



Canada

ANNOUNCEMENT

Farm Credit Canada and Ridgetown Campus Agri-Food Foundation Recognize Westag Alumnus Peter Twynstra with Lifetime Achievement Award

June 5th, 2010 - Ridgetown

Recognizing agricultural innovation and outstanding community leadership, the first Westag Alumnus of Honour – Lifetime Achievement Award has been presented to Peter Twynstra. The 1960 Ridgetown graduate received the honour as part of the 58th graduation celebrations at the University of Guelph's Ridgetown Campus on Friday, June 4th, 2010.

Farm Credit Canada District Manager, Gary Paling, made the presentation and noted that Peter's lifetime achievements are an inspiration to farmers at home, across Canada, and abroad. "His success, achieved through innovation, hard work and a strong business model, has enabled him to contribute greatly to the Canadian Agri-Food industry."

"Peter is a perfect example of how steadfast determination can develop a successful farm business and build international agricultural markets for local producers. He also made time to volunteer in his local and broader rural community and to provide humanitarian support to those less fortunate in other corners of the world. He is an outstanding selection for this alumni honour," says Garnet Snobelen, Chair, Alumni Development, Ridgetown Agri-Food Foundation.

Back in his days at Ridgetown Campus in 1959 and 1960, Peter recalls he was excited about learning and studied hard. He had been out of school for five years before starting at Ridgetown and found he grew personally from the leadership of individuals such as Dr. Reg Doidge and residence deans Ma and Pa Willson. Upon graduating from Ridgetown, Peter was employed as a regional service representative with International Harvester in London. His farming journey began two years later with the purchase of his father's 300 acre home farm. In 1967 an expanded Twilight Acre Farms was incorporated.

In 1978, Peter formed the Great Canadian Bean Company to market edible beans from his farm and a few of his neighbours' farms. He recently noted that in his agricultural career he has spent 25 years of his life in an airplane as he travelled Canada and countless other countries developing diversified markets for edible beans. This business eventually grew to providing markets for over four hundred contract growers across Canada and the U.S. The success of his farm and the Great Canadian Bean Company of Ailsa Craig were the cumulative effort of Peter, his wife Dinie, their three children; Steve, Sharon and Linda, and their many employees. The bean company was sold in 2003 and is currently owned by Hensall District Co-op. Twilight Acres is now operated by his son Steve.

Crafted at time management, Peter's volunteer commitments to local farm organizations included leading 4-H Clubs and memberships in the Middlesex Soil and Crop Improvement Association, the Conservation Authority and many other local organizations. Peter's leadership skills were quickly spotted by former provincial Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Bill Stewart,

who asked him to lead the organization of the first Ontario Farm Safety Board. As the founding President of the Ontario Farm Safety Association in 1973, Peter worked hard to ensure all the key agricultural stakeholders had a spot at the board table.

Looking for the opportunity to influence agriculture and rural policy, Peter was the first Junior President of the National Farmers Union and has travelled the far corners and diversified agricultural landscape of Canada. He has been on council and reeve in his municipality and served on Middlesex County Council.

As the Chairman of the 2002 International Plowing Match in Middlesex County, working together with forty-two committees and over eleven hundred volunteers, a successful, well-attended agricultural showcase allowed for substantial financial contributions to be made to health care and seniors facilities in the community.

The Rotary International motto 'Service Above Self' suits Peter very well. Along with being an active member in the Grand Bend Rotary Club he helped with the charter of Rotary clubs in both Strathroy and Grand Bend, as has attended Rotary club meetings all over the world.

During the operation of the bean company, Peter traveled to Southern Africa many times for business and developed a love for the country and its people. Since his retirement he has led six tour groups there, showcasing the landscape, wildlife and agriculture. Seeing the need for humanitarian support, he is currently engaged in efforts to ship books, chalkboards, sports equipment and desks from closing rural Ontario schools to teachers and students in this struggling country.

Peter has been a supportive alumnus to Ridgetown Campus and was one of the first donors to the Rudy H. Brown Rural Development Centre. This fall, he will celebrate the 50th anniversary of his graduation.

Driving a tractor and spreading fertilizer on an open field at 5:00 AM remains one of the greatest joys of a man who has been farming for over 50 years. He also remains optimistic about the industry. "I see a great future for agriculture in this country. I came as an immigrant to Canada and found a land of opportunity. We have a great climate, great soil and farmers whose expertise is second to none. We need to be bold in our thinking and strategic in our directions and our agricultural possibilities are endless. Despite certain foreign difficulties, farmers in Canada are among the most efficient in the world and are a real benefit to Canada," he says.

In honour of Peter's tremendous commitment to agriculture and his community, at home and abroad, Farm Credit Canada made a \$5,000.00 contribution to the Ridgetown Agri-Food Foundation's top capital priority.

Peter – congratulations from all your fellow Westag alumni and everyone gathered here today!

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L-R: Ken Monteith (Ridgetown Agri-Food Foundation), **Garnet Snobelen** (Ridgetown Agri-Food Foundation), **Dr. Art Schaafsma** (Ridgetown Campus Director), **Peter Twynstra** (2010 Alumnus of Honour for Lifetime Achievement), **Dini Twynstra** (Peter's wife), **Gary Paling** (Farm Credit Canada and Ridgetown Agri-Food Foundation)