

to companies like Victory Aircraft, Hawker Siddeley, and A.V.Roe. Later, the construction of the Toronto International Airport fuelled this growth. Bill remembers small Brampton industries like Gummed Paper, Charters Publishing, Dixie Cup and of course the flower industry, led by the Dale Estate. He also recalls immigrants arriving from Europe after World War II and the opening of American Motors Corporation. The population began to climb; the city began to grow and subdivisions were needed to house that growth.

When Bill joined his father in practice, the population of Brampton was around 15,000 people. The firm was located at 7 Main Street South, where Scotiabank now stands at Main and Queen Streets. The premises were very small and Bill's office had no heat. Bill convinced his father that they had to find a larger office, so they bought a building and moved to the "country"—less than a block away! Lawrences still occupies those premises at 43 Queen Street West. The original building had been a tinsmith shop; over the years, the firm added space as it grew, so that today the building comprises 10,000 square feet over three storeys.

At that time, the firm's practice was primarily real estate and estates, with some smaller litigation matters. Bill says that most Brampton lawyers did not practice litigation, referring such work to Toronto law firms. Bill did some litigation, primarily personal injury and criminal work, but his clients' greatest need at that time was for real estate development work. Over his career, Bill worked with a number of developers as they developed numerous residential subdivisions within the City of Brampton, commercial and industrial developments, and retirement home communities throughout Ontario. As Bill's practice and his clients' needs grew, the firm's core practice areas of real estate and estates expanded to include corporate and commercial law and litigation.

The Biggest Changes

Bill thinks specialization has been the biggest change in the way lawyers serve their clients. When he started out, every lawyer was a generalist and "did it all". Nowadays, especially at Lawrences, lawyers develop niche areas of expertise, to ensure that our clients get precisely the legal services they need. Then of course, technology has changed everything. When Bill started his practice, Dictaphones were just becoming commonplace. Secretaries would transcribe dictated documents,

but they also took shorthand and used manual typewriters. Today, every lawyer has a computer and we use digital dictation. Clients have many more ways of communicating with their lawyers—by e-mail, phone, fax and letter—and their expectations for good, fast service have risen accordingly.

Where changes in Brampton are concerned, Bill points to the rapid growth in population—from 15,000 to 500,000 people—and in industry. Most notable for Bill is the growth in population diversity and multiculturalism, both of which have created tremendous opportunities in business in Brampton.

I asked Bill how he accounted for his success in running the firm. His answer was that with good financial controls, the firm kept growing and its skilled lawyers gave good service to clients. Primarily though, Bill credits hard work, listening to clients' needs and nurturing the solicitor/client relationship so that the client regards the lawyer as a "trusted advisor."

I asked Bill what advice he would give to someone starting out a legal career at Lawrences today. He responded: "Talk to someone younger than me!" To my mind, a young lawyer would do well to talk to Bill Lawrence and learn from his example. As he said to me when I started my career 22 years ago, "You've chosen a career you love, so you will never work a day in your life." I think he's right, but a good part of the reason for that is that I have spent my whole career here at Lawrences, following the examples of the great lawyers who have built our firm over the past 85 years, starting with Harold Lawrence and Gordon Graydon. Later, the advice of such wonderful lawyers as Farquhar MacDonald, Jim Gaskin, Dennis Cole, John Webber, Gerry Fitzhenry, Janet Simmons and Basil Stevenson (to name a few) have guided so many of us. But through it all, it has been Bill Lawrence who has been the guiding legal and professional light for the firm. His example will stand us all in good stead for the next 85 years. Thanks, Bill!



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