**John Rowell**

****John Rowell the only son of Francis and Clara was born in Toronto.

He moved to Woodstock at a young age where is grandfather operated

a taxi service. John’s father purchased the Watson Funeral home and

they moved to the apartment located above. The magic rule became

‘Quiet Please”.

After completing grade 12 he started his apprentice in the family funeral home business and graduated the Canadian School of Embalming in 1962. Running a small funeral home entailed his fair share of washing vehicles and becoming all too familiar with a broom and vacuum. There were also memorable moments like the time he ran out of gas during a funeral procession. He took over the operation when his father died and soon began looking around for other opportunities.

John’s persistence in obtaining a radio system license finally paid off in 1972 when he was granted a license to operate a radio paging system. He launched “Oxford Communications” with 8 customers the following year and added an answering service from MacLean- Hunter a few months later. The company soon employed over 25 full and part time operators to cover over 100 customers, including doctors, 24/7. Realizing he could not run the funeral business and continue to grow the communications business John sold the funeral home. In 1979 he enlarged the company foot print by adding transmission sites and opening offices in London, Windsor and Kitchener with agents in the smaller communities.

Oxford Communications was a member of the Canadian Radio Common Carriers Assoc. when they finally were granted the right for full interconnection to the telephoned switched network. The company soon became fully automated, eliminating the need for operators and dispatchers. In 1985 John sold the answering and paging system back to MacLean-Hunter but not until the paging base had grown to between 3 and 4 thousand units. When Bell and Cantel began to roll out their cellular networks our two-way radio business became agents for both, eventually becoming exclusively Cantel. It became a Rogers dealership operating as Oxford Cellular Ltd. till 2009. The towers that had been built to facilitate radio and cellular networks were sold as a package in 2014.

John retired in 2016 to a home he shares with Dawn, his wife of 45 years. He has 5 children, 9 grandchildren and 2 great grandsons. About 15 years ago, after searching for 2 years, John, who had always know he as adopted, discovered his birth family. He is thankful for the time he has had building a relationship with both his brother and sister. After a career of 57 years John is ready for new activities including Probus.