



## **GORDON SINCLAIR**

1900 – 1984

Throughout the history of Etobicoke, many interesting and colourful characters who have made their mark on the world at large have chosen to make Etobicoke their home. Long-time Etobicoke resident Allan Gordon Sinclair was one such individual. He was renowned as a reporter and a journalist, a broadcaster and an author. He was a popular game show panelist and a seasoned world traveler. Sinclair was also well known for being highly opinionated and wearing his trademark flashy suits; long before there

was Don Cherry there was Gordon Sinclair.

Sinclair was born in Toronto's Cabbagetown neighbourhood to Scottish immigrants in 1900. In 1916, before completing his first year of high school, he dropped out to take a bank job. For the next few years, he worked a variety of odd jobs – including being a part-time soldier and farm hand – before landing a job as a reporter at the Toronto Daily Star in 1922. After years of routine assignments, Sinclair eventually got a byline and rose to become one of the paper's star reporters. For over a decade, he filed stories from the field around the world, traveling to destinations such as India and Afghanistan.

A new period of Sinclair's life in journalism opened when he began his relationship with CFRB radio in 1942 during the Second World War. He eventually became a partial owner of CFRB and continued to be associated with the station for over forty years.

With print and radio journalism under his belt, another opportunity arose for Sinclair in 1957 when he commenced a career in television as a charter panelist on the new CBC program Front Page Challenge. He remained a panelist on the flagship program for twenty-seven years.

Throughout his years in the media, Sinclair wrote a number of books including two autobiographies: *Will the Real Gordon Sinclair Please Stand Up* (1966) and *Will Gordon Sinclair Please Sit Down* (1975). He also wrote several best-selling books based on some of his travels: *Cannibal Quest* (1933), *Khyber Caravan* (1936), and *Signpost to Adventure* (1947).

Sinclair's comments – whether in print, on radio or on television – were often controversial. He held strong opinions on many issues of the day and was not afraid to voice them, often facing criticism for his views. However, one of his radio editorials would vault him to almost universal popularity in North America. The year was 1973 and the United States was still grappling with its involvement with the war in Vietnam. Sinclair was broadcasting regularly on his radio column *Let's Be Personal*. He decided to record a tribute to the American people whose country was struggling to do what it felt was right, but was the target of vicious criticism around the world. *The Americans (A Canadian's Opinion)* was a phenomenal success in the United States and even rose to #24 on the *Billboard Hot 100*. When then U.S. President Ronald Reagan visited Canada in 1981 during his first state visit, he thanked Sinclair for his support during a difficult period for Americans.

It is clear that Sinclair loved working and sharing his opinions. In the weeks leading up to his death at age eighty-three, he was still doing fourteen broadcasts a week for CFRB radio and appearing on *Front Page Challenge*.

Sinclair was honoured with many tributes and awards both during his life and after his death. In 1970, the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television created the Gordon Sinclair Award for “outspoken opinions and integrity in broadcasting.” In 1972, he was named to Canada's News Hall of Fame. The Gordon Love News Trophy was awarded him in 1974. Also in 1974, he received the Radio/Television News Directors' Association's Distinguished Service Award “for Challenging and Courageous Commentary.” He was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1979. In 1984, he was posthumously inducted into the Etobicoke Hall of Fame, as well as the Canadian Association of Broadcasters' Hall of Fame.

*Inducted into the Etobicoke Hall of Fame in 1984*