

OCTOBER 2010

FOREVER YOUNG

GORD ATKINSON'S SHOWBILL

A Fond Farewell

The passing on August 19th of my old friend and fellow broadcaster, Dick Maloney, was like a “death in the family” for his colleagues and long time fans. For over 50 years he was a musical institution in his hometown of Ottawa. He sang at the capital’s popular nightclubs and restaurants and at our finest hotels and theatres. Anniversaries, birthdays and special occasions were celebrated as he crooned his romantic ballads and swung nice ‘n’ easy his favourite old songs. Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Jerome Kern and Richard Rodgers were among his musical mentors. Albert Francis Sinatra was his musical inspiration. The stars of the golden age of popular music his sentimental favourites.



On a sunny afternoon in the summer of 2006 Dick suffered a near fatal accident. While walking on a downtown Ottawa street on his way to meet his wife, Carrie, he stumbled on a section of broken sidewalk and fell to the ground. The impact of his fall broke his neck and caused a devastating spinal cord injury. He was rendered helpless and speechless. Passers-by called paramedics and he was quickly transported to the General campus of the Ottawa Hospital. His life was in jeopardy for some time.

His voice and ability to speak eventually returned, but not his mobility. He became a full-time resident of St. Vincent’s Hospital where he resumed his radio career, hosting his popular nostalgic program, *Sentimental Journey*, Sunday mornings on Oldies 1310. It gave him purpose and great satisfaction. Our mutual friend and popular radio personality Bob Derro thoughtfully assisted Dick in the production and taping of his programs. His hospital room became an on-location studio.

“As you know, Gord,” he once reminded me, “I love radio. It introduced me to show business. I was also greatly influenced by the stars of the classic movie

musicals of the 1930s and '40s. As a teenager I used to fantasize about being one of those performers up on the screen or performing on stage.”

It was in the 1960s that he embarked on his “fantasy” career fulfilling his boyhood dreams. He remained true to his roots as a life-long resident of Ottawa. With few exceptions everything that he accomplished as a recording artist and performer happened without him leaving home. “A few years ago,” he said proudly, “our former mayor Jackie Holtzman declared a special day in my honour. It was a wonderful pat on the back for all those years of entertaining in the capital.”

Another proud achievement was the *Dick Maloney Scholarship Award* named in his honour by the *Ottawa School of Speech and Drama* in recognition of “his life-long contribution to entertaining people in his hometown and beyond”.

When Dick began his radio apprenticeship in the early 1960s at CFRA our shared musical appreciation and common interests made us instant friends. Several years later he was hired by CJOH to host their popular program, *Saturday Date*. Dick followed this well remembered assignment touring Canada and the US singing in clubs and lounges, including *Dangerfield's* in New York, where he appeared with the downtrodden comic, Rodney “I Get No Respect” Dangerfield.

He shared marquee billing with an impressive group of performers, including: Rich Little, Tex Beneke, Pat Cooper and Phyllis Diller. He also had success as a composer for films writing two songs for the movie, *Undercover Agent*. He also made a Hollywood cameo appearance in the film, *Miss Castaway*, singing one of his own songs, *Island Girls*.

In 1980 as the program manager of CFMO-FM I had the pleasure of bringing Dick back to radio for our afternoon drive-home show. One of my most satisfying initiatives at that time was presenting his earliest record albums, *For Romantics* and *Touch the Heart*. We were collaborators for ten years.

As he looked back over a career of many memorable engagements he recalled the following fondly: “*The CFMO Big Band Dances* with a classy musician Moxie Whitney at the Sportsplex; working with the swingin’ Champ Champagne Band on those nights when they were cooking -- and of course my concerts at Centrepointe Theatre.”

The Maloney recording repertoire consists of 12 releases, including four CDs. His last collection, *Spice of Life*, features seven of his own songs with a total

of 16 easy listening selections, including 3 stand-outs, *Weren't We Lucky*, *They Don't Write Songs (Like They Used To)* and *All My Yesterdays*. The latter was written for his devoted wife, Carrie. He is accompanied by exceptional musicians, Bill Miller (Sinatra's pianist), Guido Basso and Peter Appleyard.

Another beautiful ballad that Dick wrote and recorded a few years ago, *So Little Time*, is a thoughtful reflection on life and its uncertainties. It was featured on his CD set, *Beautiful Beginning*. It is a very personal insight on life, love and the passage of time. It is one of his finest recordings – his *September Song*. There is no doubt in my mind that had he been born in an earlier era that he would have been an internationally acclaimed song stylist. For over 50 years Dick was Ottawa's resident troubadour – a renaissance singer-songwriter, who preserved and perpetuated the style and manner of our lyrical past.

His three children from his first marriage to Linda Maloney, Richard, Patti and Sean made him a proud grandfather. He was blessed with nine grandchildren. He was born on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1933.

Visiting his hospital room at St. Vincent's over the past four years was always an occasion to reminisce back to the good old days of show business -- the era that we shared and loved. I have lost a dear musical soul mate, but his classic recordings will continue to echo on my CD player and in my heart. Rest easy old pal!

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