

John Clifford Robertson, OLS # 968
March 22, 1933 - December 4, 2012



John was born and raised in Tilbury, Ontario. At a young age when he was in the Royal Canadian Air Cadets he must have stood out as he was one of 25 Canadian Cadets chosen out of 17 000 to tour all the airbases in the US. It was his father who instilled the importance of education in him at the age of 17 by getting him a job unloading creosote boards which had been used on the floors of manure spreaders. This would help him decide to further his education after graduating high school. He went to college and then did work in Accounting and Auditing. He joined The Ontario Department of Highways in 1952. He travelled throughout the province working for the provincial department for nine years conducting

property surveys, drafting and inspecting expressways, bridges and highways. He became qualified as an Ontario Land Surveyor in 1958. In 1963-64 he worked for the engineering department of Kitchener on inspection, construction and layout of streets and sewers while attending the University of Waterloo where he graduated with his degree in Civil Engineering in 1965.

Following his graduation from Waterloo he was hired by the City of Sarnia as a Design Engineer in 1965. He would be named Deputy Works Commissioner three years later. He was known as a young man keen on learning all aspects of city operations. He did things like ride all night with snow plow operators to experience what was going on. In 1968 during a strike, John and a superintendent moved into the Sarnia Water Plant and ran it for nine weeks. He worked in the Deputy Works position for eight years and would also graduate from Western University in 1975 with Public Administration. He served on the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors, Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario and two years as chairman of the Engineering Institute of Canada.

The final phase of his working career would be to become the City Manager of Sarnia from 1977-1991. While in this position some of his accomplishments were the Polysar Building (now known as First Sarnia Place), the Eaton Centre (now Bayside Mall), the Seaway Centre, Kenwick Place and one of the first private waste collection systems in Ontario. John also headed a waterfront plan for Sarnia that included acquiring properties along the waterfront to give the city complete ownership. He cut the city's debt in half while there and fought for the

hiring of women as senior administrators. John considered one of his greatest challenges to have successfully put together the underground diagram of all services for the creation of the Donohue Bridge and the two one-way streets of Vidal and Brock. He helped lead the amalgamation talks in the 1970's and 1980's that led to the merger between the City of Sarnia and the Town of Clearwater after his retirement in 1991 at the age of 58. After retiring as City Manager of Sarnia he was involved with one more large development. He became a very valuable consultant in the making of the CN Tunnel that goes under the St. Clair River from Sarnia to Port Huron, Michigan that opened Friday May 5, 1995.

A few years after retiring John moved from Mooretown back to Tilbury to be closer to his family. John was married to Dorothy for almost 50 years before her passing. John has two married daughters and three grandchildren. He always made himself available for family and friends showing his love, support, kindness and generosity never asking for anything in return. One thing he loved to do in his life was to drive anywhere and everywhere. He found it relaxing, a way to visit those he knew and meet those he didn't, while seeing both familiar and new places. He took annual fishing and hunting trips with childhood friends. He enjoyed travelling, with cruising and Florida being at the top of his list. He always looked at the positive side of things and never complained. Even after being stuck on the disabled Carnival Cruise ship Splendor, off the coast of California and Mexico for almost a week, he was just happy for receiving a free future cruise. That free cruise would be his last before being diagnosed with Pulmonary Fibrosis.

John could not deny he could be a demanding person to work for but it was said "he's the kind of guy who can be assertive without being abrasive." He also gave advice once stating "just do the best you can, don't ponder and keep your values." Mike Bradley, Mayor of Sarnia wrote in a recent article after John's death that "he was a visionary, professional, public servant who served with commitment and integrity. The public and private John were two different people. His public image was of a public servant who was hands on with an iron fist. The private John was witty, caring and one who had a great curiosity about people from all walks of life and who dearly loved his family. He will leave a big hole in the lives of those who knew him." He will be missed by many.