

Stuart Milton Hodgson

April 1st, 1924 - December 18th, 2015

It is with deep sadness that we announce the passing of Stuart Milton Hodgson at age 91, in Vancouver on Friday, December 18, 2015.

Stuart was born on April 1st, 1924, in Vancouver BC, the second son of Allan and Mary Hodgson.

He attended public school at Walter Moberly and John Oliver, completing Grade 11 (and voted least likely to succeed by his peers) before joining the RCN in WWII, at the age of 18. He served as a gunner on the HMCS Monnow on the Murmansk run where he shot down a German Junker Ju88 off the Norway coast and was present for the surrender of the German U-boat fleet Trondheim at war's end.

At the end of the war he returned to work in the plywood mills of MacMillan Bloedel. Soon, he became involved in the rough and tumble world of labour politics where he rose to the position of Secretary of Local 217 at the IWA, one of Canada's largest and most militant unions. His time with the IWA shaped his career as someone who cared deeply about people and treated everyone equally.

In 1964, he was appointed a member of the Council of the Northwest Territories. The following year he accepted the appointment as the first full-time Deputy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories and moved to Ottawa, which by federal law was the Capital of the NWT.

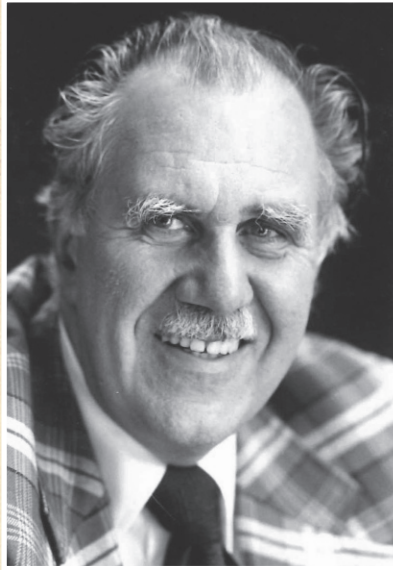
Upon the retirement of Commissioner Ben Sivertz, Stuart was appointed as his successor by then Prime Minister Lester Pearson on the recommendation of Arthur Laing, the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs. Stu said to the Prime Minister "I know nothing about running a government", to which Mike Pearson quipped "that is actually why I am appointing you".

He is best remembered for his achievements as Commissioner of the Northwest Territories from 1967 to 1975 where he was affectionately known by the Inuit as Umingmak (Musk-Ox), for his big warm, friendly, generous, wise, and protective presence.

Within months of his appointment as Commissioner he developed a fledgling civil service. In September 1967 he moved his 30 employees from Ottawa, some 1,800 miles distant, to the new capital of the NWT, Yellowknife, a small, isolated mining town on the north shore of Great Slave Lake. Houses had yet to be built and offices were in a dilapidated, condemned school.

The vast Arctic which lay beyond had become his responsibility. The population of 22,000 people were scattered in 72 isolated communities and camps over 1,300,00 square miles, an area almost half the size of the United States. He travelled the north extensively throughout his twelve years as Commissioner visiting each and every community at least annually.

The North was fraught with problems: the staggering distances, inadequate communications, and the fact that the Central and Eastern Arctic areas were so far removed from Yellowknife, it should have been another country. He realized there was no instant solution and that the key to bringing the northern population into the mainstream of Canadian life was to develop



local government by decentralizing power into the regions and local communities.

To unite the North and its people he devised a grand scheme to celebrate a 100-year birthday, a Centennial. It was a year of celebrations and events, which brought official visits by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, Governor General Rolland Michener and Queen Elizabeth and the Royal Family. He also initiated and hosted the first ever Arctic Winter Games in Yellowknife. He appointed an Inuk, Abraham Okpik, to head up Project Surname, replacing the Eskimo Disc System, introduced by the federal government in the 1940's, and gave the Inuit people back their names.

He presided over the affairs of the Council of the Northwest Territories, the legislative arm consisting of both appointed and elected members. He controlled the process as both Speaker and Leader. His administration wrote the laws, developed the financial budgets, and asked the Council to pass the ordinances and bills before them.

Finally, in 1975 he relinquished his authority over the Council and handed over control to the fully elected Council, the predecessor of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories.

As a final undertaking before leaving the North he built and invited Prince Charles to open, the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, one of his proudest moments as Commissioner of the NWT.

His role in the North speaks of an unforgettable time and place - the rich and vibrant Arctic, one third of Canada's land mass and Stuart's role as mentor for its people. He loved the North and its people and often spoke of his time there.

After leaving the North he was appointed Chairman of the International Joint Commission where he settled 21 longstanding disputes between Canada and the US, followed by his return to BC as Chairman of the BC Ferry Corporation where he used his union background to bring labour stability while overseeing the construction of a new fleet of ships. He was then appointed Chair of BC Transit where he oversaw the construction of the Skytrain system and played a key role in the decision to make the Vancouver airport an independent authority to better serve the needs of BC. He was then appointed a Citizenship Judge by Prime Minister Chretien as a final opportunity to serve his beloved Canada.

He was an Officer in the Order of Canada and a Knight of the Order of St. John.

He was predeceased by his beloved wife, Pearl, in 2003 and is survived by his son, Eugene (Karen), and grandsons Stuart and Evan, daughter Lynne and grandchildren Sarah, Travis, Kyle, and Brittany, who he all loved very much.

Special thanks to the "darling" staff at Crofton Manor and his care aids Socorro and Cecilia.

A memorial service is scheduled for January 14th, 2016, at 2:00pm, in Vancouver BC, at the HMCS Discovery in Stanley Park.