

D.R. (DAVE) RIDSDALE

1925 – 2009

David Robert Ridsale was born in Dodsland, Sask., shortly after his family emigrated from England, and was raised on a small farm near Asquith. At age 18, he enlisted in the army and was trained as a driver/mechanic in the Reconnaissance Corps. In 1949, he and his older brother, Fred, deciding to utilize some of the skills they had learned in the army, acquired an operating authority to serve seven towns between Saskatoon and Manitou Beach. They bought a truck and went out to drum up business. The first load for Ridsdale Transport was a five-pound carton for an implement dealer in Watrous.

The main competition in the early days was rail. The brothers were able to compete by offering personalized same-day service with pickup and delivery with the same equipment. In the winter, they provided heated service by incorporating a wood-burning heater, complete with chimney, in the truck box.

It certainly was not easy work. At the time, the Department of Highways did not clear the roads in the winter. This was done by local snowplow clubs, usually a group of farmers who would chip in to buy a snow blower and look after a portion of the road. Occasionally, the roads would get so plugged the snowplow would abandon the road and plow a route through the fields where the snow was not so deep. Sometimes Dave would finish delivering freight in a town and find several cars waiting at the edge of town for him to break a trail to the next town.

In 1961, the brothers dissolved their partnership. As his share of the company, Dave retained two five-ton highway trucks, a half-ton, and the original seven-town operating authority. With determination and hard work, he continued to grow the company until his retirement in the 90s. The foundation he built ensured that his family and employees could continue to grow and prosper. In 2009, Ridsale Transport Ltd. celebrated its 60th anniversary at which time its employees numbered over 250, serving over 200 Saskatchewan points, using 400 pieces of equipment from a network of ten terminals including Winnipeg, Edmonton and Calgary. All this from one five-pound shipment in 1949.

During his career, Dave was a long time supporter of the Saskatchewan Trucking Association, serving as General Merchandise Conference Chairman, on Government Advisory Committees, and as President from 1980-81. He was awarded the prestigious Trailmobile Service to Industry Award in 1982. Some of the issues he dealt with were a possible fuel allocation system due to a looming fuel shortage, lack of uniform standards between provinces for the trucking industry and, of long term consequence to the industry, the deregulation of the Trucking Authorities.

Dave and his wife, Edith, had six children—four boys and two girls, several of whom are still actively involved in the industry. Dave's maxim was to be fair and honest, to work hard and to take pleasure in a job well done. He enjoyed his work and made many friends along the way. He had a fierce loyalty to his long-term employees, which made his work the true definition of a family business.

Inducted into
The Saskatchewan Transportation Hall of Fame
June 2010