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Harry Norton's 90

Worked around the globe but came back to Acton to retire

By **FRANCES NIBLOCK**
The New Tanner

Acton's Harry Norton, 90, travelled the world to find himself.

"When I worked for my dad in Acton I was "Bill's boy" but in South America, I was shop foreman and my title was in charge of land, sea and air. I wasn't just Bill's boy - I was Harry Norton, and I think that's what kept me there.

The time I was home I was just Bill's boy. I don't know if that's what held me there or not, but I was somebody down there," Norton said on Monday as he reminisced about his nine decades of life all over the globe, the last three, in retirement in Acton.

On Sunday, many of Norton's family and friends helped him celebrate his 90th birthday with a party in the common room at his Birchway Place residence.

On Tuesday, Norton, who said he was "embarrassed" by all the fuss, and other Acton seniors with January birthdays were feted at a



BIRTHDAY BOY: Acton's Harry Norton celebrated his 90th birthday with a party at the Acton Seniors' Centre on Tuesday. - Frances Niblock photo

luncheon at the Acton Seniors' Centre.

Harry was the son of William Robert and Ellie Mae Chapman Johnson, and older brother of Harold and Marjorie, who now lives down the hall from Harry at Birchway Place.

Harry was born in the prairie town of United, Saskatchewan, on January 10,

1916, and as a boy moved with his family to Moose Jaw and Calgary, and then to Toronto where his father was shop foreman at a Ford dealership.

When the Ford dealership in Acton became available, it was offered to Harry's dad who opened a garage and dealership in February, 1929, in a livery stable



REMEMBER WHEN: In February 1929, Harry Norton's father Bill, sold this Model A Ford from his new Ford dealership in Acton, located in a livery stable on Main Street North, now home to Ed's In-N-Out Variety. Harry Norton reminisced about those days on Tuesday as he celebrated his 90th birthday. - Submitted photo



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where Ed's In-N-Out Variety is now located on Main Street.

"We kids stayed in Toronto until the end of the school year and I remember it was my last day of public school and the van was loaded and we threw my bicycle on top and we came to Acton to the house dad had bought, right across from the Cenotaph," Norton said.

Unfortunately, as the family settled in to Acton, Mrs. Norton became ill and died of cancer in 1931, at a time when there was no universal health care or medical support.

"My dad had a hell of a job paying for it, but he insisted on a private room for her. It was a real scramble - in the end of it, we lost the house and Dad built a garage that was across from the old Station Hotel," Norton said, adding his dad eventually sold the building to Art Gordon, who operated a Canadian Tire store on the site.

As a young man, Norton followed the lead of his brother when things were slow at the Acton garage and dealership and worked in the mines in Northern Ontario and at a Sudbury Ford dealership.

He was left with a handicap from his days in the mines - 10 years after getting what he thought was some dirt or dust in his eye, doctors found a piece of steel in his eye and had to remove the eye.

Through their contacts at Ford, the Nortons learned that Imperial Oil was looking for a mechanic to look after its fleet of Ford vehicles in Columbia, South America and Harold Norton took the job while Harry Norton worked for his dad, honing his skills and earning his papers as a mechanic.

During this period, Norton met the love of his life - his wife Dorothy MacArthur, who he married on October 9, 1940 in the Knox Presbyterian Church Manse, now a private house located across the street from St. Alban's Church.

(When Norton's granddaughter was getting married, he went to the owners of the house and showed them the picture of he and his bride on their wedding day on the porch and received permission for his granddaughter and her groom to be photographed on that same porch on their wedding day, along with Norton and his wife.)

"Harold came home for vacation and they sent me down to South American to

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