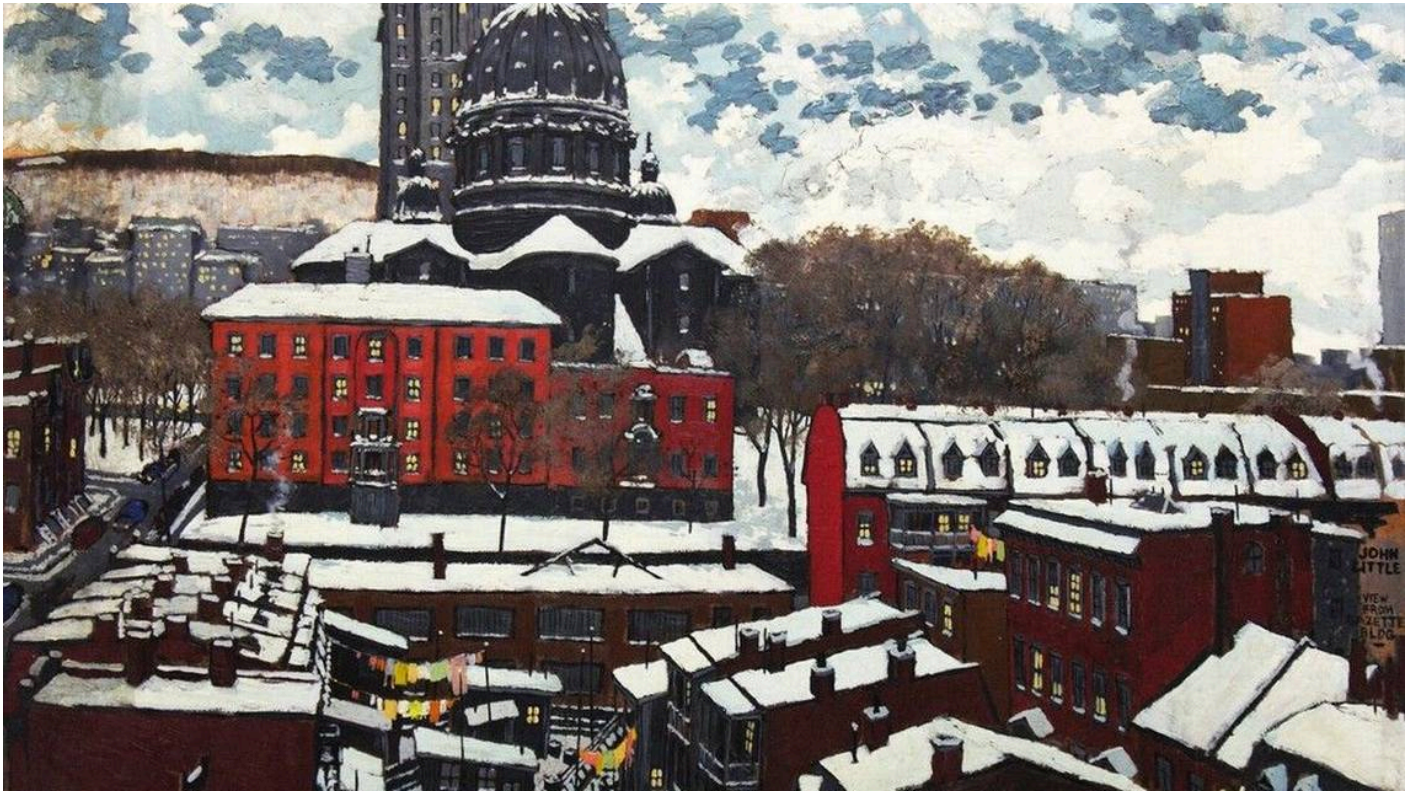


NEWS

Terry Mosher: John Little was beloved Montreal artist, sports fan and a great friend

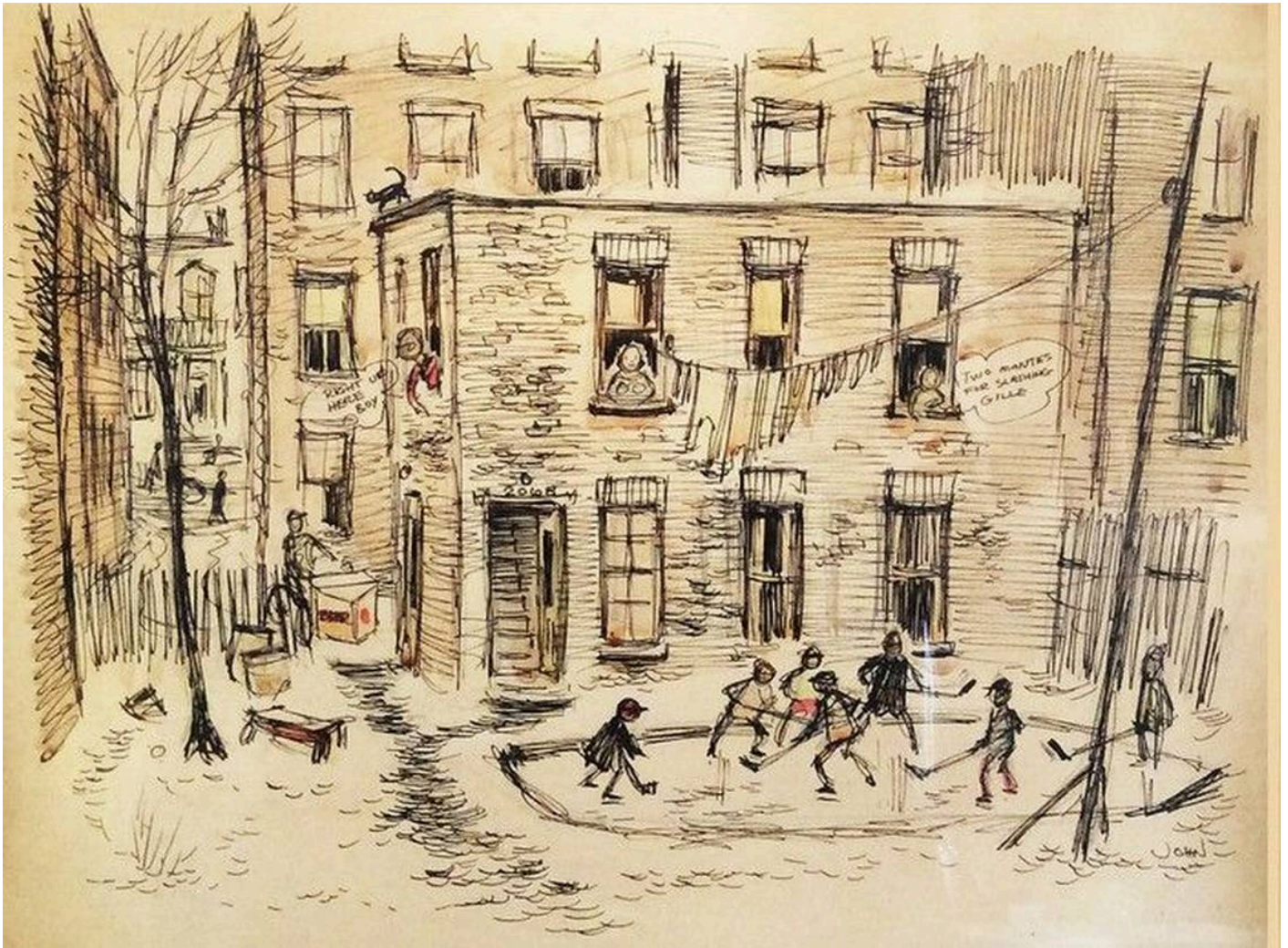
By Terry Mosher, Montreal Gazette

Updated November 05, 2024 12:55 PM |  5



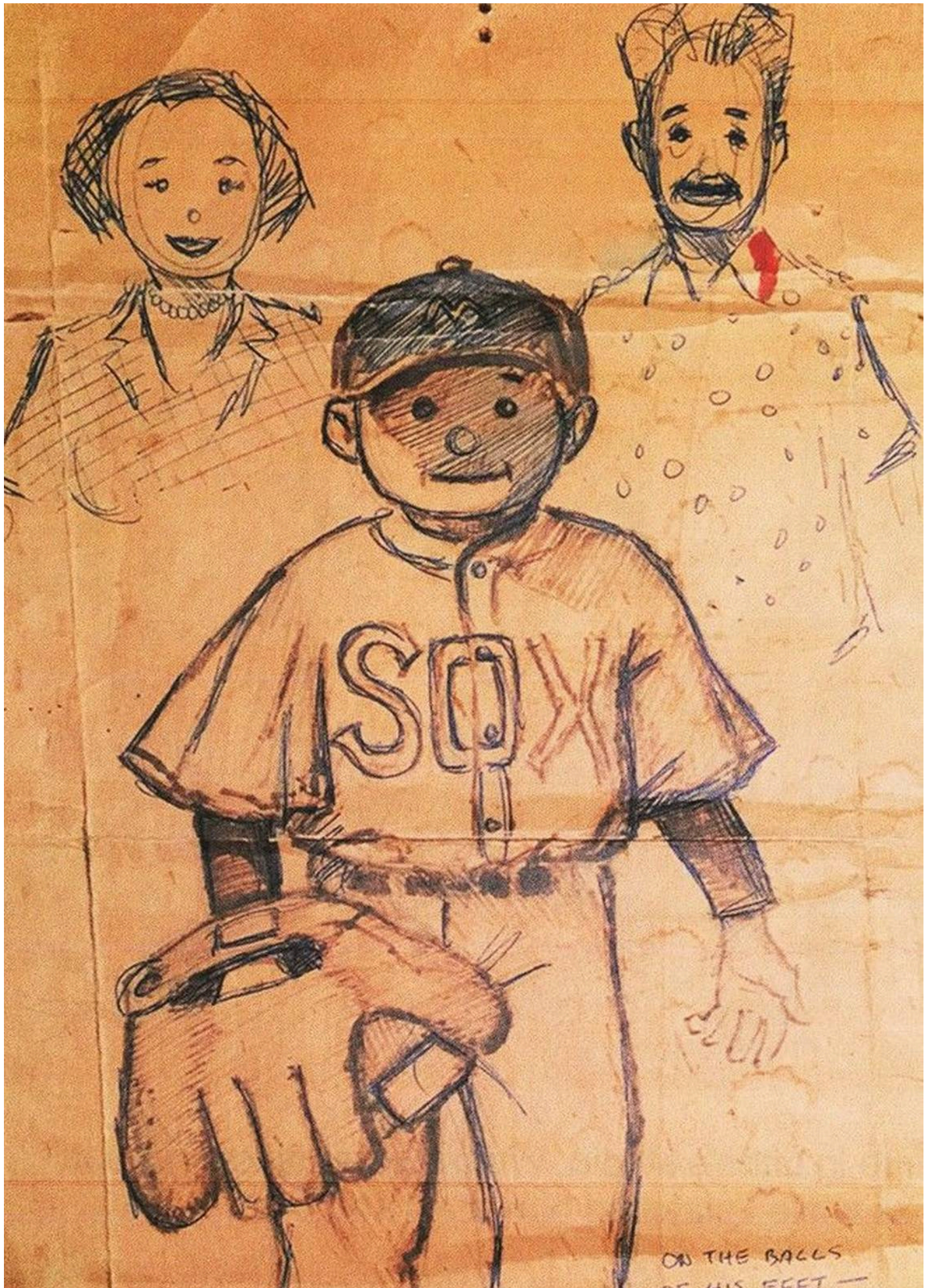
John Little's View of Downtown From a Gazette Window, from 1952. *Courtesy of Eric Klinkhoff Gallery*

Well-known Montreal artist John Little died on Oct. 29 at the age of 96. My deep sadness at his death is about much more than the loss of one of the city's great painters, for John was my friend, my mentor and my godfather.



Little's 1953 sketch of 2068 Lincoln Ave John Little, courtesy of Terry Mosher

In 1952, at age 9, I was living with my mother, Norma, and father Jack in a small converted garage/coach house behind several aging apartment buildings on Lincoln Ave. One day, John and his charming wife, Lorraine, both in their 20s, introduced themselves as our new downstairs neighbours. Thus began a lifelong friendship.



ON THE BALLS
OF HIS FEET —



Little's sketch of Terry Mosher as an 11-year-old Little Leaguer. John Little *courtesy of Terry Mosher*

After my immediate family, John became the most important influence in my life. I loved visiting his studio, with its ever-present odours of turpentine and linseed oil, and listening to classic jazz or a hockey game on the radio. The space was piled full of unfinished artwork, old newspapers and art publications — and sporting magazines. Oddly enough, my most prized John Little piece is a rough little sketch he drew of me as a Little Leaguer for the mighty St. Matthew Street White Sox, my parents standing proudly behind me.

John and Lorraine became my godparents in a ceremony at St. Stephen's Anglican Church on Dorchester near Atwater. We had no money to donate for the ceremony, so John did a sketch of the church. It was used as the cover of the weekly church program for years after.

John was born in Montreal in 1928 and grew up in the Town of Mount Royal. Except for sporting activities, school didn't interest him much, so he quit after Grade 10 and spent his days exploring Montreal on foot, getting to know the working-class neighbourhoods, from St-Henri to Verdun. He did briefly attend the École des beaux-arts de Montréal and then went to New York to join the Arts Students League. John was badly injured after coming to the aid of a woman who

was being attacked; after being released from hospital, he returned to Montreal and briefly joined Luke & Little, his family's architectural practice.



Lorraine McMahon Little *Courtesy Alan Klinkhoff Gallery*

John and his wonderful wife, Lorraine (née McMahon), had met in Nova Scotia, but settled in Montreal where John launched his career as a painter. Lorraine

Little was the rock of the family. As she recalled to Alan Klinkhoff, a gallery owner who promoted John's work: "We worked together ... I carried his sketchbooks and his pencil sharpeners. I had been very much a part of everything."

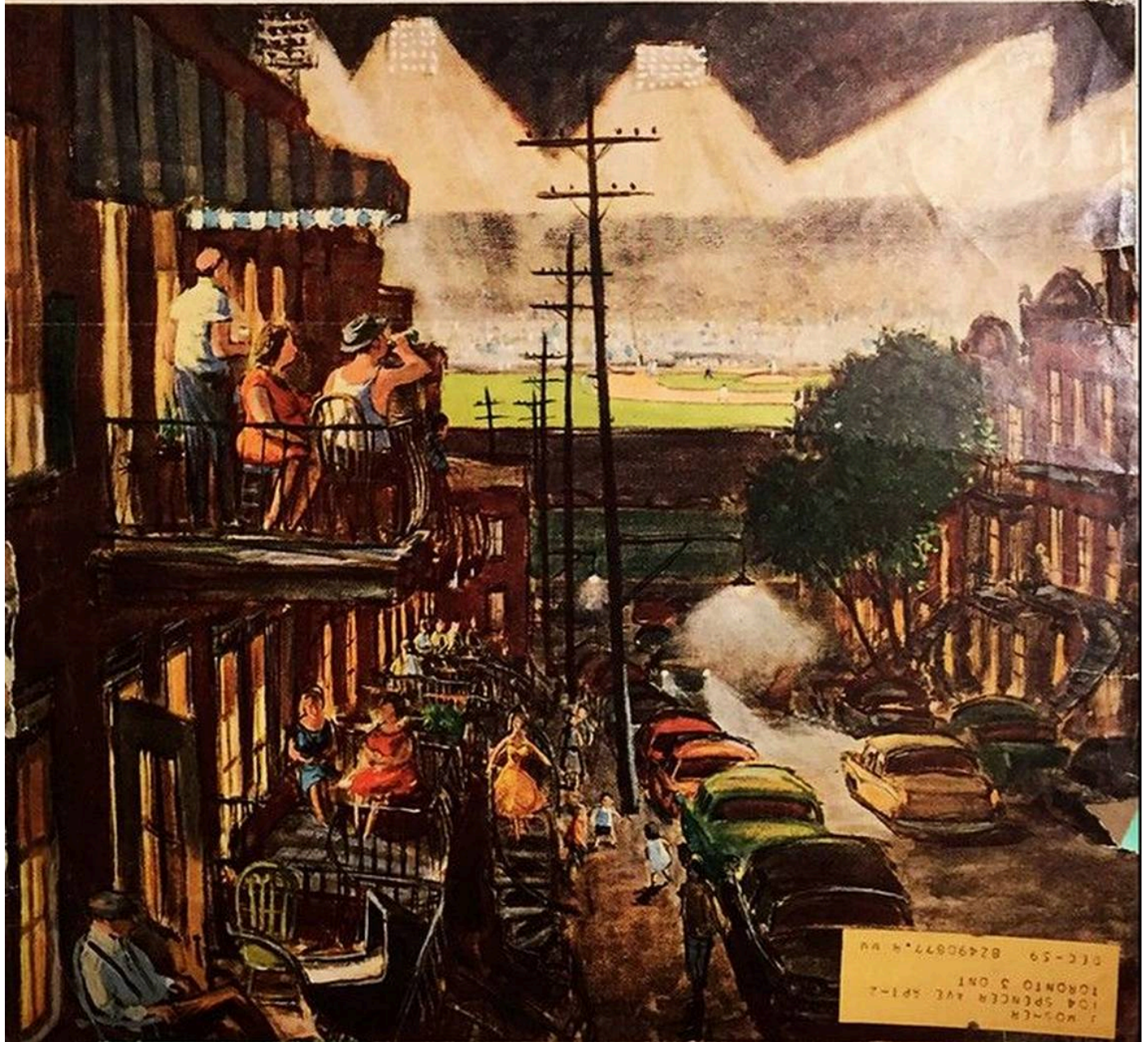
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COVER BY JOHN LITTLE
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MACLEAN'S

SEPTEMBER 12 1959 CANADA'S NATIONAL MAGAZINE 15 CENTS



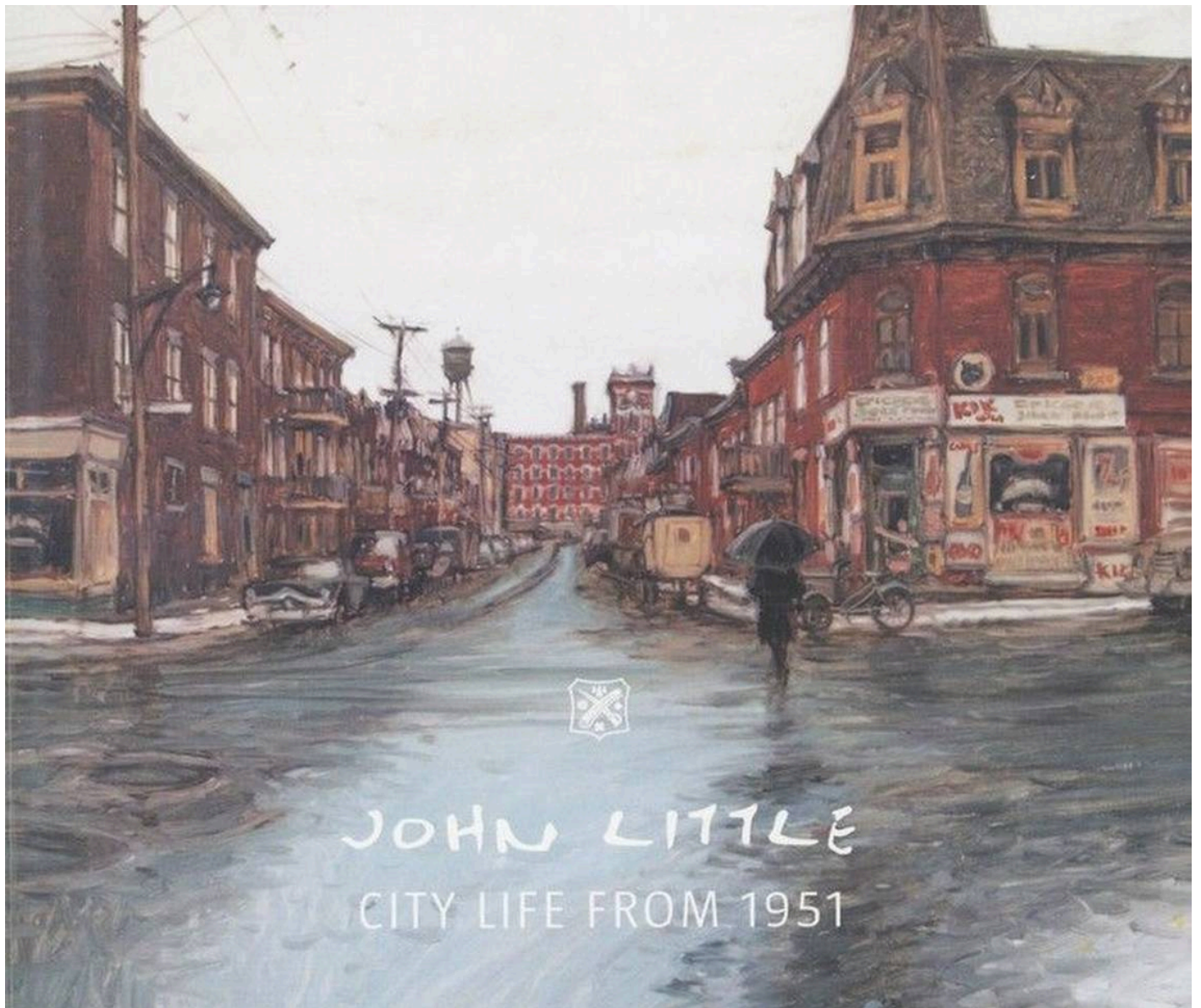
A Maclean's magazine cover showing a painting of Delorimier Stadium, home of the Montreal Royals in September 1959. Terry Mosher

John's earliest commercial successes were a series of cover paintings, created for Maclean's magazine, depicting Quebec life in the 1950s.



Little Courtesy Alan Klinkhoff Gallery

John Little's growing reputation as a chronicler of Montreal's urban landscape soon drew the attention of several prestigious galleries, including the Walter Klinkhoff Gallery. Walter's two sons, Eric and Alan, each with his own gallery, continue to feature Little's work even today.



Little's book, published by the Alan Klinkhoff Gallery. *Courtesy Alan Klinkhoff Gallery*

In 2017, Alan Klinkhoff published *John Little: City Life From 1951*; it remains the bible on anything “John Little,” based as it is on the only actual interview he ever gave. He was shy about promoting his own work, preferring to have his canvases convey his message. In private, however, John could be very entertaining, particularly after a few glasses of wine.



Skating Rink at Rue Ste-Rose and Champlain, from 1979. John Little *Courtesy of Alan Klinkhoff Gallery*

John’s work became extremely popular in the 1970s and ’80s. Many professional athletes admired his work because of the sports element. Jean Beliveau had several of John’s paintings. One other well-known local hockey player was

desperate to buy the above painting of a neighborhood skating rink. He very much wanted to buy the original, but was informed the painting was no longer available: It had been purchased by the Bank of Nova Scotia, which had more money.

Andrew Carter was appointed to his current position as CJAD's morning man in 2003. When the hiring was confirmed, he walked up the hill and bought himself a John Little painting from the Klinkhoff Gallery. Everyone he considered to be well-established seemed to own a John Little.



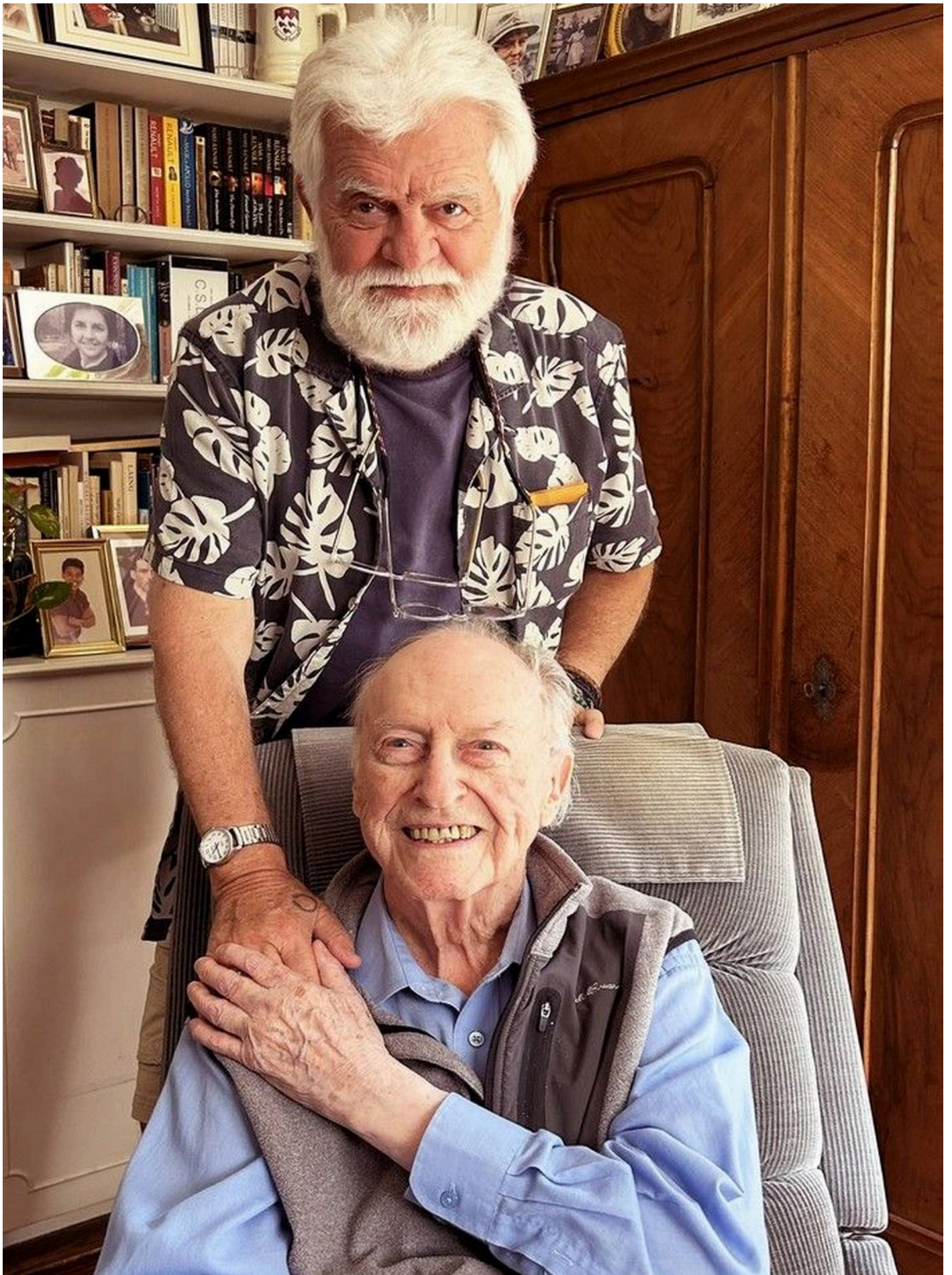
Little's home studio. Terry Mosher

In the early 2010s, Lorraine became increasingly ill. After her death in 2016, John never painted again. As his younger son, Roger, observed, "Father was like a professional athlete who just knew that his time was up."



Little, seated left, with Ronaldo Soriano and Roger Little, right. Courtesy of Terry Mosher.

When Roger and family friend Rolando Soriano started to notice that John himself was developing some medical issues, they took over all the daily chores and tasks John no longer felt up to tackling. They cared for him up until the very end and were with him when he died comfortably last week. Although I'm not a religious person, I would like to think that John and Lorraine are now together somewhere. For my part, I will miss him terribly.



Little with Terry Mosher, the Gazette cartoonist Aislin, from last August. Mary Hughson

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