

STEWART MCMORDIE CARTER

MY BROTHER MAC As told by Hugh Munro Carter

Some say the one word to describe Mac is *adventurous*. I agree he was adventurous, but more words are needed to capture the essence of that amazing man: *irrepressible, imaginative, positive, exuberant, energetic* are a few which spring to mind, but words fall short in describing this fun-loving, exciting, compassionate, sensitive brother.

Mac and I were the closest of friends, and yet, except for boyhood when we shared the same bedroom, we didn't spend much time together. There were long gaps when we neither saw each other nor even corresponded. Whenever we met, though, we enjoyed an instant rapport, and happily picked up our close friendship.

Mutual respect was a strong part of our relationship. I admired and envied Mac and he seemed to feel the same way about me. He was a fun-loving, positive force with huge momentum, and with a wide circle of friends which suited Mac and Sally to a T.

He could sometimes be quite exasperating in his eternal quest for something more exciting. I believe that to the end of his life he was pursuing a dream he couldn't quite define but it represented happiness and fulfillment. He kept driving himself to find it.



In part, Mac could be defined by the number of businesses he started. Toward the end of his life I remember counting thirteen, most of them still functioning. Not that Mac had anything to do with them by the time I counted them. He was passionate about finding a good idea for a business, incubating it, nurturing it, getting it up and operating, and then somehow he got bored, lost interest, and sold. He just wasn't made to be interested in administering a going concern.

In my opinion, his best idea, far ahead of its time, was what he called *Instant Offices Limited*. He bought an old large house on Broadway a few blocks east of Granville, renovated it, and offered for rental about twelve small offices with a central reception area and telephone switchboard. It was just what many salesmen needed, men who were on the road most of the time, and couldn't justify the expense of their own office, but needed someone to answer the phone and provide a few hours a week of secretarial service.

This type of facility became commonplace eventually but it was a brilliant new idea at the time. It was an enterprise, with low cost, little management attention, no personnel problems, and with huge untapped demand - resulting in a healthy profit. The entire house and each little office were attractively decorated by Sally.

An example of his innate search for new ideas was demonstrated when the family visited us in England. He was most observant of differences in the way things were done compared to back home, and whether he might implement the idea(s) on his return to Vancouver.

It was the business that financed the family's trip to Europe. Mac and Sally with Doria, Hugh, and John had an experience almost unimaginable at that time - by taking a year to see Europe. The schools agreed to release the kids for a full year on Mac and Sally's undertaking to commit to a minimum number of hours a week of supervising studies. So off they went! They bought a minibus and rambled through many countries.

One of the highlights of that trip for Mona and me, and our family was Christmas and New Year's at Cap D'Ail, a fashionable resort town on the Mediterranean, bordering on Monaco. Our dear friends, Jackie and Art Ralph lived in Monte Carlo, only minutes away. With typical initiative, Mac and Sally had found a quaint and enchanting villa in Cap D'Ail that had been converted from an old lighthouse. It was right on the water and had several bedrooms.

What a jolly time was enjoyed by the two Carter families and the Ralphs! Hilarity reached its peak one evening among the six adults after the kids had gone to bed. Art Ralph was a limerick enthusiast and I had made copies of many of his best. We started with a few innocuous ones and were soon giggling and laughing like a bunch of teenagers, finally roaring with uncontrollable laughter as the limericks became naughtier and naughtier. After a particularly juicy one we heard a noise on the stair and discovered several of the kids were watching and listening to the childish behavior of their parents.

Embarrassment and indignation swept over us as we chased the kids back to their bedrooms, but we were too weak from laughter to be really critical.

In 1943 both Mac and I were in the RCAF. Because of Japan's entry into the war, I had been sidetracked from my way overseas and was stationed in Bella Bella, B.C. flying as a navigator in *Stranraers* doing coastal runs. Mac was in Europe in Bomber Command. He came home on leave, and one of his first priorities was to visit Mona and me on our houseboat near Bella Bella. It was a thrill to see my "kid brother" take precious hours out of his time at home to spend a couple of days with us. There wasn't much to do, other than introduce him to the dozen or so couples who were mad enough to live as we did - on a houseboat in primitive conditions, and to take him to my RCAF station, show him around, and introduce him to the men I flew with. But two days passed quickly with enjoyment of every minute of our time together.

The other side of the coin was my visit to him as he was clearing land at Vaucroft a few years after the war. I took the bus to Secret Cove and a water taxi over to Thormanby Island where I spent the day helping him. We lit a couple of bonfires to burn the brush and other debris and were

specially vigilant in watching for boats approaching as it was illegal to have open fires at that time of the year and the authorities were always on the lookout for transgressors.

A memorable experience was when we came together on Mac's final trip home from his wartime experience in Europe. My squadron in Newfoundland had been disbanded and we were waiting for demobilization. In the interim I was stationed at a holding depot in Halifax where I volunteered for duty in processing thousands of returning servicemen as ship after ship brought them home. They were put on trains at the Halifax docks and transported to their home towns. The job assigned to me, helped by a sergeant, was to be in charge of a train. It was up to me to ride the train through to its destination, maintain discipline, and deal with any personal problems.

In Halifax, the principal port for the repatriation of the Canadian armed forces, I had access to the records showing the list of names aboard each ship. On one of them, there it was: **Flying Officer Stewart McMordie Carter!** Mona and I were on the dock as the ship inched its way to be berthed. We caught sight of Mac far above us at the rail of an upper deck with hundreds of other men, all waving and shouting and singing.

There was a problem. Tight security forbade any of the returning men to leave the ship except when marched *en masse* onto a train. The gangplank, when it was lowered had four armed sentries to prevent any enthusiastic or drunken returnee from getting ashore. I broke all the rules. I went past the sentries as though I were part of an official party (I was a Flight Lieutenant so the sentries saluted me without any questions.)

I found Mac on an upper deck and we embraced warmly. "You have to say hello to Mona", I said, and Mac and I marched down the gangplank past the saluting sentries. "I'm taking this man off for documentation", I said authoritatively. The sham worked, and Mac, Mona, and I had a joyous few minutes together. We were not only overwhelmed to see him but also so proud of his having been awarded the *Distinguished Flying Cross*.

To my knowledge Mac worked as an employee only twice during his life, once, for Pitney-Bowes and once for our father Bob Carter. At that time Pitney-Bowes' only business, so far as I know, was making and selling postage

meters. Mac was a salesman, entirely on commission, no salary, no expense account. He not only loved it, he excelled. He became the leading salesman in North America! At their annual sales conference somewhere in Florida he was feted and extolled as the star.

Working on commission finely tuned his appreciation of time and how precious it is. He learned instinctively which prospective client could be called on during the lunch hour or at quarter to five in the afternoon, and even at quarter to eight in the morning! He had lunch on the run or often not at all. This was the restless Mac, always wanting to be active and successful, with not a lazy bone in his body.

His other experience working for Dad didn't work out, and I don't know why. Our father was not a martinet, but he had little idea of how to work with other people, except in the sense of a boss giving instructions to an employee. For him, people either knew what to do on the job or they didn't. The concept of training or coaching was puzzling to him. If you had to be shown how, you didn't know your job. I suspect it was this facet of our father's makeup that made it difficult for a sound working relationship with a very forthright and independent Mac seeking to carve out his own area of responsibility.

The upshot was that after working for Dad for a while, Mac and Sally emigrated to California. They might well have stayed there if it were not that the business he founded ran afoul of the beginnings of environmental thinking and legislation. He started a company that processed human sewage into a sterilized black powder, packed and sold in 50- and 100-pound bags to be used as garden fertilizer.

Mac named the product **Black Gold** and it got off to a good start. After about a year the idea began to take root among the agriculturists that recycling human waste could lead to a deleterious and perhaps dangerous build up of trace elements in the human food chain. That killed the whole project and Mac and Sally returned to Vancouver.

RoseMarie and Sid Winsby remember many escapades and good times with Mac and Sally and others. For example, in 1975 four couples converged on Bing Crosby's home in Palm Springs which believe it or not could be rented in

all its splendour. Mac and Sally, the Winsbys, Judy and Sandy Winsby, and Mac and Sally's son Hugh and his girl friend. It was typical of Mac to find such an opportunity and to be the catalyst in getting a group together.

That visit prompted Mac to take an interest in Palm Springs and he and his 'gang' returned several times.

It would take many volumes to depict Mac, all his facets, all his talents, all his friends, and all his adventures. I have tried to capture some of the essence of this remarkable man. I conclude by attaching Dave Carmichael's account of how and why Mac was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his calm bravery as an officer in The Royal Canadian Air Force.

Hugh : I will take a little time off and fill you in with Mac's history in Italy, after his crew had been practicing bombing stationed in Cairo and North Africa.

After peace was declared and we Canadians were sent to embarkation pools, was the time Mac and I were again together, this time in Torquay. We had met in Bournemouth by accident (just after we got overseas). I was on parade and saw Mac walking along the parade square --- I let out the old whistle, he spun around and I broke ranks and we meet on the parade square. We were excused and went to have a beer.

We simply bumped into one another in Tourquay, actual Paignton, a place close by, and came home.

Both Mac and Brian had paid me a visit at my airfield and the three of us went up for a flip across the Bristol Channel. We spent 3 weeks in Paignton with a dance at the Imperial hotel practically every night---what a time.

Here it is:

While Mac was in Italy, and with the Germans retreating back to Germany, the highways were plugged with their troops marching or on trucks, taking their heavy armament of course. They were heavily armed with anti-aircraft guns because of their vulnerability to aircraft --but --they were

getting troops North. The air was called upon to blow a bridge the Germans had to use. A number of attempts had been made to bomb it -- none had been successful. Mac's squadron was called upon to send in aircraft to attempt a mission, which had to be done in daylight. Mac's aircraft, called the Dark Angel, (as I remember) was one of five to go in -- not a cheerful exercise.

The planes got to the target area during an afternoon, the flak was very heavy and, as I was told, one aircraft got the chop. They were flying at only about 15,000 feet to the target and reduced height on the approach attack. When the other aircraft had made their runs and dropped their load, Mac's skipper made the approach, and Mac took over as the target came in sight. As bomb aimer, Mac directed the pilot best he could. The flack was bad and the aircraft unsteady, which made accuracy difficult. Mac told the pilot they had to make another run, which was not taken lightly by the crew, but it had to be done as he ordered. On the second run the aircraft was down to 10,000 feet on the approach. Mac called for "Steady!", and a few seconds later he said "Bombs away!". The pilot turned and set out for home. The bombs made a direct hit and that was the end of the retreat for a few thousand Germans who were now hopelessly outflanked.

Mac's action was reported to the debriefers and the bridge incident was reported to higher command. The DFC was an immediate one, in the field----
----- and so it was.

The capture of enemy troops enabled a quicker advance by the Americans and Canadians. You probably know the history of the PPCLI (Princess Pat's Canadian Light Infantry). The capture of the Germans certainly reduced the number of casualties that could have been inflicted on the allies.

And that is the story, as close as I can recall Mac telling it to me while in Tourquay. I never, for a second, regret any time we spent together, and I cannot recall one argument -- we had small differences, but no big deal.