

April 15, 2012

Today I learned CBC Radio Dramas are no more. I also heard a rebroadcast of one by Michael Enright. I made these notes:

- John Drainie in Joe McCarthy satire. Written by Reuben Shipp. Trudy (daughter) Shipp, now a Canadian, was deported with rest of her family after he lost his appeal of US Senator Joe McCarthy decision. Was in a prison hospital, went to Windsor Ontario. Bronwyn Dranie book called *Living The Part*. Her father drove to Buffalo to get better reception of McCarthy Un-American hearings.

From an eBay ad:

[Radio] THE INVESTIGATOR 1955 Discuroisities LP 6834 (M). 33 1/3 RPM. Original Radio Broadcast of 1 hour duration. A political satire. Written by R. Shipp, starring Canadian actor John Drainie. A plane crashes & "The Investigator" must decide who gets into Heaven. 1 hour. Pictorial cover by Wattley - a Senator McCarthy-like figure faces 5 leading citizens of history - Head Gateskeeper/Titus Oates/Torquemada/Cotton Mather/Baron George Jeffreys - with a bank of microphones. The rear panel has a complete history of the controversial recording of the political movement in the U.S. known as "McCarthyism." The "Junior" Senator from Wisconsin was finally Censured by The Senate in 1954 & Died 1957. A partial scan of the cover is shown. Scarce!

- John Drainie's wife thought he should **not** have spent time with his family, because the production was too important. In the play the McCarthy character is at the gates of heaven, deciding who gets in. All people named Karl Marx are sent to 'the other place'. The play was nationally broadcast. It was bootlegged as an LP released in the US, heard by liberals all over US, remembered by children of leftist families.

- Presages Diefenbaker when McCarthy says "I am the Chief!" over and over. The McCarthy era was so traumatic in the US that Drainey stayed in Canada because of his experience of the fear in New York, where the subject was taboo.
- The real Joe McCarthy was an alcoholic as you can hear in his slurred speech. He did not have a real skill as an orator, beyond making his speeches melodramatic and sermonizing.
- Contemporary as well as modern Canadian conservatives want to appease Americans and want to be rid of CBC Dramas, thought *The Investigator* scandalous. Compare this to *Afghanada* and CBC Drama being cancelled by the government.

My father (John F. Sullivan) and my family have deep connections with both Canada and with the CBC. We are now all Canadians, though one of us is now living in New York, as an American. He is more Canadian than I am, having been born here, while I spent my first years in Detroit.

I think a timeline would tell this story better, so here goes:

1850s:

My ancestor Michael Sullivan (alias Sweeny) comes to the Peter Robinson settlement near the modern Peterborough. I and my son are descendants in a long unbroken line of John Sullivans starting with Michael's son.

1860s:

My German ancestors settle near Bracebridge Ontario in a settlement called Germania, Ontario, Canada.

1900s:

My grandparents meet, settle at a border town, Detroit, and become Americans.

1945:

Iron Curtain goes up.

1952:

After WW2, my father gets a PhD on the GI bill, and goes to work for University of Detroit. He is an American, from Detroit. My mother is from Chicago. They start a family. My brother Michael is born.

1953:

I'm born.

1954:

CBC broadcasts *The Investigator*. A bootleg release of it circulates among leftists and intelligentsia in the US, probably including my parents, although they may also have heard the original broadcast from CBE, the local Windsor CBC studios.

Late 1950s:

Max Ferguson does comedy on CBC including his impressions, one of which is Joe McCarthy. The Senator himself dies in 1957. My family moves to Windsor, and father takes a job with the University of Windsor. We are Landed Immigrants, because my father has land (small suburban house). McCarthy, Drainie, Ferguson

have much of the credit. Father was not then, ever had been, ever became, a Communist. They were just scared academics.

1959: The Chief (Diefenbaker) cancels Avro Arrow jet, to soothe American fears.

1960-1963

Parents happy Kennedy is in White House, defeating Nixon (McCarthy-era Communist hunter). Nukes threaten. Kennedy dies. Vietnam War starts.

1968:

Nixon elected US president.

1969:

My father is named Head of the University of Windsor English Department. Students there protest the "**Americanization**" of Canadian Universities. My brother Mike registers for the US draft. I don't. We would take out Canadian citizenship as a family, and avoid the draft, but not while being accused of "**Americanization**" by students. We had been here 11 years. My grandmother was born as **Canadian** as hockey. My father had spent a lot of his young life in Germania, where his mother had taught in 1911, the year before the Titanic sailed. She had an Ontario teacher's certificate, which at that time was granted for life. It is a one-room school that exists still in 2012. I have been there four times. She passes away that year, in 1969.

1972:

Nixon re-elected. My family all get Canadian citizenship. The **Americanization** furor has died down.

1974:

20th Anniversary of *The Investigator* broadcast. Nixon resigns US Presidency.

1975:

Vietnam War ends.

1991:

Communist Soviet Bloc ends. Iron Curtain raised.

1993:

My father passes away. I am 40.

2004:

My mother passes away. I am 51.

From Concordia University:

E-1126-2. The Investigator

CBC Stage, 30 May 1954

Producer: Andrew Allan, Toronto, Trans-Canada

Network, 60 min., 59 pp., M002882

Concordia: production ts, microfilm, author's
ts; CBC: sound; McMaster: production ts; Public
Archives: sound BBC: 24 Aug. 1955

Satire: Investigator of subversives dies in
plane crash and enters heaven, zealously resumes his
profession, and is returned to earth--McCarthy-ish.