



Larry and Reta Campbell

BY SANDRA EAGLE

Larry Campbell Calls It A Day At The Canadian Meat Council

Anyone who has attended the Canadian Meat Council (CMC) annual conference in the last 38 years will be aware of Larry Campbell and his infamous brass bell. Priding himself on running punctual meetings is one of Campbell's quirks, and now the brass bell and its owner are moving on. Campbell will be retiring this June to his beloved village of Carp, near Ottawa, to enjoy some quality time with his wife of 40 years, Reta, and puttering about the house and yard.

Campbell has been connected one way or another to the meat industry all his life. He was born and raised on a mixed farm of 210 acres, near London, Ont., and was a 4H member for six years, winning the Ontario provincial beef cattle judging championship when he was in Grade 13. He studied at the Ontario Agriculture College in Guelph, Ont., specializing in animal husbandry and was one of 125 graduates in the spring of 1963. He was immediately hired as an assistant agriculture representative for the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and posted to Bell's Corners, Ont., for the next four years. In 1967, he was asked to meet with the general manager of the then Meat Packers Council of Canada and that turned into a four decade career.

Campbell joined the council as an information officer and field service representative and since then he's seen and been a part of the huge shifts in the meat industry.

Campbell has seen the demise of the multi-species plants

the major players had in metropolitan centres right across the country. On the process side he's seen a growth in the specialty plants that are only doing sausage or further value-added product. The way in which the product moves from the packer to the retailer and on to the consumer is different. He's seen the wholesale changes from swinging beef (a half carcass that is cut up by a butcher at retail), to case ready meats ready to place on the counter.

As for major challenges in his time at the CMC, he says without a doubt, "BSE has been a major consumer of time, industry input and knowledge. Issues like the tariff rate quota for beef and veal are also difficult because different players in the Canadian industry have different perspectives on the situation." Another controversial issue was the conversion to the metric system. "We've seen the advent of nutritional labelling and ingredient product listings in descending order of content. I'd say the industry has evolved over the years into a much more market responsive, consumer driven industry."

Although Campbell notes that the council has significant interaction and still liaises with primary producer groups at the national level, "there is a lot more emphasis placed on the technical and regulatory aspect of the industry, involving the government. We've had an increase in the amount of time we devote to that side of the industry, especially in the area of export readiness and maintaining market access internationally for our members around the world."

In the late '70s Campbell was instrumental in the creation of associate memberships for suppliers to the industry. Dennis Hicks, president of Pemberton & Associates Inc., a member of the CMC board of directors, says Campbell has been incredibly supportive. "Whenever we needed organizational assistance he stepped up to the plate, or if we needed to make contact with a government department he paved the way for that, and in some cases he just let us vent. His connections within the industry have helped all of us, at one time or another. He's always upbeat. He was always there with his support."

In 1981 Campbell took on the role of secretary-treasurer to the board of directors and a number of committees, including: beef, pork, foodservice and associate members. Campbell has served under five executive directors of the CMC. Jim Laws, who is the current executive director, says "Larry has certainly been very gracious putting up with a younger boss with a very different management style than his last one. He's been very tolerant of my many questions, but he has so many answers in his head it's been great that I can tap into his knowledge and especially his contacts."

Larry's strengths, for Laws, lie in "his composure and demeanor, he's fairly relaxed, calm and very friendly with people. As he's been on the 4H Council and served on their board of directors for four years, he understands the farmer side of the business as well."

sandra.eagle@food.rogers.com

His connections within the industry have helped all of us, at one time or another. He's always upbeat. He was always there with his support.