

Perinton's Don Hull of Howell Road

Fifteen years have passed since Don Hull retired from Perinton's Town Board. I recently met with Don, one of those rare people whose presence simply improves your day, with his stories, smile and perhaps most, with his sense of humor. Born in 1926, Don Knapp Hull grew up on Howell Road and his family lives there to this day. Four generations of the Hull family reside on the quiet street, where Don's grandparents, Andrew Jackson Hull and Ida May Howell, settled shortly after their marriage in 1894. Her family previously settled on the country road named for their family in the 1850s.

Don graduated from Fairport High School with the class of 1943. Soon after, he joined the Navy, where he served in both the Atlantic and Pacific theatres. He recalls making port at a desolate Russian harbor, where no young people were present, for all were off fighting the war. He remembers the teeth of the Russians he encountered, some made of wood, some stainless steel, others simply black.



1977 photo of Don Hull and Town Supervisor Lake Edwards

Don's love of farming was passed down from both the Howell and Hull families, and after the war he returned to the family farm. In 1947 Hull married Shirley Ellsworth, another name long associated with agriculture in Perinton. His daughter Laura told me of her father's love of the land, and that he considers its stewardship to be akin to a religion. While still farming Don took on other jobs as well, not uncommon for those on a small farm. He was one of Fairport's first school bus drivers, and like his father, Don worked at the can factory on Parce Avenue.

Don never planned to get involved in politics, but that changed while visiting his daughter, Laura, at the time a college student at Oswego. As they approached the university, protesters lined the streets. Don recalls taking issue with some of the positions of the protestors, stating emphatically to Laura, "I would tell them how to run the country." Not long after, Bob Antell, town attorney and head of the Republican Party, approached Don and said they needed someone from the town's northeast quadrant on the Planning Board. After the recent trip to Oswego, Don decided he would accept the offer, least he appear to be a hypocrite to his daughter. Thus began over thirty years of public service to Perinton.

Don served briefly on the Planning Board, and in late 1968 was appointed to fill an open position on the Town Board. He retired in December of 1999, when current Town Supervisor Mike Barker replaced him on the Board. As a councilman, Don witnessed the evolution of Perinton from a farming town to a suburban community. He was a driving force in Perinton's commitment to preserve open space. While board members valued the historic perspective that Hull brought to each discussion, Mike Barker recalls that Don was not stuck in the past: "He embraced the future. Don helped us to maintain our small town feel despite our growth".

Written by Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

Fairport-ER Post, 04/02/2015