



Inducted: 2003

Peter Twynstra of Ailsa Craig is a dynamic leader in Middlesex County. From humble cash-crop beginnings, he built Twilight Acres farms and the Great Canadian Bean Company into large suppliers and marketers of edible beans on a worldwide basis. His enthusiastic leadership as demonstrated by his chairmanship of the 2002 International Plowing match (Rural Expo) is characteristic

of Peter's commitment to agriculture and to his rural community. Peter has led 4-H groups, participated in rural politics, and in many farm, business, and community organizations. Like many immigrants to this country, Peter came with little in the way of monetary wealth. His success, achieved through hard work and business acumen, has enabled him to contribute greatly to the well being of his rural community and the Canadian Agri-Food industry.

PETER TWYNSTRA

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Peter Twynstra was born in 1939 in Holland and came to Canada with his parents in 1951. He started his Canadian life in Kent County. Three years later his family acquired their farm near Ailsa Craig in Middlesex County and in due course Peter attended the Ridgetown College of Agricultural Technology. On graduation in 1960, He obtained employment with the International Harvester Company in London as a sales representative doing dealer training and handling warranty claims. Two years later he purchased the home 300 acres from his father. Also in 1962 he and Dinie were married.

Under their leadership the farm operation grew and prospered to the point where, in 1967 they incorporated it as Twilight Acres Farms. The production of edible beans was a key part of the farm operation and Peter came to realize that earnings could be improved by putting more emphasis on marketing. Thus in 1978 a new company was established under the name "the Great Canadian Bean Company".

At the outset, this company marketed the beans from their farm and those grown by a few neighbours. Success led to expansion and in 1986 the London facility of the Ontario Bean Growers Co-operative were purchased. By 2002, when Peter sold his shares, this enterprise had grown to a business providing markets for some 400-contract growers to about 37 countries of the world. In 24 years Peter Twynstra had not only improved the market for the beans grown on his farm, but had provided an expanded opportunity for his contract growers in Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba.

In spite of the time demand the family, farm and marketing business placed on Peter, he has been generous in giving of his time and talents to his community and our county. He has been a 4-H leader for several farm machinery and farm safety projects; he hosts many groups of visitors each year such as agricultural college classes, local school groups, service clubs, other urban groups and farm marketing clubs. He has served as Reeve of East Williams township for 4 years and as Reeve was on several county council committees. For 8 years he served as a director of the Asable Bayfield Conservation Authority. He was a member of the North Middlesex Community Centre Board and the Downtown London Rotary Club. He is past president of the Grand Bend Rotary Club. He is past chairman of the London Chamber of Commerce's agricultural committee. He has been an active member of the Middlesex Soil and Crop Improvement Association. He was the chairman of the recent 2002 International Plowing Match (Rural Expo). He was the founding president of the Ontario Farm Safety Association, a director of the Canada Safety Council and a director of the National Institute of Farm Safety. Peter has been on various bean organizations in Canada and in 1999 he co-chaired the international conference of the World Pulse Confederation which attracted 570 delegates from all corners of the planet.

His expertise in agriculture and marketing has led to many speaking engagements including to the recent American Council of State Governments conference on the topic of " Why Canada is opposed to the New U.S. Farm Bill."

As a result of his many community and business interests Peter has been the recipient of several awards: London Chamber of Commerce Farmer of the Year, Canada Seed Growers long service award, Honourary Middlesex county plowman, honourary life membership in the Ontario Institute of Agrologists.

Peter and Dinie have 3 children, Steve, Sharon and Linda. All are married and 6 grandchildren are now in the fold. Steve has taken over the operation of the farm, which now involves cropping of some 4,000 acres.

In total, it is obviously fitting, that a person having made such a contribution to the agricultural and rural community in Middlesex and having been recognized by his peers in many ways, should now be inducted into the Middlesex County Agricultural Hall of Fame.