

HENRY COMOR 1931-2002

ACTRA's National President, 1964-1968



Henry Comor died on March 9. When he was first elected President in 1964, ACTRA was in a state of chaos, and when he left office in 1968, the union was on the road to achieving outstanding success. Henry's presidency served ACTRA well, but by 1968 he and some of his colleagues had so aggressively parted company that after departing he never again, with one exception,

participated in union affairs. When we talked a couple of years ago he remained hurt and bitter at the rejection he had experienced.

The problem seems to have been Henry's style. He was committed, emotional, energetic, hardworking, and fiercely opinionated. New to ACTRA in 1970, I was puzzled by the degree of unrest Henry continued to stir among some of the colleagues. "Perhaps," he perceptively remarked in one of our talks, "I had too much hubris." An immigrant (from England) he believed passionately in Canada, in the arts, in creators, and suffered from a curious delusion, that Canadian productions should be Canadian. With a new federal **Broadcasting Act** in the works in the sixties he led a vigorous ACTRA **Do You Care** campaign to make Canadian broadcasting, including the **CBC**, much more Canadian. This campaign was well organized, noisy, made waves, and many, including then **Secretary of State Judy LaMarsh**, thought it helped to get the job done. It certainly helped put ACTRA on the map.

The more I learned about how much Henry had done for ACTRA, and pondered his subsequent total alienation from the union, the more I felt an effort should be made to heal this breach. But a decade later several of those serving on ACTRA's board and executive remained among his least enthusiastic fans. In 1979, after a lot of argument, the executive finally agreed to host a dinner honouring and thanking *all* past presidents, though until he actually walked through the door no one was certain Past President Comor would turn up. The evening was very moving. Some tasty food and a little wine soon had Past Presidents **Dennis Sweeting**, **Henry**, **Victor Knight**, **Reg Gibson** and **Don Parrish** happily insulting one another, swapping yarns, reliving former glories, and at least partly dissolving some of their uneasy past. As Don Parrish later noted: "It was a great evening and we buried a lot of hatchets – in each other's heads!"

Henry Comor deserves to be remembered in ACTRA as a president who cared, perhaps too much, and because he cared, he fought hard and effectively for the members of the union he presided over for four creative years. And if, as in so many of our institutions, his idiosyncrasies resulted in his not getting a lot of thanks, this sad fault is ours, not his.

– Jack Gray



Farewell to HARRY BROWN

Family, friends and colleagues were saddened by the death of long-time **CBC** broadcaster and ACTRA member **Harry Brown**. He died in Newfoundland on March 30th after a short illness. He had undergone heart surgery two days before his death at age 72.

Harry was a native of St. John's and hosted some of Canada's most popular radio and TV programs during a career of nearly five decades. He began broadcasting in Newfoundland in 1951 as a **VOCM** staff announcer. In his early days he was known as Uncle Harry on **VOCM** radio's **Junior Jamboree**. His sharp wit and critical insight carried him through a 30-year career with the **CBC**. He moved to Toronto in 1968 and hosted or co-hosted **As it Happens** (1974-76), **Morningside** (1976), and **Marketplace** and **Take 30** in 1978. Harry received an ACTRA Award in 1976 for best public affairs broadcaster for **Metro Morning**. He retired from the **CBC** in 1986, but continued on with **TV Ontario** hosting **Speaking Out**.

Harry moved to Holyrood, Newfoundland in 1992 where he remained active in charity work and indulged his hobbies, including golf. In his memory, three former **CBC** announcers – **George Maclean**, **George Finstad** and **John Rae** – are donating a trophy to be awarded at the annual **CBC** staff association golf tournament. Harry is survived by his wife, sons Harold, Murray, Keith and Chris and daughter Robin. **Robin Brown** is the host of **CBC** Radio's **The Inside Track**.

– Russ Germain