

Father and son town's early builders

By ARTHUR LOWE

MN: Apr. 24/68

I knew Gordon Shipp and his son Harold way back when — a long way back. It was in those halcyon days when furriers sold furs, haberdashers sold haberdashery, and scrap dealers were content to sell scrap. In point of fact I knew them before the Great Vision was vouchsafed to all and sundry — the vision that convinced the furriers, the haberdashers, and the scrap dealers that the easy way to make a fortune was by taking a flyer in the building industry.

Gordon Shipp was a builder long before the days of the Great Vision, but it was a business with him, not a speculative racket. Harold and he are both new Mississaugans, and their peculiar distinction is that they built 15 percent of Mississauga before urban Mississauga existed. Indeed, they may be said to have started its urbanization.

Their first developments were centred in the Applewood area, north of the Queen Elizabeth and west of Brown's Line, named for the orchard in which the first housing subdivision was located. That was in the early fifties, and the construction of Applewood Plaza followed in 1955.

Gordon Shipp started

building homes in 1923 so that next month he will celebrate his 45th year in the building industry. That they were successful years goes without question, but they were by no means the sort of bonanza years that lured the get-rich-quick boys into the business soon after the war. He piloted his business through years when there was a lot more famine than feast.

For the purpose of this article I had arranged to interview Gordon after a long lapse of years in our acquaintanceship. I should have phoned confirming the interview before calling at his office, but I didn't — with the result that when I arrived he had phoned his secretary to say that he would have to postpone the date.

Fortunately Harold spotted me, and after an exuberant reunion, for I had known him better than his father, we settled down to talk of mutual friends and so on. We talked too of early days, of battles past, and of the not quite foreseeable future. We talked, too, of his father, founder of the business and today a very active patriarch of 76.

It was Harold who told me that the firm would soon be celebrating its



Gordon Shipp is shown with his son Harold. It is indicative of the regard in which they are held that at the last provincial election Harold received invitations from both the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives to contest the riding.

45th anniversary. "And in 1966," he added, "father and mother celebrated their golden wedding."

Here was a good chance, I thought, to get a little factual stuff for this piece. I pulled out a pad and sat with pencil poised.

"What was your mother's maiden name?" I asked.

"Breeze," said Harold. "Bessie Breeze. And you can guess the family joke

— she's the breeze that drives the ship."

We got down to more serious stuff, and it was mostly about building and land development. The Shipp's are proud Mississaugans, but Harold, I discovered, was a lot more conservative about the growth of the town than most Mississaugans I have spoken to. He is alive to its enormous potentialities and he sees development taking place

rapidly — but not as rapidly as those uninitiated in urban development would have it. His argument went something like this.

"The town comprises over 70,000 acres," he said. "For the past eleven years — the years of rapid growth — an average of 400 acres a year has been put on registered plan, that is to say an average of 400 acres a year has gone into development. Last year, 1967, 780.9 acres went on registered plan — the highest ever. Now just suppose we treble the average development of the past eleven years and it will still take half a century to build up the 70,000 acres."

He pointed to areas on the map where farms were selling at better than \$9,000 an acre — farms far from the areas already urbanized. With land at such a price and money at 7½ percent or more, he thought that some of those holding the land were being — well — overly optimistic.

I got his point.

Harold was born in 1926 and joined the firm upon leaving high school in 1945. He served in various administrative positions before succeeding his father as president of G. S. Shipp and Son, Ltd. and president of various sub-

sidiaries. In 1949 he married June Ingram of Etobicoke, and the couple have three children, two girls and a boy.

Gordon Shipp moved to his splendid home on Boulton dr. in Mississauga in 1955 when he had completed building the Applewood Plaza. From the very beginning when he was building in East York, North Toronto and Forest Hill, Shipp's homes were acclaimed as something special, reflecting the integrity of the builder. The same quality holds true today for Harold, like his father, is a perfectionist.

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