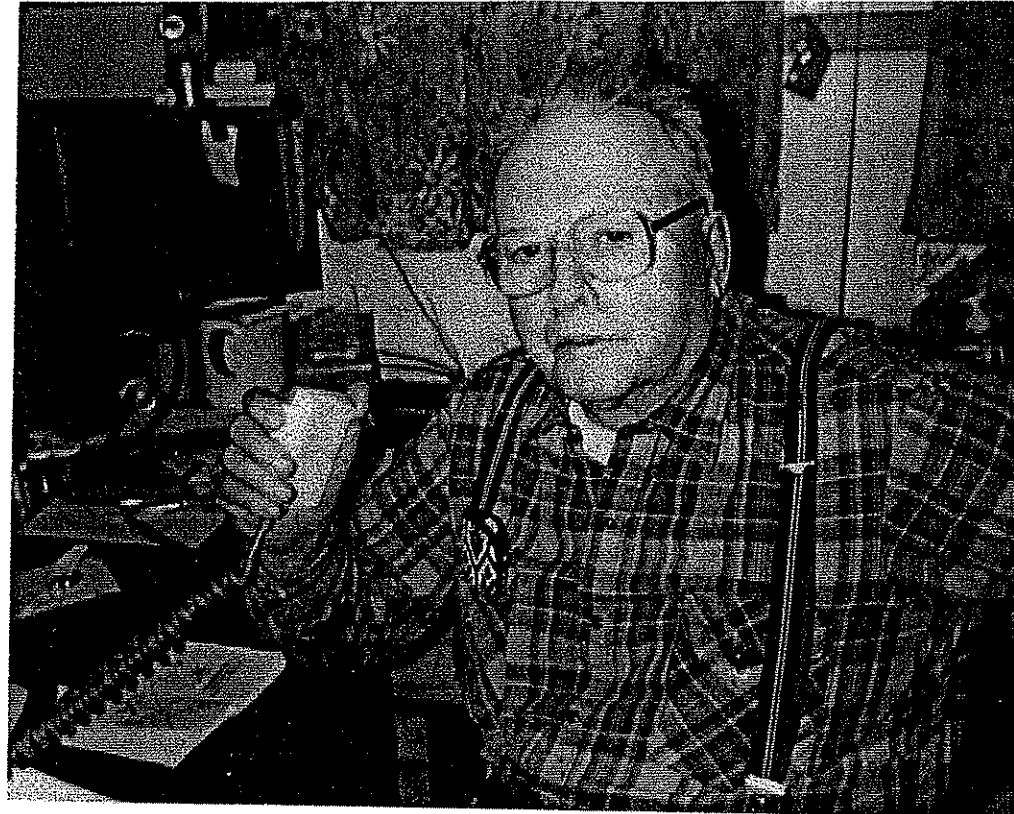


The Jack Kelly Story

*A portrait of Mr. W. J. (Jack) Kelly Sr.
as told to Darnell Fraser*



Mr. Kelly, at his radio

Perhaps you will wonder what the following article has to do with the museum.

A Museum is a place of artifacts of the past. But, each of these items came into being because of an event or a necessity.

Personalities happen in the same manner. Without the ingenuity of people, struggling to overcome personal hardship in their lives, our museum would be a building, housing nothing at all.

A noted local historian, Jack Kelly Sr. is very knowledgeable about our own area's past history.

This information could well be the subject of a future newsletter story, but in this article, I wanted to concentrate on the man himself.

People of great character do not happen by accident. Most of the time, events in our early years, shape our lives for the happenings of the future.

Mr. Kelly was born in Regina, Saskatchewan in 1914. His parents were both born in Ireland, but there the similarity ended. You have probably heard of the line in

the song by the Irish Rovers, that goes "My Father, He Was Orange and My Mother, She Was Green." Well, thus was the delicate predicament between Mr. and Mrs. Kelly, Jack's parents. His father came from Northern Ireland, his mother from Southern Ireland. The couple were treated as outcasts by both sets of parents, Jack's grandparents. Jack's parents then decided to emigrate to Canada and settled in Regina.

It was World War I, and Jack was still an infant when he traveled to Ireland with his mother to visit his grandparents. Upon her

arrival at her father's estate his mother was turned away from her parent's home by her father. She and her two children were taken in by her brother, Jim Coulter, to stay while they were in Ireland. They had a very long and tiring sea voyage. They traveled through the States because during the war the United States was a neutral country. Feeling rejected by most of her family, they returned to Canada on the ship Lusitania.

Arriving in Canada, Jack's father joined the Northwest Mounted Police in Regina. Later he enlisted in Canadian Army during the First World War.

It was in Regina, after their Ireland voyage, and while his father was overseas, a neighbor, Mrs. Duff, a Scottish lady, came over to see how Jack's mother and her young family were getting along. She found the young woman and Jack's older brother dead. Jack was alone, in his crib, soaking wet, hungry, and crying. A terrible flu had come through the area that year, killing hundreds of people. Jack's mother and brother were two of its' casualties. The Duff family took Jack in during the remainder of his Father's war service time.

Jack's father returned to the North West Mounted Police after the war and took a homestead sixteen miles north of Gravelburg, near the town of Shamrock. He wanted to take young Jack with him but Mrs. Duff said the life would be too hard for the young child on a homestead and persuaded Jack's father to let the child stay with the Duff family until the father was settled and had a home for his son.

Meanwhile, the Duff family along with Jack moved to Whitewood. The Duff's mortgaged everything to support this move and had really difficult financial times in Whitewood. The Duff's lost everything except their house, during the Thirties. This move also lengthened the traveling distance between Jack and his father.

Jack's father met and married a young woman during the separation of father and son. But he did not reveal to his second wife that he had been married before. When Jack was about sixteen, he saw his father and young sister in a shop in Regina. His father was purchasing glasses for her. Later that day, Jack waved to this little girl alone in the car, but she had no way of knowing this stranger was her brother.

During Jack's youth, an aunt in Ireland kept him informed of his father's life, although he did not know for a year that his father had died. After his death, Jack's stepmother traveled to Ireland. While she was there, she came upon the marriage entry of Jack's father and mother in the family bible. Believing it to be some strange error, she struck the name of Jack's mother from the family bible and submitted her own name.

Jack was soon to learn, that his father now had three daughters. Jack's father's family refused to acknowledge Jack's mother or the child from that marriage. Therefore, the girls knew nothing about having a brother.

Jack wanted very much to contact his sisters, but he also knew that his stepmother had a heart condition and was afraid the shock would damage her health, so Jack made the decision not to contact them til after her death.

While Jack was with his father, he went to the Roman Catholic Sunday School. His father had a Scottish housekeeper who was Catholic and she sent him to church. His father didn't seem to mind although in those days there was much religious prejudice. Later when he lived with the Duff's he went to the Presbyterian Sunday School.

Jack took his schooling in Whitewood. He started working in Whitewood at the Ford garage in his 15th year as a floor sweeper. At

age 16, took his training for a welder at the Liquid Air Welding School, and mechanics at the Ford Motor School in Regina.

He came back to work in the Whitewood Garage until 1936 as a seven year apprentice. In his sixth year of apprenticeship, He left the Ford garage to work for the foreman of that same garage who went into business for himself.

In 1938, opportunity knocked again. This time it was Rocanville. Jack worked for the John Deere dealer, Mr. Jas. Lockhart, until 1940.

In 1939 while he was working, he joined the army in Moosomin. The Canadian Army had not requested troops at that time although there was fighting behind the Maginot line. Jack waited to be called by the Army.

The recruiting officer arranged for Jack to travel to Regina where "he would be welcomed by open arms", especially as he was a trained mechanic. Jack's trip to Regina took from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. by train, (it stopped at every station).

The next morning he immediately appeared at the Army Headquarters. He waited all day in the waiting room. No one would see him. They kept telling him to come back tomorrow. He spent the next three days waiting in the same room. His money was running low as he was staying in a hotel and eating out. Finally in desperation, he cornered an officer and told him why he had come.

"I have a statement from Captain White in Moosomin advising me to join the ordinance as a mechanic." The Officer said "for heavens sake, come with me." He took Jack into the office and ordered the Sergeant, "Look after this man, we've got 5000 men wanting to get out of the army, and this one man doing his damndest to get in. He's a jewel." Jack took a test as a motor mechanic, passed it,