

# Grave. Undertakings

AINSWORTH FUNERAL HOME, WELLINGTON

## A FIVE-GENERATION FAMILY ENTERPRISE

### Conclusion – Researched & Written by Phil Ainsworth

#### MORE CHANGES IN THE FUNERAL BUSINESS

By the end of the Second World War it had become more common to hold visitations prior to funerals in the undertaker's establishment instead of the home of the deceased.

This had created a great deal of pressure on the space in the Ainsworth funeral home behind the furniture store at 302 Main Street. Fewer people wanted to have a full church funeral and were looking for alternate locations.

As well, new health regulations after the Second World War were requiring improved embalming facilities. Wilson and Densmore discussed the need for a new funeral home that would incorporate a parlour (visitation and viewing area), adequate space to house a funeral ceremony and new body preparation facilities.

They decided to convert Densmore and Cora's home at 288 Noxon Avenue into a funeral home in 1945. This was the birth of the current Ainsworth Funeral Home.

Densmore and Cora were now in their 70s. They decided that an apartment would be suitable, so one was built over the furniture store on Main Street. Newlyweds Everett and Doris moved into a new apartment created over the new funeral home.

Everett worked for a time at Thompson's coal and wood yard near the railway station behind the

seed house. Their first son, Garry, was born in 1946 followed by their second son, Tom, born in 1947.

By this time Garry's crying had disrupted some funerals below the apartment in the funeral home. To eliminate the possibility of Garry disrupting further funerals, the shuffle of homes that started in 1945 was continued. Wilson and Myrtle decided to trade homes, with Everett and Doris moving into

292 Noxon Avenue and Wilson and Myrtle moving into the apartment over the funeral home at 288 Noxon Avenue.

Shirley Ainsworth married Bernard Burley in 1947. Lyla Ainsworth married Howard Markland in 1949.

Cora Belle Ainsworth passed away in 1949. Densmore continued to live over the furniture store.

#### DUTCH AINSWORTH ACTIVE ON SPORTS SCENE

When his father retired from the Wellington Arena board in 1939 Wilson Ainsworth became a member and served until 1943. He had played sports as a youngster and after his marriage, into the 1920s and '30s.

Although he had no sons to play hockey, he had begun coaching teams in minor hockey at the Wellington arena in 1937. His son-in-law, Everett Lavender, played hockey there and Dutch coached his team.

Wilson also coached baseball teams for many years. A former player in the late 1940s and early '50s, Alex Tait, recalled in 1991 how Wilson "made baseball fun and managed to have a memorable banquet for us at the end of each season".

Tait said that Wilson "always gave unselfishly of his time for the Wellington kids and stressed the importance of being a good sport in the process of striving at all times to



**WILSON NICKNAMED  
'DUTCH'**

Wilson Ainsworth was better known as 'Dutch'. As a young lad he had received this nickname from a Chinese laundry operator located in the building on the northwest corner of Wharf Street and Main Street.

When Wilson was a child growing up in Wellington, someone had given him a pair of wooden shoes and the laundryman started to call him 'Dutch'. The nickname stuck and followed him throughout his life.

win the games before us.”

In 1962 Wilson was honoured by the Ontario Minor Hockey Association for his 25 years of service as coach, manager and teacher. At the award ceremony in Toronto he was dubbed ‘Mr. Minor Hockey’ by the presenter. In his reply, ‘Dutch’ honoured his wife, Myrtle, for all her years of support and said, “She must have mended a thousand sweaters and socks.”

### EVERETT LAVENDER JOINS FUNERAL BUSINESS

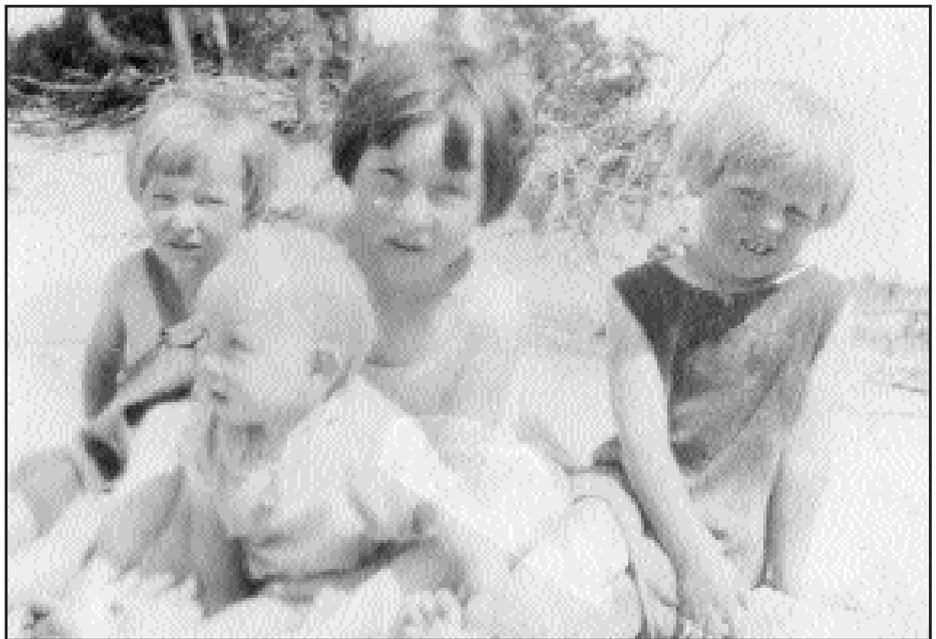
When Dewey Stoneberg started a meat plant in Wellington, Everett went to work for him. A third son, Robert, was born to Everett and Doris in 1949. Wilson discussed with Everett his need for assistance at the funeral home now that Densmore had retired. It had not yet become common practice for women to enter the funeral business, and Wilson had no sons.

In 1950 Everett went to the Canadian School of Embalming in Toronto, graduating and receiving his certificate in 1951. He completed his apprenticeship at a funeral home in Toronto. He returned home to become a full partner with his father. A fourth son, Paul, was born in 1953.

A lifelong member of the Masonic Lodge in Wellington, Densmore was given special recognition of his service in 1953 through a life membership in the organization. He was also a long time member of the Canadian Legion, the Star of the East Lodge and the Rameses Temple. He was treasurer of St. Andrew’s Anglican Church for many years and Sunday School Superintendent there for nearly 40 years.

### FUNERAL HOME FOUNDER PASSES IN 1954

On Aug. 29, 1954, the founder and patriarch of the Ainsworth Funeral Home passed away. Ironically he was attending the funeral of his first cousin, Emma Ainsworth Brickman, at Albury United Church in Ameliasburgh Township, when he felt ill and was



Above: The Ainsworth girls at the Sandbanks c.1931 – Doris Ruth, Shirley, and Lyla in front.



Right: Doris Ainsworth Lavender in 1952.



Far right: Garry and Everett Lavender returning from fishing in 1952.

Bottom: Everett Lavender, member of the Wellington Champion Hockey Team in 1950.

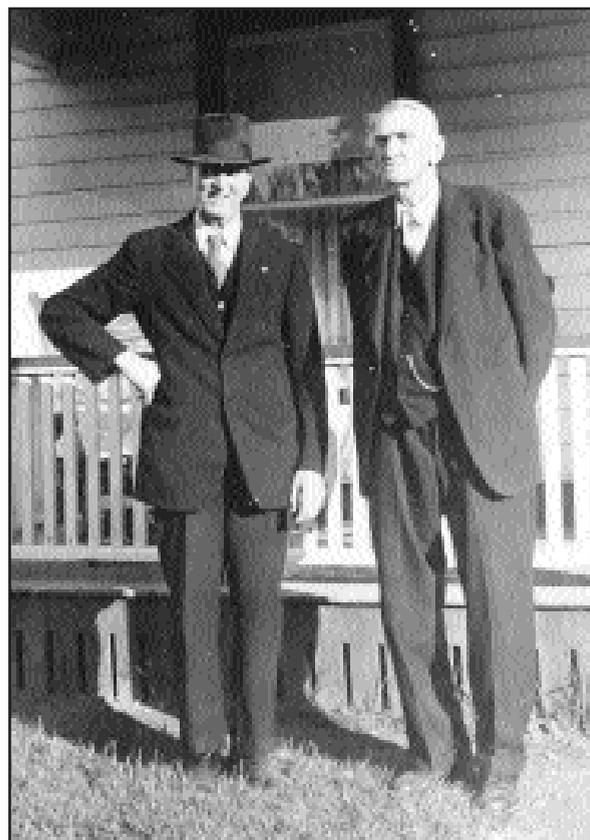
Photos courtesy Doris Ainsworth Lavender.

taken home by his granddaughter, Ruth Ainsworth Boyle, where he suffered a stroke and passed away. He was 81. His remains were interred in Wellington Cemetery.

### AMBULANCE SERVICE PROVIDED

Wilson and Everett saw the need for a local ambulance service in the Wellington area. They purchased a vehicle and the service was initiated in April 1955. This service continued for almost 15 years, ending in November 1969. Over that period of time they averaged 25 calls per





Top: Wellington Legion Hockey Team c.1930, in front of Wellington Dairy. Wilson Ainsworth is on the right end. Photo courtesy Tod Lavender.

Left: Densmore and his brother Willard in 1947. Photo from author's collection.

Above: Everett and Doris Lavender with Garry, 1946. Photo courtesy Lyla Ainsworth Markland.

year for emergency trips to hospitals in Picton, Belleville, Trenton and Kingston.

### WILSON AINSWORTH RETIRES AND GARRY LAVENDER JOINS PARTNERSHIP

Everett and Doris Lavender's eldest son, Garry, finished his secondary education at Prince Edward Collegiate in Picton in 1966.

He attended the funeral directors' training program at the Canadian School of Embalming at the University of Toronto, graduating in 1967, followed by an apprenticeship at the Turner and Porter funeral home in Toronto.

In 1968 he joined his father, Everett, in the funeral business in Wellington. At this point his grandfather, Wilson, retired from the business at the age of 64.

After Garry married Diane Osterhout in 1970, Wilson and Myrtle moved into the apartment over the furniture store on Main Street. Garry and Diane moved into the apartment over the funeral home. Their first child, Tod, was born in 1972. Shortly

Left: Advertisement from the Prince Edward County Yearbook, 1958, published by The Picton Gazette Publishing Co. Ltd.

**WILSON AINSWORTH**

Furniture — Floor Coverings — Lamps — Plywood

Ambulance Service

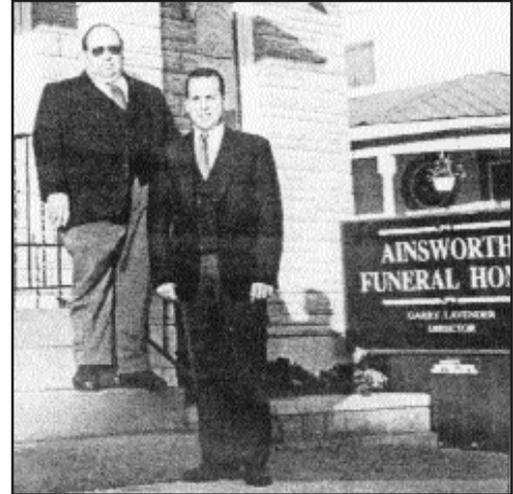
Complete Funeral Service — With Funeral Home

Wellington, Ont.      Phone: Office 25

Wilson Ainsworth or Everett Lavender, Res. Phone 21; Summer res. 16314



Above: Ainsworth Funeral Home today.  
 Top right: 60th Anniversary of Wilson and Myrtle Ainsworth in 1982, with daughters Ruth, Doris, Shirley and Lyla.  
 Photo courtesy Ruth Boyle and the late Myrtle Ainsworth.  
 Right: Garry and Todd Lavender in 1999.  
 Photo courtesy The Picton Gazette.  
 Below: The Lavender family, 2003 – Peter, Tod, Diane, Garry and Sara.



Ruth Boyle, whose husband had passed away in 1989. Myrtle lived until 1995.

Garry made some changes to the funeral home in 1993 when the sun porch was enlarged and windows and double-door were added, giving the front of the funeral home a new appearance.

### **TOD LAVENDER JOINS GARRY LAVENDER**

During high school, after Everett passed away, Tod Lavender sometimes helped his father with aspects of the funeral operation. At the age of 11, Tod remembers telling his father that he was interested in entering the funeral business some day. As a kind of test, his grandfather took him with them one day when they were picking up a body in Kingston. Everett took him into the autopsy room at the hospital there when an autopsy was underway. For a while after that, Tod wasn't sure he wanted to be an under-

thereafter, Garry and Diane moved into the house at 292 Noxon Ave. and Everett and Doris moved into the apartment over the funeral home.

Renovations were made to the funeral home in 1969, expanding the reception and visitation areas, as well as modernizing the behind-the-scenes activity rooms. The verandah was closed in at that time.

Garry and his brothers had played hockey on teams coached by their grandfather in the late 1950s and early '60s.

### **EVERETT AND GARRY LAVENDER**

Everett and Garry Lavender carried on the operation of the

Ainsworth Funeral Home and the Lavender Furniture Store through the 1970s and '80s. Garry and Diane had two more children: Sara in 1974 and Peter in 1978.

Garry played hockey and other sports in Wellington. He became player-coach with the Wellington Dukes when it was an Intermediate hockey team and became general manager when the team became a Junior A organization. He moved the Belleville Junior B Bobcats hockey team to Wellington in 1989.

Everett Lavender passed away in 1988 at the age of 63. Garry continued on with the businesses alone.

Wilson Ainsworth died in 1990 at the age of 86. Myrtle Ainsworth moved in with her eldest daughter,



Left: Garry Lavender, General Manager of the Wellington Dukes, 2003.

Below: Tod and Lesley Lavender at their wedding in 2003.

Below: Vanessa – the sixth generation?

Photos courtesy Lesley and Tod Lavender.

taker after all.

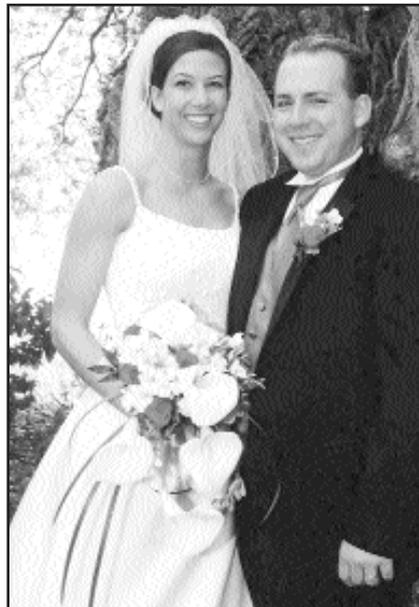
Tod played hockey for his father's team, the Wellington Dukes, and went to university on a hockey scholarship in Pennsylvania getting a business degree. He then worked in accounting in Ohio for a while.

When his father called and asked him if he wanted to join the family business, he said, "Yes". He returned to Canada and attended the one-year funeral directors' program at Humber College in Toronto, followed by a year's apprenticeship at the Trull funeral home on Yonge Street. He joined his father in 1999 as the fifth generation to be in the family business. He became the coach of the Wellington Dukes.

### **TOD LAVENDER LOOKS TO THE FUTURE**

Garry was diagnosed with cancer in 2005 and passed away in 2006. Tod has carried on the businesses with assistance from his brother and cousins. He married Lesley Konieczny in 2003 and they have a daughter, Vanessa, born in 2005. When his father passed away, Tod had to relinquish some of his responsibilities for the hockey team. He has carried on as Assistant Coach and devotes much of his time to the funeral and furniture businesses.

Looking ahead to the future, he recognizes the legacy that he has inherited. He wants to live up to the high expectations held by the community for the family business. He



also has plans to renovate and expand the funeral home. Jokingly he also hopes that Vanessa hurries and grows up so that she can join him in the business as the sixth generation in the Ainsworth Funeral Home. □

