

## Canadian Propane Association Honours Grant Sparling with 2015 Lifetime Achievement Award

The Canadian Propane Association (CPA) is pleased to announce that it has selected Grant Rufus Sparling as the recipient of the 2015 CPA Lifetime Achievement Award. The award was accepted by his son, Steven Sparling, on June 4 at the CPA Ontario Seminar in King City.

The CPA Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes individuals who have made significant or consistent outstanding contributions to the betterment of the Canadian Propane Association and its membership. This award recognizes an individual who is regarded as possessing integrity, honesty and the respect of their peers. The award is for lifetime achievement rather than for a single contribution.

Grant Sparling, Founder of Sparling's Propane in Blyth, Ontario, grew Sparling's quietly and significantly to become one of the largest propane retailers in Canada when it was purchased by Parkland Fuel Corporation, Calgary, in 2013.



Grant Sparling

Founded in 1951, Sparling's is Canada's oldest propane company and was twice named "One of the 50 Best Places to Work in Canada" by the Globe & Mail. The company supports over 350 groups, organizations and events annually, across Ontario. Sparling's employees are active in the community, in service clubs and organizations, agencies, sports and churches, and through financial support provided by the Sparling's Employee Fund.



Steven Sparling (R) accepting the award on behalf of Grant Sparling from CPA Board Chair Guy Marchand.

Throughout the years, Grant's genuine commitment to fair pricing and customer service always helped him stand out in a crowded field. In 1977, Grant circulated a timeless service memo to all employees. He reminded everyone that, at Sparling's:

"It's about service. Not propane. It's about a friendly, cooperative voice on the phone. It's a knowledgeable service man, who shows up on time and takes his boots off at the door. It's a Clean shave, a Clean uniform, and a Clean truck. It's a fair price. It's a smile at the door. It's saying, 'thank you', to our Customers - for being our Customers. That's what we sell around here."

Grant was active in the United Church and his community, and served 32 years as firefighter/Captain with the Blyth & District Fire Department. After a lifetime of service and accomplishments as a banker, soldier, entrepreneur, and community champion, Grant retired just three years ago, at 88 years of age, and was also awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal and the first Lifetime Achievement Award presented by the Ontario Propane Association. Grant Sparling passed away on May 13, 2015, at the age of 91.

**The Canadian Propane Association thanks Grant Sparling for his years of dedicated service and contribution to the betterment of the propane industry in Canada.**



## **History of Sparling's Propane**

Banker to Merchant, Grant Sparling was born in Forest, Ontario, and was an accountant at the Bank of Commerce in Kitchener. But in the back of his mind he always had the idea of owning a store in Blyth, where he was stationed with the bank before Kitchener. In 1951, Grant borrowed to purchase a hardware store from a friend who sold the store to re-enter the air force.

In addition to "shelf and heavy hardware", Grant sold appliances at his store, including gas ranges and starting in 1951, he sold the propane to go with them. So began Grant's entry into the propane business.

In the early years, Sparling's Propane was only sold in 100-pound cylinders, then often referred to as 'bottled gas.' While Grant eventually owned over 1000 cylinders, it began with he and Howard Wallace, his first employee, who delivered cylinders to homes and farms in a 45-mile radius of Blyth.

With the construction of a small bulk plant at the south edge of the village in 1955 and the purchase of a bulk delivery truck in 1957, Grant began uninterrupted service to most propane applications.

In 1967, Grant sold his hardware store in Clinton, and in 1970 began construction of a new larger bulk propane plant south of Blyth. The first Sparling's office was built in 1977; until that time, the office had been in the hardware store.

The Blyth plant has been expanded and upgraded several times, and today covers nine acres. Grant's philosophy on distribution and customer service however, remained unchanged: to develop a network of large, regional propane distribution centres and service large, regional markets – with a peerless commitment to customer service.

In 1979, Grant sold his hardware store in Blyth to concentrate on the growing propane business. To better define the propane supply and transportation operations, SLT - Sparling's Liquid Transport was established in 1981, as a specialized carrier of propane, butane, anhydrous products and industrial gases. To industry, SLT became recognized as a specialized carrier with qualified, knowledgeable people, a large fleet of modern, well-maintained equipment, and reliable service to central Canada, and as far south as Florida, Louisiana and California.

In 1996, Great Western Resources of Toronto purchased SLT, and in 1997, Sparling's launched its first website, including a kid's site called "Propane on the Brain".

Over the last 20 years, the company enjoyed sustained organic and acquisition growth and new regional distribution facilities were built. The retail service area expanded to all of southwestern and central Ontario and wholesale operations reached Ontario, Quebec and the Midwestern United States.

Sparling's was purchased by Parkland Fuel Corporation, Calgary, in 2013.