



Mayor Thomas Broadhurst of Richmond Hill presents a set of earrings and a cuff link set to Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Longhouse of Woodbridge, as the couple celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on November 1.

Mr. Longhouse, a member of Woodbridge Village Council for 12 years, met his bride, the former Julie Violet Bridgeman, at a dance in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. The couple were married in Regina and for the next 22 years they "homesteaded" in the Meadow Lake area of Northern Saskatchewan.

Their nine children, one who travelled from Frankfurt, West Germany, were "with the folks" as Mr. and Mrs. Longhouse celebrated their anniversary, along with dozens of friends from York County.

Community Service Spans More Than 50 Years

By THOMAS SOMES

The majority of today's youth, influenced by post-war affluence, don't know the meaning of "hardship" and because they haven't experienced the rigors of battling nature and economic depression they lack purpose and the ability to "make up their minds" says a man with an enviable record of community service.

Now retired because of failing eyesight, Gordon Longhouse, 9 Coles Avenue, Woodbridge, served his community for nearly 50 years and can claim having never lost any election he ever entered since first becoming a school trustee in 1920 while "homesteading" in Northern Saskatchewan.

For the past 12 years, until he declined to seek re-election as reeve of Woodbridge last December, Mr. Longhouse was a member of Woodbridge Village Council. He was reeve for his last two years on council, deputy-reeve for four years and a councillor for six years.

Born and raised near Woodbridge, attending the former Lower Ninth Public School, the former Woodbridge High School and Weston High School, Mr. Longhouse heeded the call of "Go west young man" in 1915 and began homesteading in the Meadow Lake area of Northern Saskatchewan.

World War I interrupted his homesteading and he joined the Royal Flying Corps in 1917, returning to Saskatchewan in 1919.

At a dance in Moose Jaw, he met the former Julie Violet Bridgeman and the couple were married in Regina. On November 1, they and their nine children celebrated the couple's 50th anniversary at a family reunion in Woodbridge.

The new Mrs. Longhouse, a Saskatchewan native, was not unfamiliar with the rigors of prairie life in the early years of Saskatchewan's development following World War I but life in "the bush" was even harder than she anticipated.

Four of her children, Muriel, Dan, Bill and Jack, were born without a doctor in attendance and Mr. Longhouse was "midwife" in the delivery of Dan.

The Longhouse homestead near Meadow Lake, then 90 miles north of the nearest railroad, covered a section of 640 acres of bush and between 1919 and 1941 when Mr. Longhouse returned to Woodbridge, he cleared and planted 300 acres of wheat.

"I cut every tree with an axe and pulled every stump with horses in that 300 acres," said Mr. Longhouse.

SURVIVED DEPRESSION
"Life in Northern Saskatchewan was tough, particularly during the depression after the crash in 1929, but there was no better life and you quickly learned to be resourceful and think for yourself," he adds. "That's what's wrong with today's young people, they have it so good they haven't had to think for themselves and they keep wanting someone else to do their thinking for them."

Although the depression wiped out many farmers and left thousands of men jobless, Mr. Longhouse struggled through. "I can remember after the crash in 1929 loading 60 bushels of wheat onto a sleigh and hauling it to the railroad which by then was 45 miles south. It was a three-day trip there and back and the wheat sold for 19 cents a bushel. I wouldn't want to see that happen again, but it's something wheat farmers should think about today," he says.

To augment his meagre income from the farm, Mr. Longhouse obtained employment with the provincial highways department in Northern Saskatchewan and was foreman in charge of 300 "relievers" constructing the first road into the north.

"It was through having the 'relief gang' in the area that Meadow Lake obtained its first doctor and eventually the 'only all cedar hospital in the world,' a 'gift' which Canadian National Railways may never know it contributed to the growing community.

Provincial law required there be a doctor in communities where "relief gangs" were located and the first doctor, an intern from Winnipeg, was hired for \$300 a month.

When the workmen were laid off for the winter and the doctor's income ceased, he quit, but a second doctor who remained in the community replaced him.

However, the new doctor was upset because he didn't have proper facilities to treat patients and so it was decided to build a hospital.

"We didn't have any money to build a hospital and although lumber was cheap, we didn't even have enough money to buy lumber. But the CNR had come north and just outside Meadow Lake they had stockpiled cedar timbers," said Mr. Longhouse. "We decided those timbers would be ideal and thought about writing the CNR to ask if we could have them, but somebody said that if we wrote the CNR it would be maybe two years before we received a reply so we decided to take the timbers, build the hospital and then write the CNR. Somehow, after the hospital was built we neglected to tell the CNR what became of their timbers, but we were very proud of our all-cedar hospital, probably the sweetest-smelling and only all-cedar hospital in the world."

ENTERED PUBLIC LIFE 1920
Resourcefulness was nothing new to the hardy homesteaders of Meadow Lake. Mr. Longhouse, who first entered public life in 1920 as a trustee of the original public school board, proudly says the Meadow Lake School Board built the first school and operated all through the depression without ever going into debt.

"We were maybe the only school board in Saskatchewan who always had a surplus," said Mr. Longhouse.

The school board started off on the "right foot" from the

beginning when it was decided a school would be necessary to educate the children in the growing community of about 250 people.

Even before the first two-room school was constructed, the trustees had applied to the provincial government for education grants and taxes had been levied. "We built the school and the board operated throughout the depression without ever going into debt. The people at Meadow Lake were the kind of people who believed in paying cash for what they got and doing without if they didn't have it," he says.

ILLNESS FORCES RETURN EAST

Mr. Longhouse, who still has a fondness for Northern Saskatchewan, was forced to leave his beloved "homestead" and return to Woodbridge because of an ulcerated stomach.

"I intended to go back after two or three years down here, but so many things happened that I finally sold the homestead for \$10 an acre, including all the machinery, through the Department of Veterans' Affairs in 1944. I was back to Meadow Lake on vacation four years ago. It has changed, with paved streets, hydro and all municipal services, undreamed of when I left there in 1941. Its present population is 3,800 and it is a thriving town," he says.

Mr. Longhouse was a worried man when he arrived in Woodbridge with his wife and nine children. "I had no trade other than farming and didn't know how I was going to make a living, but a cousin of mine convinced me I should go to work for Victory Aircraft at Malton," he recalled.

"When I got over to Victory, all they were hiring was electricians and after over 20 years in the Saskatchewan bush, I didn't even know how to turn on a light let alone wire an airplane," he said.

"But my cousin encouraged me, reminding me that I seemed to know something about keeping my car running and the machinery on the farm running so I started at Victory as an ignition electrician. I learned quickly and was one of the seven electricians who wired the first Lancaster bomber built at Victory. It was my job to do the wiring from wing tip to wing tip, including all the wiring for the engines, the cockpit and the radio," he said.

UNION ORGANIZER

Active in the co-operative movement in Saskatchewan, from which the Co-Operative Commonwealth Federation, now the New Democratic Party, evolved, Mr. Longhouse saw a need for organization of labor at Victory Aircraft and was an organizer of the union.

Appointed as a member of the negotiating committee, he still has a copy of the first

union contract signed between the Crown corporation and the union.

For three years he served on the union grievance committee and he was the workman the general manager called in to announce the shutdown of the plant.

"It was an honor to have been chosen to arrange the meeting at which the announcement was

made to the 10,000 workers," he said.

Following the shutdown of Victory Aircraft, Mr. Longhouse operated Elm Park in Woodbridge for three years and then went to work for A. V. Roe for a year.

He then built the Terrace Lunch on Highway 7 at Woodbridge and operated it for three years before forming his own construction company which remained in business for six years. For the past 10 years he operated as a real estate agent, but because he can no longer drive a car, is now retired.

DEPLORES LACK GROWTH
Mr. Longhouse says he is disappointed that Woodbridge has never grown.

"It is still pretty much the same community I remember 60 years ago, although electric street lights have replaced the five oil lamps I used to help light when I was a boy, gravel streets are now paved and there are a few new subdivisions," he says.

"But the heart of Woodbridge is pretty much unchanged. The old public school, now the hydro building, is still there, so are all the churches, the Orange Hall and the three hotels, although only one is still operating," he adds.

Mr. Longhouse says one of his greatest satisfactions since coming back to Woodbridge was having served for two years on the Board of York Manor at Newmarket.

"I can remember back in 1910 going to York Manor with my father who served on the board for many years. Being able to follow him has been something a little extra," said Mr. Longhouse, whose father, the late Dan Longhouse, was a former reeve of Vaughan Township and for 60 years was a director of the Woodbridge Fair.

At the family reunion on November 1 were: Mrs. Zelma Hocker, of Mount Denis; Phyllis Longhouse, of Weston; Mrs. Muriel Brownlee, of Woodbridge; Dan, Bill and Jack, all of Woodbridge; Bob, of Frankfurt, West Germany; Ed, of Snelgrove, and Mrs. Doreen Bryson, of London, the Longhouse children, and the 21 grandchildren.

SUTTON — W. D. Bruce of this community has been named a director of the Ontario Milk Distributors Association at its 40th annual convention held recently in Toronto.

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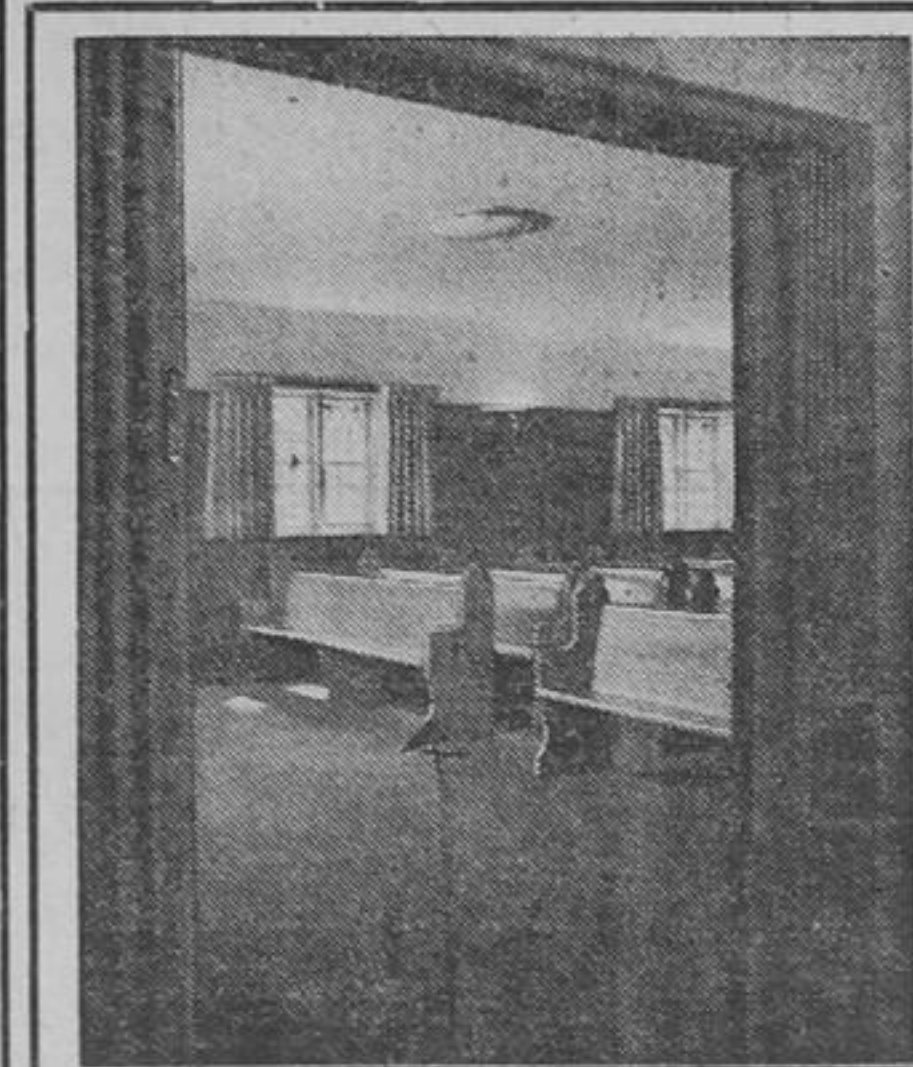
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