



Inducted: 2011

Dick Heard was an assistant agricultural representative and farm management specialist with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture from 1951 to 1987. Twenty-five of those years were spent serving the needs of the farming community of Middlesex and surrounding area.

A strong supporter and organizer of many local commodity groups Dick's specialty was working with individuals to establish competent farm business plans and succession planning with farm families. The agricultural community has long recognized the value of the advice so freely shared by Dick. His efforts have contributed substantially to the longevity, success and viability of many Middlesex County farms

RICHARD F. (DICK) HEARD

1929 -

Dick Heard was a Christmas baby born on December 25, 1929, the second of four children (two girls and two boys) born to parents Robert and Margaret Heard. They farmed in Proton Twp. near Dundalk in Grey County. The farm was at that time considered an average, small mixed farm. The family milked cows, shipped cream, raised pigs, geese and ducks. Dick attended the local primary school of S.S. # 12 Proton Twp. The local high school was in Dundalk, nine miles away, and as there no school transportation system, Dick boarded in town during the week. It was during these years that he played for the "Dundalk Beavers" of the Central Ontario Hockey League. In Dick's graduating year, the Beavers won the league championship and when a professional team scout approached the Beavers' general manager to enquire about Dick, he was told not to bother talking to Dick as he planned on attending college after high school.

In 1948 Dick arrived at the O.A.C. He was part of the first class to require a grade thirteen diploma. As a result of this stipulation, his class of approximately 75 students was considerably smaller than the previous two or three years when the classes of between 200-300 students had been augmented by servicemen returning from the war. Class hazing, probably as a result of the small number of initiates, was particularly harsh. It did, however, lead to a graduating class year that became and still is a very close knit group.

Dick graduated in 1952 and began his career with the Ontario Department of Agriculture. In fact, he had worked the previous summer as a summer assistant Agricultural Representative in Prince Edward and Northumberland Counties. Upon graduating, he was assigned as assistant Ag. Rep. in Waterloo County. It was while working in Waterloo County that he met Flora Henderson who lived just outside Guelph. They were married in 1956. That year was also momentous year in that Dick became the Agricultural Representative in the Rainy River district of Northern Ontario working out of the community of Emo.

In this position, Dick was able to foster the organization of the Rainy River Cattlemen's Association from which evolved the annual feeder-calf sales. 2010 marked the 50th anniversary of this group which now boasts three annual sales. In 1961 he took a year of absence from his position to complete a Master of Science Degree from the University of Wisconsin in Madison, before returning in 1962 to his posting in Emo. In 1963 he was transferred to London, Ontario and became the first Farm Management Specialist with the Department of Agriculture.

During the 1960's, the Canada Pension Plan was put in place. It involved a ten year phase-in and during that period farmers who were approaching retirement age could readily create a significant retirement pension by legally adjusting their income tax returns and reported income. Dick played a leading role in many information seminars for farmers that illustrated to them how they could make maximum use of this new pension plan. In a related program, he helped set up a series of Farm Tax and Estate Planning seminars across Ontario for those people who serve farmers' tax needs. This annual series of meetings for accountants, bankers, lawyers and farm bookkeepers continues to this day.

By the end of the 1960's and into early 1970, a re-organization within the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture resulted in Dick becoming one of 8 area coordinators in the province. He served as area coordinator and farm management specialist for the five counties of Essex, Kent, Lambton, Elgin and Middlesex.

Shortly after being transferred to Middlesex County, Dick purchased a farm on the northern edge of the city of London. It was to provide a home to his growing family but it also proved to be an icebreaker for his involvement in the rural community. He too was a farmer and not just a government bureaucrat. This allowed Dick the opportunity to be familiar with and to share the practical and theoretical points of view of the day to day operations in agriculture before venturing into the often thorny issues of farm management and succession planning with the farmers he was working with.

It was during this time that many farms were being changed from sole proprietorship into a partnership between two members which was generally within the same family, or the farm was being incorporated into a business unit that would allow the next generation to take over the farming operation. Dick's leadership skills and knowledge as a farm management specialist proved to be invaluable to the agricultural community surrounding the London area.

In 1983 he became a Regional Manager for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food for South-Western Ontario and worked out of an office in Centralia where he remained until his retirement in 1985. His career with OMAF spanned over 35 years with approximately 25 years in London and 5 years in Centralia serving Middlesex County and the surrounding area.

In recognition of his contributions to the betterment of the agriculture community and the agri-food industry, Dick was awarded the T.R. Hilliard Award for Distinguished Agriculture Extension and the Distinguished Agriculturalist Designation from the Ontario Institute of Agrologists.

Much of Dick Heard's work involved individual counseling and succession- planning for farm families. It thrills him when, years later, a farmer mentions to him how well their plan had worked out.

Over the years, Dick has also been actively involved within his community. He has been active in the congregations of Riverside United & Oakridge Presbyterian Churches. He was the Middlesex Soil & Crop representative on the city of London's Agricultural Advisory Committee for many years and he represented

the Ontario Institute of Agronomists as a member of the Western Fair Association. For the past five years, he has volunteered and has been a member of the operations committee with Fanshawe Pioneer Village and Dick also served as recording Secretary and Treasurer for the Middlesex County Agricultural Hall of Fame for over ten years. It should be noted that his minute-taking skills will never be duplicated; neither a motion nor an item of discussion was ever missed.

Dick and Flora have four children: John and Marie who were born in Emo and Janice and Keith who were born in London. Dick and Flora's oldest son John appears to following in his father's footsteps, he is a soil fertility specialist with the Manitoba Department of Agriculture.

Dick Heard in his quiet and unassuming way has provided the agricultural community with a wealth of business knowledge that has contributed to the success and viability of several generations of farmers and their families both here in Middlesex County and beyond. As a dedicated volunteer and a strong supporter of many agricultural-based organizations and commodity groups, we recognized his many years of service to the agri-food industry by inducting Richard F. (Dick) Heard into the Middlesex County Agricultural Hall of Fame.