

Glenn Ford in horror film

MONTREAL (CP) — "You can ask me anything you want and I'll talk about it," says Glenn Ford, the perfect interview subject — to a point.

His demeanor is pleasant, his attitude generally co-operative. But getting the Canadian-born actor to talk about his life as a film star is, at times, like pulling teeth.

Not that he'll slam the door on the subject; he answers, sometimes in vague terms. But he only really opens up when a particular anecdote becomes less a Hollywood item and more one concerning Glenn Ford, the person.

This in itself is rare in an arts community that breeds one-dimensional personalities, people who guard their private lives with fervor.

But as far as Ford is concerned, "my real life is far more exciting than my screen life."

Levels of excitement aside, he wouldn't dispute that both lives have been full. Ford was in Montreal to star in the Canadian horror flick Happy Birthday to Me, which recently finished shooting in and around the city. It was his 221st film.

CITES CANADIAN TIES

"Y'know, I'm very un-Hollywood — I'm Portneuf," the actor said, his face creasing in a smile as he mentioned the tiny community of his birth, just west of Quebec City.

"When my wife Cynthia and I give parties it's four or five people. Hollywood parties are a bore because everyone is looking over his shoulder to see who's coming in the door, or

wondering if he's being photographed.

"That's not my way of life. Maybe it reflects my quiet Canadian beginnings. My father worked for the CPR. My family goes back to the first paper mill ever built in Canada."

Yet Ford today is only Canadian "in my heart." His parents relocated to California when he was eight, and he holds American citizenship.

Despite the "excitement" of his off-screen life, which has included tours of duty with the U.S. forces in France, Korea and — in 1968 — Vietnam, Ford doesn't think his story would be appropriate material for a biographical film.

"Who would believe some of this stuff?" he asked wryly. This comment was directed in particular to one incident, a short stretch with the French Foreign Legion, which he joined in a state of inebriation in 1952.

He was acting in The Green Glove, which was filming in the vicinity of Marseille, when he became the victim of "an unrequited love affair with a lady" — his leading lady, in fact.

Drowning his sorrows in brandy and bouillabaisse at a waterfront bar, he decided on impulse to enlist in the Legion. A drinking buddy took Ford up on the impulse, and conducted him to Legion headquarters.