Gordon Souter

AUGUST 21, 2016

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing on Sunday August 21, 2016 of Robert Gordon Souter, at home on Pender Island, surrounded by his loving family and with Barbara, his wife of 61 years, curled up beside him.

Gordon was born at Drumheller, Alberta, and spent his early childhood at Michichi, AB. He was 9 years old when his family moved to BC, settling on a small acreage at Sardis. As a teenager he was a keen 4-H member in Chilliwack and he worked for several dairy farmers who encouraged his interest in dairy cattle genetics. A highlight of his youth was winning a trip as one of the top dairy judges in BC to National 4-H Week and the Royal Winter Fair in 1953. His career spanned a 50 year period of working with dairy and beef cattle, and his commitment to genetic improvement in the Canadian cattle industry culminated with his induction into the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2004.

He was first employed as an artificial insemination technician at Chilliwack in 1953, and in 1959 started at BCAI Centre at Milner (now WestGen), first as a technician, then moving up the ranks as fieldman, sire analyst and bull buyer, becoming General Manager in 1977, a position he held for 20 years. He retired as GM in 1997 but continued working for Semex Canada until 2004. His exceptional skills and vision in all aspects of genetic improvement enabled him to become a major innovator in the cattle breeding industry.

From 1995 until 2011 Gordon chaired the Milk Industry Advisory Committee for the BC Milk Marketing Board. He was a past chair of the PNE's 4-H committee, an official Holstein judge, and served on numerous agricultural boards and organizations. In 1992 he and Barbara were jointly awarded the BC Institute of Agrologists award for outstanding professional contributions to the agriculture industry of British Columbia.

In addition to being an industry legend, Gordon was a manager who inspired and had the respect of all those he worked with. In recognition of his outstanding contributions to the company and to the Canadian AI industry, WestGen's new boardroom was dedicated to Gordie Souter during the Grand Opening celebrations for their new facilities at Abbotsford on August 16. It seems fitting that this was the last public event Gordon attended, where he was surrounded by friends, family, and both the colleagues he inspired as well as the farmers he served so well.

Gord and Barb met in 4-H and this was a 4-H romance that lasted. After marriage in 1955 they farmed at Chilliwack, moving in 1959 to Cloverdale, in 1973 to a small farm near Abbotsford, and in 1980 to a larger farm at Fort Langley. For 25 years they had a purebred Simmental beef herd, operated as Meadowlake Farm. Gordon was supportive of the 4-H program throughout his life, all three children were in 4-H clubs (with dairy calves, horses, sheep and beef). In recent years grandchildren have been active in 4-H clubs in Alberta.

Through his work Gordon had many opportunities to travel. He was part of the first Canadian Agricultural Trade Mission to China in 1972, and was part of BC Trade Missions to South America and the Phillipines. Barb (as an agricultural journalist) was able to accompany him on Semex Canada trips to Japan, Korea, Israel, Russia and Ukraine, Australia, New Zealand, and numerous trips to Europe and the UK, where they were able to combine business with visits to cousins in

Scotland. Vacation trips have included California, Hawaii, Mexico, a trip to Africa with amazing animal encounters in Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and South Africa, and most recently Tahiti, Iceland and Cuba.

In 1998 Gord and Barb moved to Pender Island where they have both enjoyed an active retirement and continued their love of travel. Avid golfers, both have been involved with the Pender Island Golf Club, Gord serving several terms on the executive including two terms as president and he volunteered weekly with the Monday morning work crew. Gord also served as a director of the Pender Islands Fire Protection Society for 15 years, ten as president. If friends desire, memorial donations would be appreciated by either of these organizations.

Gordon loved his family, and loved spending time with each of them. On July 23, 2016 we attended our eldest grandson's wedding in Kamloops and enjoyed the time with all the family. Gord golfed 18 holes with Dex and all the guys in the wedding party the morning of the wedding, and we were still dancing at 1 am when the music finished.

His illness was brief. On August 5, the opening day of the Olympics, Gordon was diagnosed with a brain tumour. He passed on August 21, the closing day of the Olympics. We would like to extend thanks to the doctors and staff at Pender Island Medical Clinic for their care over the years, with special thanks to Dr. J. Petzold, and to our community nurses Carolyn and Miranda.

Gordon is survived by his wife Barbara, his children: Grant Souter (Grant Catt) of Calgary, AB, Anne Wasko (Barry) of Eastend, SK, and Karen Legault (Tony) of Nanton, AB, and his grandchildren: Dex Dunford (Alisha) of Medicine Hat, Clint Dunford, Shayne Legault, Chantelle Legault of Calgary, Luke Legault and Cody Legault of Nanton, by his niece and goddaughter Barb Arsenault (Peter) of Sherwood Park, AB and by many other nieces, nephews and cousins, across Canada and in Scotland. Predeceased by his parents Alexander and Isabella

Souter, and by seven siblings, Bill, Alex, Ethel, Isabel, Bert, Don and Helen.

A Celebration of Life for Gordon will be held Saturday October 8 at 12:30 pm at the Anglican Parish Hall, 4703 Canal Road, Pender Island. Words can’t express the impact he had on his family and friends, we will cherish his memory forever.

Messages of Condolence

Barb,
Could we have a conversation, sometime?
I'm not a typer, and I'd love a talk, regarding Geordie.
Dad was farming on South Sumas Road. Ethel was the Hired Hand as it was 1942 and the war
was on.Dad with Ethel's help was managing Bill Simpsons farm. Mrs. Souter cooked with Mom's
help for the haying season.
I still remember Mrs Souter.s delicious pies. God Bless, Joycep

— Joyce Dyble