Ward Bearcats, and the Ryan Ward Lions, and so on and so on.

GARY PECK: Right.

ART CARR: And Saturday morning at the old Palace rink, we would have the ice surface for the entire morning and we would play leagues-, you know, competitive hockey with coaches, usually ex-pros. Joey Ironstone comes to mind, Jumping Joey, the famous goaltender. Sammy Rothschild is another main name. Shorty Green and his brother Red also coached teams. Now, these men I mentioned, formed the first New York American team, and in the eyes of us small boys, they were simply marvellous. And when they told us what to do and demonstrated how to do it, we really tried hard, because these were the experts.

GARY PECK: You were with the pros.

ART CARR: Oh yes. It was marvellous, you know. Now, I could skate, I could skate backwards faster than most of the boys could skate frontwards. I could stick handle not too well. I was terribly weak on the shot. We didn't have a slap shot. The slap shot was ridiculed as golfing. It was entirely wrist shot in those days. The blue line was very close to the goal crease, I think about 12 feet. There was no forward passing whatever, except behind your own blue line, so you had to work out short passing plays, and you passed slightly backwards, or you'd be called on the offside. And to be called on the offside made you look a trifle ridiculous, as if you didn't know what you were doing, and you were very careful not to be called, because if you were called too frequently, you'd be benched real quick. And you would be told rather blisteringly what you had done wrong. And boy, to offend an ex-professional player was just a no-no. Believe me, we boys works hard at it. I don't know what to tell you to elaborate on it.

GARY PECK: You've mentioned a number of the professionals, Hector Blake, of course, who was-, grew up in the Victoria Mines area, born in that community, did he play in the league? He's probably a better known...

ART CARR: Not in the school league. When you left the school, your primary school, you were out of the Star League, and you hoped you would be pick up by a mercantile league team. Now, Sudbury was hockey mad. Their juniors won the Memorial Cup time and again, and I knew all of the players on those teams, and I played with many of them. We mentioned Art Cressey, he was backup goalie behind Bill Gardner in one of our Sudbury's championship teams. And I have played hockey with Art Cressey. However, I imagine you would like to get on to-, you'd like to be good enough, you would apply and go for a tryout, and oh my, it was marvellous if you made the team. Now, Toe was introduced and he was quite young, as a possible Sudbury junior. But his first year in Sudbury, he was a few years younger than I, and a gangly youth, as I recall him, and really, we didn't consider Toe had any potential-, that's a horrible thing to say isn't it?

GARY PECK: Mm-hmm.

ART CARR: And I actually played...

GARY PECK: How wrong people could be.

ART CARR: Yes, I actually played opposing wingman, I can't recall-, now, I did stints with Sudbury Canoe Club, with Cochrane Dunlop Hardware, and with the Knights of Columbus over a three season spell, and I really can't tell you who the coach was when I was playing with Toe, because he was an unknown at that time. In fact, we were not aware of his nickname, he was Hector. And of course, you know how he got the Toe, didn't you? How his little sister?

GARY PECK: Why don't you repeat it on the air now?

ART CARR: Well, his little sister had trouble saying Hector. She could get the last, but it turned out to be Toe, and his family adopted that and he was Toe Blake, and still is.

GARY PECK: And it's stuck with him.

ART CARR: Yes.

GARY PECK: You were involved in organized sports, also you played in a band, I believe?

ART CARR: Yes. Both brass, I was a member of the GWVA and Citizens band.

GARY PECK: Great War Veterans?

ART CARR: Yes, the Great War Veterans Association. And then I was playing clarinet, woodwind, I managed to get enough money to buy an alto-sax and became a member of-, well, several minor jazz bands, including one with the amusing name of Bill Orange and his Lemons. And Bill Orange was the boy's name that led the band, he later went into medicine. I think he practiced in Sudbury, Doctor Orange. Then I was picked up by Henry Norris and his Midnight Ramblers. I would say that the Norris band was one of the two top flight bands, I would identify the other as Art Gimpoli's band. And I was very proud to be picked up by Norris. Guy Lombardo was just making the sax trio very sweet, and very popular. A sax trio required two altos and a tenor. There were no tenor sax players in

Sudbury-, pardon me, there was on, Eddie Cecchetto, and Eddie played with Art Gimpoli. Norris needed a tenor sax player, he heard me at dances, and he laid out a deal, whereby, employed in his band, I could indeed pay for a new tenor sax, and I went for it and I never regretted it. I also had to double on the flute, and somebody will remember out there the old dance hit that Ozzie Nelson made famous, I'm looking for a guy that plays alto and clarinet, and doubles on a flute, and wears a size 37 suit, because that is what I was doing at the time, only I played tenor. I guess that's why that song (inaudible).

GARY PECK: I'm sure that's why it's lingered in your memory. Now, these are-, you've given us-, provided us with examples of entertainment that certainly kept you busy as a youngster. You began to work in the newspaper business, I think, was at age 13?

ART CARR: Yes.

GARY PECK: Did you stay in the band while you were working with the newspaper?

ART CARR: Oh yes, and you would be out until two, or three, or four o'clock in the morning, depending how far you had to travel.

GARY PECK: You had a nine hour day with the newspaper.

ART CARR: Yes. But you were young and resilient, and I learned to turn things off and go to sleep almost instantly. We would travel to Capreol, of course, that's just a few minutes today, then it was...

GARY PECK: A trip then.

ART CARR: ...it was a trip. And we could get into the backseat of the enormous old cars and I could go to sleep almost instantly, and I...

GARY PECK: So you find a way...

ART CARR: ...and awaken when the car stopped. And you learned, I think, to conserve your energies. You played at Falconbridge, and to play for the Copper Cliff club was quite an honour, and I'll tell you that, for some years, Norris' band was the only jazz band that played in that lovely place where the dance floor was suspended on chains so that it would have a

resilience. And these chains were tightened with great turnbuckles, and the steward adjusted the buckles as the crowd demanded.

GARY PECK: An early example of special effects.

ART CARR: Yes, marvellous.

GARY PECK: We're going to end our program on that note. We'll return in a few minutes with a wrap up. Welcome back to the concluding portion of our program today on Memories and Music. Our guest is Art Carr. Mr. Carr, most recently you've been the publisher and editor of the Palmerston Observer, you were born in Sudbury in 1912 and left the community-, was it during the 1920's?

ART CARR: Yes, late '20's.

GARY PECK: You get back to Sudbury now and again, I assume?

ART CARR: Yes, I do.

GARY PECK: When you look back on the years that you've spent in Sudbury, what were some of the values that were instilled that have probably served you well through the years?

ART CARR: Gary, when I started to work, my father said to me quite seriously-, he called me boy, because I was an only son, I guess, he said, boy, always do a little more than you're paid for. Always do a little more than is expected of you. And then I was fortunate, in that, I worked with good craftsmen in the trade, or profession. And I saw that they were doing exactly what my father told me to do. And they sort of clinched the nail that my father had driven. So I tried to do a little more than was expected of me, and as the years rolled by, I found that, by and by, people were expecting more of me than I could deliver. But then, Gary, I think you know that in this life, it's what, 80 percent BS and blustering, and 20 percent actual fact.

GARY PECK: This program excepted...

ART CARR: I hope so.

GARY PECK: ...I must say.

ART CARR: So I have managed to obfuscate questions, I guess, and pull statistics out of the air, and build up defensive mechanisms to protect myself and those

close to me. And I've managed to survive in this game of life, and it's a glorious game, you know. And now, I suppose, the curtain is coming down, but I don't think so. I'd like to go on till about 120 and then be shot by a jealous husband. I think that would be ideal.

GARY PECK: That would make an interesting epitaph.

ART CARR: Yes, it would, yes.

GARY PECK: On that note, we're going to end the program, on that note of optimism on your part. And though you've made reference to the fact that one often likes to cloud the issue as a defence mechanism, I think that, really, over the-, considering the last number of programs that we've had, I think you've, in a sense, revealed your soul. I've found it most fascinating, your recounting of early Sudbury history and what it has been like to be a newspaperman. At this time I'd like to thank you on behalf of our listening audience, thank you very much.

SCOTT TURNBULL: And I hope you've enjoyed Memories and Music for this Sunday afternoon, brought to you by International Nickel. Mr. Carr is certainly an interesting guest, thank you very much to him. And hope you'll join us again next Sunday afternoon at 1:00 when we'll have another interesting guest. This is Scott Turnbull, have a pleasant afternoon.

00:31:03 **Track ends.**