

THE

SONINS

Ray's Memory Lane

By NANCY ENRIGHT
Ray Sonin says he would never move back to his native England and that should make many Torontonians happy.

As host, writer and producer of CFRB's *Calling All Britons* and *Down Memory Lane*, Ray is a lot of radio

listeners' cup of tea.

Ray and his wife, Eileen, are now Canadian citizens, live in Mississauga and have busy schedules.

Eileen travels frequently across Canada speaking on psychic phenomenon. In between lectures, she has written three

Saturdays from 4:10 p.m. to 5:45 p.m.

In 1968, Ray began broadcasting *Down Memory Lane*, a music-talk show based on nostalgia, long

before it became fashionable. *Down Memory Lane* is on CFRB Monday through Thursday at 8:10 p.m.

Ray arranges all his programs at home in his record room, filled with 12,000 records ranging from Irish folk tunes to Caruso selections.

In fact, it was a Caruso record he received from his father as a child that sparked his love of music. Another early gift he received was a violin, an instrument he still plays when he can find time.

Ray Sonin was born in London in 1917. He became a newspaper reporter at the age of 17 and edited monthly trade magazines at 19.

In 1939, he joined the staff of *Melody Maker*, the number one showbusiness weekly in England, where he continued to write

humorous articles on pop music and comic verse. He later became news editor of the paper, followed by a 10-year position as managing editor.

Ray met Eileen at

Melody Maker and they were married in 1940, the same year he began freelancing for the BBC. He wrote radio comedy scripts for such stars as Edward G. Robinson and Noel Coward, and was also the principal writer of the wartime radio hit *Hi Gang*.

When Ray left *Melody Maker* in 1951, he retired to the country to write books — seven whodunit thrillers and one science fiction book called *The Adventures of Space Kingly*.

"I'd still like to write books, especially one about Mississauga, but I haven't wholly mastered Canadian idioms," Ray says.

He also wrote pop songs at one time, including the war hit, *The Homecoming Waltz*.

"Besides lack of time, there's a problem of finding a good pianist to work with now, but if there are any around in Mississauga, I'd certainly like to meet one and give another go at writing songs."

Another highlight of

Ray's career came in 1952 when he was asked to turn the struggling music weekly, *The Musical Express* into a respected showbiz newspaper.

Renamed *The New Musical Express*, the paper attained a circulation of 80,000 per week under Ray's direction and is now the largest weekly showbiz paper in the world.

The Sonins moved to Canada 17 years ago and have lived in Mississauga for five years. They have one daughter living in England. For four years, Ray and Eileen co-hosted a television magazine program called *Breakfast with the Sonins* on CHCH-TV.

"We're still asked to do it," Ray says, "but again, there's just not enough time."

Besides his regular CFRB radio shows, Ray co-hosts *The Family at War* with Judy LaMarsh, televised Sunday evenings at 8 p.m. on Channel 19, Cable 13.

He is also the master of ceremonies of a British pub night every Tuesday at the Ascot Inn.

Even with the additional time Ray spends driving to and from Toronto, he still finds time for community activities, such as beauty pageants, auctions and entertaining at senior-citizen centres.

"I love Mississauga and I wish I had more time to get involved in the community. We've

found a country village atmosphere here, unlike downtown Toronto," Ray says.

"The tradespeople here are extremely friendly and honest and our neighbors are very kind. My next door neighbor often drives me to work if something goes wrong with my car or if I can't drive for some reason."

Although Ray has received the TV Radio Mirror award for Down Memory Lane

for Outstanding Programming in its Broadcasting Area and is also a member of the Quarter Century Club of the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, he still has one outstanding ambition.

"It may sound immodest, but I would like to have a road or park named after me. Since radio broadcasts only last the length of the program — and I don't think the books I've written will be

around forever — I think it would really be an honor."

Ray Sonin's many listeners and admirers would undoubtedly not like to think of a future without week nights and Saturday afternoons filled with his unique broadcasting talents and warm, companionable nature.

But they'd have to agree that his ambition is far from immodest.



Eileen and Ray Sonin relax in the sunroom of their Mississauga home. The Sonins have lived here for five years and Ray says he loves the country village friendliness of the residents. (Times photo by Stan Carmichael)