



**Peter Lewington
(1923-1992)**

Peter made a widespread contribution to Ontario agriculture by learning and writing about innovative practices and new technologies which had the potential to improve agricultural production and quality, to enhance the rural environment , and to increase farm income.

Writing from "Larigmoor Farm" his home just outside Bryanston, Peter regularly contributed articles to the major farm publications of the day in both Canada and the US.. He also wrote for the CBC radio noon farm program and several major newspapers. He won over 25 national and provincial writing awards as well as an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the University of Western Ontario for his contribution to agriculture and to the protection of the rural environment.

Peter Lewington 1923-1992

A commitment to safeguard the land and advocate for farmers defined the life and work of Peter Lewington, born March 7, 1923.

In 1947, as new arrivals in Canada from England, Peter and wife Jean rented a farm near London, Ontario, before purchasing Larigmoor Farm near Bryanston, Ontario, in 1951, where they raised three children. The 100-acre farm was home to a milking herd of registered Holstein cattle until the early 1960s and then to beef cattle through the 1970s; it remains in cash crops today under family ownership.

With only distant family roots in agriculture, Peter educated himself about all facets of farming, a path that led to a career writing for some of the leading Canadian farm publications of the day: the *Farmer's Advocate*, *Family Herald* and *Country Guide*. No matter the subject – pasture improvement, pesticide control, cash crop productivity or medical breakthroughs for humans using pig tissue – Lewington focused on practical ideas for farmers. Intrigued by the non-bloat qualities of trefoil, a legume unfamiliar to Ontario farmers at the time, he planted the crop at Larigmoor to evaluate its beneficial attributes. He was an early proponent of the now-familiar triangle farm safety sign required on farm vehicles on the road. His writing and radio career in Canada and the Britain spanned more than 40 years, with more than a score of local, provincial and national farm-writing awards to his name. Between 1959 and 1963, he wrote for the *Family Herald*, becoming Ontario editor in 1962. One year later, he joined *Country Guide* as Eastern Canada editor and spent almost a decade with the magazine.

In the mid-70s, Peter became editor of *Agri-Book Magazine*, an innovation in farm journalism at the time with the publication of themed magazines aimed at a cross-section of producers and suppliers.

His book-writing career began in 1967, when he prepared documentation for a major conference on milk recording by the Dairy Farmers of Canada. In 1983, in honour of the 100th anniversary of the Holstein breed in Canada, the national organization commissioned Peter to write *Canada's Holsteins*, which chronicled the global reach of Canadian milk producers. He was the author of several biographies of leaders in agriculture, including "*Cottage*

Industry to Corporate Giant,” a social history of the Beatty Brothers, and *The Armbro Story*, on the career of the Armstrong brothers in cattle, horse breeding and construction. In 1991, he wrote *No Right-of-Way, How Democracy Came to the Oil Patch*, an account of his determined effort to educate pipeline companies and regulators about the rights of landowners. While farm, family and writing were top priorities, Peter volunteered for several farm writing organizations and, in 1966, served as president of the Canadian Farm Writers Association. He worked with local residents on environmental campaigns, organizing Save the Medway as a grass-root community group to protect the Thames River tributary and to promote conservation practices taken for granted today.

In the 1960s, 70s and 80s, an epic struggle with oil company pipelines that bisected the family farm grew from a simple truth Peter held firm: protection of high-quality, non-renewable farmland should be as paramount concern for regulators, legislators and energy companies as landowners. With a handful of stubborn farmers, he pressed regulators, legislators and the courts to recognize the responsibilities of pipeline companies when interacting with landowners. His dogged insistence on doing what was right for the land and the environment lives on through advocacy organizations such as the Ontario Pipeline Landowners Association and the Canadian Association of Pipeline Landowners Associations, which recognize the need for ongoing vigilance in an unfinished battle to safeguard a precious resource.

In 1987, in recognition of his wide-ranging contributions, Peter was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree from the University of Western Ontario and made the commencement address. In 2009, he was a posthumous inductee to the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame.

A line from *No Right-of-Way* captures the commitment that Peter brought to bear in his life and work. “The first essential of a winning blueprint is not confidence in success but a commitment to try and achieve change.”