



HUGH FILSON

1925 –

In 1912, Alfred David (A.D.) Filson followed his brother west to homestead near Woodrow, Saskatchewan. There he built a house but returned each winter to his Ontario home on Amherst Island near Kingston. While home he would purchase horses to be shipped west in the spring. As well, he courted and in 1919 he married Sadie Tugwell. Following their marriage they moved west where two sons, Alfred, who died in infancy and Hugh were born.

In 1937, in the midst of the depression and following seven years of planting crops but harvesting nothing, the Filson family moved to the Ilderton area of Middlesex County. Hugh was 11 years old at the time. The expanding 4-H and Junior Farmers clubs in the county offered Hugh the opportunities to augment his local schooling. (Hugh credits I. B. Whale as being one of his most influential club leaders.) Hugh worked his way into the farm enterprise eventually becoming its proprietor.

During this time he met Margaret Wilkie and they were married in 1950. Together they had six children, Ellen, Barbara, Nancy, David, Ken and Ray but Margaret died tragically in 1967, the victim of a lightning strike. Hugh was left with a young family to raise. With the aid of a dedicated housekeeper, Hugh succeeded admirably in this challenge and in due course he married Kathryn Milne.

Hugh's interest in selling livestock led to his enrollment in the Reppart School of Auctioneering, Livestock Judging and Pedigree Study at Decatur Indiana. To this day, Hugh continues to draw crowds with his auctioneering skills at general farm and specialty livestock sales. From its inception in 1958 until 1993, Hugh was a driving force in Denfield Livestock Sales and its weekly auctions. Hugh has had high profile assignments at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair where he now sells for the Sport Horse Association, and previously sold for the Queen's Guineas and market livestock sales. He sold the Ontario Bull sale for many years and also a number of the Northern Ontario stocker cattle sales. As a community minded person, Hugh contributes his time and talents in conducting many charity and fund-raising sales each year.

Beef cattle and pigs have been Hugh's livestock areas of interest on his farm. He was instrumental in bringing the first purebred Limousine beef cattle to the Middlesex area and in pioneering the embryo transplant program for beef cattle. As a breeder and exhibitor of Yorkshire swine, he has exported breeding stock to most provinces in Canada and many states in the United States.

Hugh Filson has been a leading figure in many organizations dedicated to improving the well being of the community and its citizens. His 50-year involvement with the Ilderton Agricultural Society, during which time he served as its President, illustrates his commitment to the community. He served 32 years as a director of the Ilderton Co-op; one of those years as president. Also, he has been a long-term director of the Western Fair Association becoming a member in 1951 (again a 50-year involvement) and was President from 1982 to 1984. He was a founding member of the Ilderton Arena and Curling Club and as a farm leader, Hugh has contributed his efforts as a director and president in each of the following organizations: Ilderton Junior Farmers' Association, Middlesex Junior Farmers' Association, Middlesex Soil & Crop Improvement Association, Middlesex Hog Producers, Ontario Swine Breeders' Association, Canadian Swine Breeders' Association, Middlesex Cattlemen's Association, Ontario Limousine Cattle Association, Auctioneer's Association of Ontario, and the Ontario Livestock Sales Barn Association.

Hugh's contributions to agriculture and his community have been publicly recognized from time to time. The Ilderton Agricultural Society granted their Service Award for his 41 years as a member, many of them as a 4-H leader. Also, the Ontario Institute of Agrologists awarded him an honorary life membership and most recently the Middlesex 4-H Association presented Hugh with the W. A. Stewart Award in appreciation for his dedication to the 4-H programme.

Perhaps it was his prairie roots or his parental examples that imbued Hugh with a burning desire to work for community betterment and for improvement in the quality of livestock being raised – we're really not sure – but we gather today to recognize the many contributions and achievements that HUGH FILSON has made to agriculture and to his community by inducting him into the Middlesex County Agricultural Hall of Fame.