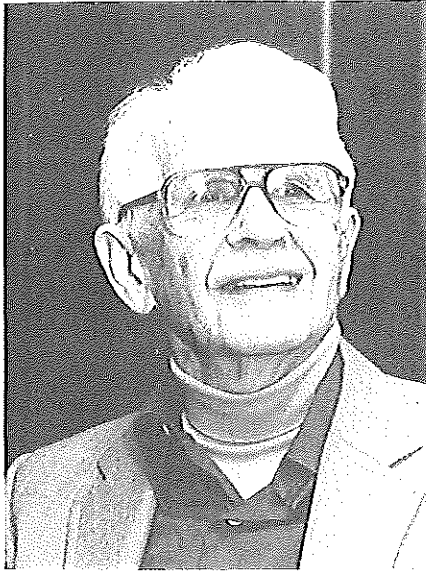


**Harold Stewart Howden (OLS # 607)  
1911 – 2007**

**Submitted by: Brian Howden and Craig Stewart, OLS (Ret)**



When the Royal Canadian Air Force recruited Harold Howden in 1942 as a navigation instructor, they made a good choice. Harold had obtained his commission as an Ontario Land Surveyor on May 11, 1935 and spent the following 6 years with the Ontario Department of Highways, surveying various highway locations throughout the province.

He had articulated to N.D. (Barney) Bennett O.L.S. in 1931 and performed his fair share of highway location and boundary retracement surveys in the wilds of northern Ontario.

He also became a member of the Association of Professional Engineers, Ontario on June 26, 1938.

He was well suited for the role of navigation instructor as he loved to teach. The mathematical precision of land surveying and its similarity to aeronautical navigation appealed to him, and when he signed up in 1942, the RCAF shipped him off to Quebec to train young pilots in celestial navigation. His only problem as an instructor was his appearance – he looked younger than many of his students and was frequently mistaken for one himself.

Born in Toronto on November 29, 1911, one of Harold's favourite stories (and he had many) was the fact that as his parents emigrated from Edinburgh, Scotland in April of that same year, he was an unpaid passenger on the S.S. Saturnia.. His 6 year old sister, Catherine, and 3 year old brother, George Jr. traveled on that ship with their parents. A sister, Margaret was born 3 years later. Harold was not the only OLS in the family – Catherine's son, Robert Craig Stewart received his OLS commission 1964.

After he retired from the RCAF in 1945, he was appointed as Chief Inspector of Surveys with the Ontario Department of Surveys, a position he held until 1957. During this period, he oversaw the assumption and legal surveys of the Ontario secondary highway network. As a result, a large number of young surveyors were hired around the province and most of them were articulated to "H.S.Howden

He also established a series of training courses for party chiefs and articling surveyors. They ran for many years and were instrumental in providing an excellent groundwork in the practical aspects of legal surveying. Over the years, many of these surveyors left the public service and established their own private land surveying firms.

In 1958, the Department moved him upstairs as Assistant Director of Services, and then on to Director of Services in 1960.

Never one to stand still, he was promoted to Assistant Deputy Minister (Administration) in 1962 and then as Assistant Deputy Minister (Planning, Research and Policy Development) in 1972.

His reputation for "getting things done" resulted in his being appointed as chairman of various ministry committees during his career dealing with such varying subjects as electronic computing, property purchasing, management employees, organization structural changes dictated by changes in government, and many more.

As he moved away from contact with the survey activities of the Department and into more administrative duties, he never lost his love for land surveying and regularly attended the AOLS annual convention until 2006. He also contributed his time to the AOLS, as an instructor on the Surveys Act; as chairman of the land surveying committee; and as a member of council.

Harold retired from the public service in 1972 after a remarkable career spanning 42 years, but apparently he left a hole that was difficult to fill and in 1973 he was hired back for a year as a consultant to the Ministry of Transportation and Communications.

The AOLS recognized Harold's contributions over the years and in 1991 presented him with the Professional Recognition Award. He treasured this award, much as an actor treasures his Oscar and he well deserved it.

Harold was truly a "renaissance man" – he was a painter, a writer, a photographer, a musician, and a voracious reader. If he didn't know the answer to something he would look it up. He spent the 35 years after he retired, still learning and "looking things up".

As he wrote in one of his many articles – *"Maybe we are not supposed to ever know the absolute truth. If we did, the striving for it would be over and the striving itself might be the very essence of life."*

Harold's special gift though, was his love of people and his practical approach to problem solving. He was never too busy to talk to you, and whatever the subject under discussion was, he conveyed his total interest in you and your views.

Harold Stewart Howden passed away on June 7, 2007 in his 96<sup>th</sup> year and will forever be remembered by those whose lives he touched.

He is survived by his wife Betty, his sons Brian, David, Gary and Kevin, 14 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.

He was predeceased by his only daughter Heather in 1995 and his oldest son Gordon in 2006.

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