

CHAPTER SEVEN

Our Strength IS People

For those men and women who contributed to the development of the Calgary Real Estate Board during the fifty years leading to the present half century milestone, their achievements are a legacy and a memorial.

Of all the formal recognitions of an individual's constructive and dedicated service to the organization, the bestowing of Honorary Life Membership perhaps is the most prestigious. The awarding of this honor began in 1962 when C.R.E.B. saluted three of its founders as the architects who purposefully guided and built it into a prestigious community business organization. They were Clair J. Cote, Archer Toole and Kennett I. Lyle. Each distinguished himself in the real estate profession as well as in community affairs, Lyle having been active in Calgary municipal concerns as an alderman.

In all, thirty-seven distinguished realtors have been so named. In the words of Ron Esch, C.R.E.B.'s executive vice president, "This special recognition is a very substantial award". The significance of it has been preserved by not making it a mechanical annual, or more frequently bestowed, honor. It is presented only to those who have earned special recognition for outstanding service to the profession. For example, the most recently honored is Harvey Gamble. Mrs. Dorothy Larson was one of three 1990 recipients, and Mrs. Barbara Watson received recognition in 1991 along with John Fraser, a C.R.E.B. past president who also received a gold watch for his wholehearted service as a member of the board of directors.

A gold watch, long a symbol of appreciation for services rendered, became a realtor's goal when awarded for property sales on a monthly basis, the tally being kept by the board in terms of points earned. Salesman of the Month, Volunteer of the Month, Salute to Pioneers, Realtor of the Year, the real estate office award for qualifying as a member of the Million Dollar Club, all are part of C.R.E.B's on-going process of encouragement, and the recognition of those who steadfastly adhere to the code of real estate business ethics and behavioral standards so carefully devised and monitored by the board over the years.

In May, 1960, James Cleave, who had been one of the directors on the original board in 1943, was honored for his 50 years' service to the real estate profession in Calgary. A very special honor befell Aubrey M. Edwards when, in 1964, he was appointed to the Court of Revision, a function he fulfilled until his retirement. At which Mayor Al Duerr said, "You provided leadership and distinction that was much needed." Among others whose "extra-curricular" achievements received recognition were Art Dixon who, as an MLA was named Speaker of the House, Roy Wilson who became a Social Credit member of the provincial legislature, and Ken Russell, chairman of the Court of Revision.

Strictly within the profession there is the designation of the Real Estate Institute of Canada, a mark of special professional skills, enabling its achievers to proudly affix FRI to their names. Earning that distinction as a Fellow of the Real Estate Institute is

many a Realtor's cherished goal. Other much sought-after titles are the Canadian Real Estate Association's CCIM, Certified Commercial Investment Membership, CMR, meaning Certified in the Marketing of Real Estate issued by the Real Estate Institute of Canada, and C.P.M., a distinction for a Realtor specially trained as a Certified Property Manager.

A distinctive national honor is that earned by the Calgary Real Estate Board for having produced from its ranks four national presidents of the Real Estate Institute of Canada: Frank Johns, George Loades, Rick Dalton, and Ron Smith. The local organization also has been the source of 18 Alberta Real Estate Association presidents, the first of whom was A.R.E.A.'s first, Kennett I. Lyle, FRI, SIR who served during 1946, '47, and '48. Other Calgarians holding that post over the years were:

J.A. Burn, FRI	H. Kelly
L.E. Wade, FRI	A.M. Edwards, FRI
E.H. Jackson	C.E. Sanders
E.B. Lyle, FRI	R.G. Wilson
R.G. Rich, FRI, AACI	R.L. Armbrust, FRI
A.T. Larson	P.J. Toole
R.L. Harris	W.G. Fofonove, FRI
W.A. Stephenson	J.G. Toole, FRI, CCIM, CMR
T.A. Zaharko, B.Comm., FRI, CMR	

Also from the Calgary organization came two presidents of the Canadian Real Estate Association, Kennett I. Lyle (1949) and William E. Dickson (1984). All of these Calgarians have been representative



Frank Butler, incoming President for 1965 accepts the gavel of office from Past President Ervie Jackson in this ceremony of Jan. 22nd, 1965

members of a proud tradition marking the Calgary Real Estate Board as a creator of leaders.

A local, but yet very prestigious honor is achieved by recipients of the T.W.H. "Bill" Saunders Memorial Award which means being named Realtor of the Year. Bill Saunders reached retirement as a grain buyer and at 65 years of age turned his hand to real estate buying and selling. He enjoyed the success he found in his new second career. However, he felt that there was a lack of recognition for the real estate salesperson "who makes his living selling real estate, is recognized as an ethical, honest individual, works well with fellow realtors, has served at the Board level in various capacities, has worked in community organizations, and has been involved in the real estate business for a number of years."

Bill left a request in his will that this sort of salesman should be saluted and a modest amount of money was left to make it possible. Ken Russell was the first recipient of the Saunders Award and it has been presented annually since 1979 to a man or woman who has been a C.R.E.B. member for a minimum of five years. It is not given to anyone for a dollar sales achievement but rather to that "special person" who has earned respect for his or her involvement and contribution to the real estate industry and to the community.

Harvey Gamble was the most recent recipient, having been chosen by his peers as the Realtor of the Year in 1992. Over the years other recipients have included Tom Clark, George W. Loades, Clair J. Cote Jr.,

Peter Sandall, Jim Willford, W. Frank Johns, and Wayne Stephenson.

It is heartwarming that in the decade of its existence the Saunders Award has honored Mrs. Evelyn M. Hinds, Mrs. Barbara L. Watson, Mrs. Kitty Noble, Mrs. Karen Gammie, and Mrs. Dorothy Larson. From the days when "there were very few women" in the business, their numbers have grown significantly. Following World War II, as women escaped the stereotype of the singularly-focussed housewife role, they discovered their marked capabilities as Realtors. Considerable impetus was given this trend by Calgary's all-women real estate firms which competed for business head-to-head with established firms which tended to be traditional male strongholds.

In 1975 the C.R.E.B. board of directors first included a woman when Grace Turley began a four-year span at the boardroom table. She was joined in 1977 by Barbara Watson who set her own pace as an eight-year board member. Not only that, Mrs. Watson was elected C.R.E.B. president in 1983 and gradually more women's names appeared on the board roster. Mrs. Turley completed her fourth year on the board in 1978 and was followed the next year by Mrs. Evelyn Hinds. That outstanding woman realtor set a new record of her own. For eleven years, until the end of 1987, she helped fashion the framework within which C.R.E.B. grew and prospered.

The pattern for women was set, for in 1987 the presidential gavel was placed in the hands of Mrs.

Dorothy Larson following her four years as a board member. As C.R.E.B. moved into the 1990's, Ms. Ellyn Mendham, who had entered the board of directors' ranks in 1988, has continued to hold a seat at the "big table" accompanied in 1990 by Ms. Rene Sorenson, in 1991 by Ms. Suzanne Mathews and, in 1992, by Ms. Pat Beaudry. On January 8, 1993, Ellyn Mendham was inaugurated as President, to serve during the Board's 50th anniversary year.

Most women, it appears, ventured into the world of real estate as their first move away from domestic life. Today an admirable number of them continue their roles of housewife and mother, successfully adding their new-found business capabilities to their already proven home-based accomplishments. Men, too, often enter the real estate arena from totally unrelated backgrounds. John Fraser, for example, was under pressure from his doctor father to follow him into a medical profession. But John, determined to deal in property, located a friend who helped him buy into an Okotoks real estate firm, thus launching himself in 1981 on a very busy career with Team Realty. He found the day-to-day varying challenges stimulating, especially when, in that same year of 1981, the Calgary district town planners and municipal districts altered their hitherto strict policy of restricting rural subdivisions.

Maurice Stenson discovered his outstanding real estate capabilities after spending many of his younger years as a house-to-house portrait photographer, as a boxer during the Depression when he earned \$1.00 per round for three bouts, and

as a C.N.R. brakeman. In 1949, he plunged into real estate selling and buying with Richards & Pitcairn, then with Rich and Jackson, and P. Lawson Real Estate which he bought and re-named Stenson Real Estate Limited. Maurice served as a C.R.E.B. director on two occasions and, during his 33 years as a Realtor won several top salesman awards including monthly gold watch contests as well as the board's variety of prowess awards which included turkeys, hams, free dinners, and complimentary trips to Spain, Cuba, Morocco, and Hawaii.

Alan Mackay emerged from a World War II stint in the Royal Canadian Air Force to become a career Realtor. Frank Johns began his adult life with a trust company in Toronto in 1934, obtaining a good background for his future chosen profession which he entered with the skills of shorthand and all other facets of stenography. A born salesman such as Hank Theisson brought with him into the industry, an ability to "dicker" with prospective clients during Depression years in terms of chickens and eggs in lieu of money to close a deal. Al Montgomery made a successful somersault from Mobil Oil's personnel department into real estate, and so the roster goes.

A natural-born real estate salesman was Mike Melton of Edmonton. He knew that fellow Edmontonian Jack Weber, thanks to a partnership with Calgary realtor Arnold Burn, had a toehold in the foothills city. His brother Stan Melton also wanted to enter the Calgary scene. Treading softly because he knew "outsiders" were not welcome, Stan arranged a golf game with Frank Johns at the Calgary Golf and Country Club. Stan asked Frank to help him establish an operation

here.

Frank listened to the Edmontonian's idea and as they walked along one of the fairways Frank suggested that, if Stan did open a shop here, it should be under the leadership of Melton's very best salesman. Frank promised to do some liaison work, suggesting for example, that Edmonton realtors might be permitted to establish here but only after a six month probationary period to prove to the local fraternity that their tactics were honorable, and that they were prepared to abide by the local board member firms' terms of business behavior.

Thereafter, any realtors from outside Calgary city limits were welcomed as long as they proved themselves, during the ensuing six months, worthy of dealing with integrity with local competitors. This was the gentlemanly atmosphere, strengthened by the business principles of C.R.E.B. (1962) president Al Larson which enabled the strongly people-oriented realty firms to make Calgary a fine place in which to do business. It helped make a profession out of an industry in those days well before the appearance of the franchise-type of real estate company.

Small "people things" as well as headline accomplishments, mattered a great deal. One was the recognition of clients' lifestyles and desires. After huge commercial quantities of oil had been found at Leduc in 1947. Calgary was chosen by "the oil patch" as the company administrative headquarters centre bringing United States individuals and families to the city. Rather than bulldoze their way into, and right

through, sales opportunities, C.R.E.B. member companies and their staffs took special time to determine the tastes and habits the American and European newcomers had accumulated in their travels. A preferential pattern emerged for houses with multiple bathrooms, sunlit kitchens, and ample space for large-scale entertaining. Some of them also sought the novelty of an open fireplace.

When it came to entertaining and sharing a life-style, within their own profession, people of the Calgary Real Estate Board took a back seat to no one. In October, 1950, the Calgary board hosted a joint convention of the Canadian and the provincial boards at the Palliser Hotel. A significant outcome of that large meeting was that henceforth the word 'Realtor' has been created, a copyright, nation-wide term for board members. In 1952 the local board hosted the Alberta Real Estate Association which resulted in an increase in Calgary membership in A.R.E.A. to 130.

By 1977 C.R.E.B. had distributed more than 1,500 symbolic white hats to delegates from all across Canada while hosting four national conventions of the Canadian Real Estate Association. In 1983 one of the largest gatherings took place with Ken Russell in charge of the program and Frank Johns handling the finances.

They - hosts and guests - well remember the scope of the preparations and the events that enchanted the real estate visitors.

One of the more memorable features was a train ride

Feb. 3rd, 1976 was a special evening for Jack Rich shown with Past President Ken Russel, (centre) and Jack's son, Bob Rich, F.R.I., newly installed Board President. Twenty years prior in 1956, Jack had become President of the Board.



to and from Banff. So many turned up to sample legendary Calgary hospitality that a second train had to be quickly organized. Men and women from C.R.E.B. and local service clubs helped make it an unforgettable event complete with a high school band, a ride up Sulphur Mountain by gondola lift, a round of golf, and swims in the hot springs.

Another highlight was a hold-up on the Morley Flats. Thanks to the help of Calgary Stampede staff and competitors, the trains were stopped and held up by "bad guy bandits" while square dancing in specially-equipped baggage cars was in full swing. An outdoor Stampede flapjack breakfast in company with Calgary Mayor Rod Sykes and city councillors made it the talk of the town in the midst of the traditionally exciting Calgary Exhibition and Stampede whoop-up. The verdict was a paraphrase of ancient words: "I Came, I Saw, I Was Delighted. I'll Come Again If I'm Invited."

It would be a dreary scene without some laughter and the Calgary Real Estate Board creates its share despite the earnestness of the men and women Realtors who pursue a most demanding career. Its people indeed are its strength and that attribute, of course, includes the services rendered voluntarily within the organization, and to the community. C.R.E.B.'s public relations activities cover a broad field which includes: a Partner in Education project at a local school, a Puppets on Patrol children's traffic education undertaking with the Calgary Police Service, a Heritage Day Brunch for Calgary senior citizens, providing printed supplies for career days

and career nights, hands-on encouragement of recycling, supporting the Calgary Horticultural Society's beautiful garden undertakings are some of them.

Within the organization is the social events committee which labels itself The Party Animals, with the task of organizing and carrying out seven annual events of varying degrees of formality. Golf, slo-pitch contests, and a curling bonspiel are among them, along with a Board Builders Luncheon and a Realtors' Christmas lunch.

The golf tournament is always a merry event especially when such luminaries as Frank Johns and Aubrey Edwards approach a green together as they did several seasons ago. They were playing a mediocre quality game. Frank was giving Aubrey a particularly hard time for his slicing and four-putts. By the time they reached the 7th they had squabbled so much they were not talking to each other. Aubrey was really stung by Frank's constant accusations of his ineptness, saying that just being able to move the ball was not sufficient. Suddenly, on the 200-yard 8th he whammed in a hole-in-one. "Is that sufficient?" crowed Aubrey.

There is rivalry in the business, there is competition in the field, and with 3,800 C.R.E.B. members and staff at work, differences of opinion abound and are encouraged, for they keep the spirit bubbling and the objectives alive and in focus. This chronicle of the first half-century is a "people story" for they are the life-blood and the essence of the fifty-year-old Calgary Real Estate Board.