

Richard Stackhouse knows that tune!

Regardless of race, creed or culture, there is little doubt about the power of music over the human heart.

Composer Frederick Delius called music an outburst of the soul, and Hans Christian Andersen wrote, "Where words fail, music speaks."

On Top of the World resident Richard (Dick) Stackhouse is a living, breathing manifestation of that power.

Only minutes into a conversation with Dick, the influence of music over him becomes obvious. It pours forth like water from an artesian well. If you want to know who wrote, or performed, a particular song, Dick is your go-to-guy.

Music was the force that brought Dick and his wife, Dale, together as teenagers in Montreal and it is a tie that binds them after all these years.

Dick recalls being amazed at this girl who actually listened to the flip sides of 45s. According to Dick and Dale, they would lay on the floor of Dale's parents' rec-room floor after school, drinking A&W Root Beer and listening to each others' records.

Sure they did.

Dick is more than simply a music lover. He is an avid collector, who prowls from market to market, and from yard sale to yard sale, in search of his next fix of vinyl; his next hit of melodic magic. He's not a fussy collector in terms of genre. He embraces all forms of music, and agrees with Duke Ellington, who said, "There are two kinds of music. Good music and the other kind."

While he was still a high school student, Dick collected programs from shows like Dick Clark's "Biggest Show of Stars," where a dozen or more big stars like Dion & the Belmonts, Sam Cooke, Paul Anka, Bo Diddley, Fabian, Brenda Lee, Bobby Vinton and Chubby Checker would tour the US and Canada.

Dick and his friend, Bernie Wiseman, would go down to the Laurentian Hotel, where the performers stayed while in Montreal, and they would camp out in the lobby or hang out by the tour bus. Many of the performers were very willing to chat and give autographs.

Dick talked to the great Sam Cooke, and collected his autograph shortly before the teen icon was fatally shot.

Dick bought Chubby Checker a milkshake and rode in a taxi with Clarence 'Frogman' Henry. Dick recalls spending quite a long time talking to Brenda Lee in the hotel lobby. They were both 15 or 16 at the time. Ironically, he envied her career while she craved his normal teenage life.

Dick was originally introduced to jazz by his brother-in-law, Walter Scott, who was a gifted and versatile musician. Dick often uses the soothing sounds of soft jazz to ease his transition to dreamland. He and Dale also love Cajun music, and have made several trips to New Orleans and Baton Rouge to take it all in.

When the Crawfish Festival came to St. Petersburg, it was their favorite day of the year.

The basement of the Stackhouse Ottawa home is a loosely organized store house of pressed vinyl. There are racks



Dick Stackhouse relaxes among a tiny sample of his extensive vinyl collection. Below is part of Dick's collection that isn't vinyl. (Photos by John Koning)

and stacks of LPs, EPs, 45s and even 78s. There are hundreds of records indicative of the generation Dick and Dale grew up in, but the collection runs much deeper than that.

To this reporter's highly original question of how many records are in the collection, Dick threw his arms out, shrugged his shoulders and replied with an equally original answer, "I have no idea!"

His best guess is between 5,000 and 10,000 records. The collection is not as big as it has been. Dick sold some of his stuff on Ebay to recoup the initial investment in records and the high quality sound system he uses to play them.

A mutual love of music has introduced Dick to many other collectors and musicians from all over the world. While living in New Brunswick, he managed to book Canadian folk legend, Gordon Lightfoot, to play for a local fundraiser after reading about the opportunity in RPM Magazine. The year was 1967, Canada's centennial year, and Lightfoot had just finished composing his ballad, Black Day in July – a poignant song about the race riots in Detroit. The song was a hit in Canada but was banned from the airwaves

in the US.

So, as you can see, music has the power to divide as well as unite, often along national, religious and racial lines. Regardless of these beliefs and affiliations, music

remains an unstoppable locomotive that powers human passion. Dick Stackhouse is one music man who will ride this train all the way to the end of the line.

