

## **The First Partnership (1959 - 1987)**

### **Summary**

In 1959, Randall & Company Limited submitted a bid on the mechanical portion of the new Norquay Building. Once the Randall brothers had been informed that their tender price was too high, Gordon and Harold decided that it was time to leave the family business. They decided to sell the firm to four of their key employees: Harold Bower (steamfitting estimator and supervisor), Jim Goodman (plumbing estimator), Stuart Hay (accountant) and Fred Sheldon (plumbing and labour supervisor). The new management group had much experience in the mechanical industry, but they were new to the ownership role. The first major project that they completed was the Hudson Bay Store air conditioning upgrade.

Under the guidance of these four individuals, Randall Plumbing & Heating Limited grew quite quickly. The firm started to do a substantial amount of out-of-town work by the early-to-mid-sixties in places like Kenora, Pipe Lake, Churchill, Pinawa and Portage la Prairie. In Winnipeg, projects such as the Richardson Building and the Fisheries

Building swelled the number of tradesmen working for the firm to figures substantially over one hundred. By the early 1970's, construction had slowed somewhat. An increased emphasis on building a larger service department offset a slowdown on larger contracts. Long-time employees such as Morley Anderson and Roy Dixon left the firm during this time. In 1977, Stuart Hay became the first of the four partners to retire. Harold Bower followed him shortly thereafter.

After Harold Bower's retirement in 1979, the two remaining owners allowed Laurent Cleutinx and Norman Hanson to buy into the business. Laurie had worked approximately twenty years in the office and had taken over the financial reins of the business once Stuart Hay had retired. Norm had worked for Randall over a similar duration, most recently as a heating job supervisor and estimator.

The late 1970's brought another boom in commercial construction. Randall Plumbing & Heating Limited played substantial roles in the building of St. Vital

Centre, the Trizec building, Winnipeg Square and Cadham Lab while doing a substantial workload in Brandon as well. Once again, payroll numbers exceeded one hundred tradesmen. Despite the high interest rates and overall recession that followed, Randall Plumbing & Heating managed to survive while other financially weaker and/or more poorly managed firms failed.

In 1984, Jim Goodman retired and was replaced in the ownership group by Robert Lynch. Bob had worked for Randall Plumbing & Heating Limited for many years as a journeyman plumber, job foreman and job supervisor on many of the larger projects completed during this era. The years between 1984 and 1987 are marked by a major increase in healthcare construction, especially at the Health Sciences Centre. By 1987, the last of the original partners, Fred Sheldon, was ready to retire.

Each of the original partners has left a unique legacy at Randall Plumbing & Heating Limited. Harold Bower, well-known for his uncanny ability to estimate, was a tough, but kind man. Jim Goodman was primarily known to be a shrewd businessman as well as a consummate gentleman. Stuart Hay's attention to detail and expenses helped Randall survive those tough years. Finally, Fred Sheldon was a firm disciplinarian who ensured that all of the tradesmen were working efficiently while maintaining the high quality of installation that the Randall management continued to demand.