

LORNE CARR, 96: ATHLETE AND HOTELIER

## **Oldest surviving Toronto Maple Leaf won the Stanley Cup twice**

**A member of the only team in history to win the championship after losing the first three games in a best-of-seven series, he retired to Calgary to open a pool room and a unique hotel**

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CALGARY -- Lorne Carr was the last man standing. Part of the renowned 1942 Stanley Cup-winning Toronto Maple Leafs, he was not only the last living member of that team but the oldest former Maple Leaf and the oldest surviving Stanley Cup champion.

Mr. Carr's 13-year career began when the National Hockey League had nine teams. He spent eight years in New York with the Rangers and the soon-to-be-defunct Americans before being traded to Toronto. He found his greatest success there, as a member of the only team in history to win the Stanley Cup after falling behind 3-0 in a best-of-seven final. He also challenged for the league scoring crown as a Leaf and was twice named a first-team all-star.

Lorne Carr grew up in Calgary - he said his earliest memory was that of his mother, Mary Louise Carr, taking him to the very first Calgary Stampede in 1912. But his interests proved to be more on ice than on horseback. He displayed a talent for hockey at an early age, spending "entirely too much time" on the city's outdoor rinks. He later played two seasons for the Calgary Junior Canadians.

At 20, Mr. Carr travelled west for his first taste of professional hockey in the Pacific Coast Hockey League, as a member of the Vancouver Lions. Mr. Carr won his first professional championship in his only season with the Lions, who defeated the Edmonton Eskimos 3-1 in the 1931 PCHL finals. Mr. Carr would later recall that a prominent Vancouver sports writer of the time, Andy Lyttle, wrote that he wouldn't amount to much as a hockey player. At 5 foot 9, he was considered too small to make it in the NHL.



Undeterred, Mr. Carr decided to ply his trade in the east, nearer to the National Hockey League and its scouts. Over the next five seasons, he played for three teams in two minor professional leagues in New York and Pennsylvania. Midway through the 1933-34

season with the Syracuse Stars, he was signed by the New York Rangers. He played in 14 games and did not register a point or penalty.

Mr. Carr was moved to the Rangers' rivals, the New York Americans, where he blossomed into a top player. He played right wing on the top line and was the team's second-leading goal-scorer, behind fellow Calgarian Sweeney Schriner, a future Hockey Hall of Famer and Maple Leafs teammate.

Mr. Carr's career crossed paths with Eddie Shore, an infamous Boston Bruins bruiser who had nearly killed Maple Leaf Ace Bailey in 1933 with a vicious hit from behind. Six years later, Mr. Shore was still up to his old tricks. He hit Mr. Carr so hard that it caused permanent damage to his kidney, leaving in its place what his doctor referred to as a "dried-up bag." Ironically, the blow may have saved Mr. Carr's life - with a non-functional kidney, he was considered ineligible for the military and spared the prospect of combat during the Second World War. He finally had the kidney removed in 1947, after his playing career ended.

Mr. Carr played for the financially strapped Americans for seven years until he was traded to Toronto for three players and cash just before the 1941-42 season. Mr. Schriner, who had become a Maple Leaf two seasons earlier, had pushed for the team to acquire him. Mr. Carr played without a contract for two months before receiving a \$500 raise from general manager Conn Smyth, boosting his salary to \$6,000. "Well, I thought that was pretty good," he said years later.

It was also around this time that Mr. Carr became a celebrity in Calgary. Having joined a Canadian team, it was far easier for his friends and fans to follow his career by listening to Hockey Night in Canada every Saturday. Alan Parry grew up next door to Mr. Carr, and regarded him as his hero.

It didn't hurt that his play reached new heights in Toronto, and that his first season there was capped by a playoff series for the history books.

The Maple Leafs had finished second in the league, and defeated the Rangers to earn a berth in the Stanley Cup finals against Detroit. The Maple Leafs had finished 15 points ahead of the fifth-place Red Wings in the regular season and were heavily favoured - so it was a shock when they dropped the first two games, both close, at Maple Leaf Gardens. The third game in Detroit produced even worse results -- a decisive 5-2 loss in which Mr. Carr was Toronto's only scorer. Suddenly, the Leafs were behind three games to none.

"Somebody in the dressing room said, 'They've got the champagne on ice,' " Mr. Carr told the Calgary Herald years later. "That's all we needed to hear."

Out of desperation, Toronto benched two all-star players, defenceman Bucko McDonald and right winger Gordie Drillon. From that point on, the line of Mr. Carr, Mr. Schriner and Billy Taylor dominated, racking up 21 points between them.

In the decisive seventh game, the Leafs found themselves on the ropes again, down 1-0 after two periods. The top line took over, with Mr. Carr assisting on two goals by Mr. Schrinier, as the Maple Leafs went on to win 3-1 and take the Stanley Cup.

To this day, only two other teams in professional sports have gone on to win a best-of-seven series after losing the first three games: the New York Islanders during the 1975 Stanley Cup quarterfinals and the Boston Red Sox in the 2004 American League pennant race. And only the Maple Leafs did it in a championship final series.

Mr. Carr went on to play four more seasons with Toronto. He led the team in scoring, was twice named an NHL all-star and won a second Stanley Cup in 1945, when the Leafs upset the Red Wings, four games to three.

He retired after the 1946 season, ending a career spanning 580 games, scored 204 goals and recorded 426 points.

Mr. Carr returned to Calgary, where he became a partner in a pool hall and then went on to found the Amylorne Motel on what is now the Lake Bonavista subdivision in southern Calgary. Named after Mr. Carr and his second wife, Amy, the motel featured an 18-hole golf course and a driving range. By all accounts, he had developed an unashamed love of golf during his hockey career. "It was a favourite haunt for hockey players," Mr. Parry recalled.

Mr. Carr's life after hockey was marked by tragedy. He had the singular misfortune to lose three wives to cancer. He also lost his older son, Jerry, a commercial pilot, in a plane crash.

Mr. Carr remained something of a local celebrity. He was often invited to visit the Calgary Flames and identified with the Flames' own diminutive scoring threat, Theoren Fleury.

In 1992, he was presented with his own Stanley Cup ring, 50 years after first winning the celebrated trophy. If the reward and recognition was late in coming, it was not in Mr. Carr's nature to show it. As he later reminisced about his hockey career: "We would have done it for nothing."

## **LORNE CARR**

Lorne William Bell Carr was born July 2, 1910, in Stoughton, Sask. He died of natural causes in Calgary on June 9, 2007, a month shy of his 97th birthday. He is survived by his son Bryan and daughter Judy. He was predeceased by wives Sylvia, Amy and Evelyn, and by his son Jerry.