

Retired vet Dr. Dan honoured for extraordinary career

By Elisa Nguyen
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter
enguyen@fortfrances.com

He began as a young graduate who had promised his new fiancée he would stay in Fort Frances, Ontario, for only three years. Five decades later—after he had established a leading veterinary clinic in northwestern Ontario, served as an active volunteer in his community, retired, and received a Golden Life Membership Award from the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association (OVMA)—he laughs at how quickly his plans changed.

At the end of January, Dr. Daniel Pierroz received the 2024 Golden Life Membership Award. The award, which was presented at the OVMA Conference and Trade Show in Toronto, honours a veterinarian who has made extraordinary contributions to animal welfare and veterinary medicine.

Dr. Pierroz gave a short speech in front of hundreds of fellow veterinarians at the conference, accompanied by his wife Anna Pierroz.

“I was really quite shocked and amazed,” he said. “The honor, of course, is having your name submit-

ted for such a thing. But the achievement, of course, is actually getting rewarded with one. Both of those things were a very big honor to me.”

His associates Dr. Marialisa Laurella and Dr. Douglas Veldhuisen nominated him for the award.

Dr. Pierroz was born on a dairy farm on the outskirts of Hamilton, Ontario. He attended the Ontario Agricultural College in the fall of 1969 and was accepted into the Ontario Veterinary College in 1971.

After graduating from the Ontario Veterinary College in 1975, Dr. Pierroz saw an ad for a job opportunity in Fort Frances and relocated to northwestern Ontario. “Everybody in southern Ontario thought I was crazy moving that far, 1200 miles north, including Anna,” he said over the phone, laughing.

“We had just met prior to me leaving school,” Dr. Pierroz said of his engagement to his now wife, who had been working as a teacher in southern Ontario at the time. “We did long distance for a year and she joined me up here in 1976.”

“Very reluctantly,” Mrs. Pierroz chimed in good humoredly. “Because I had a nice teaching job in Guelph I

didn’t want to leave.”

Travelling the north back then involved multiple stops, one that included a four to six seater plane. On his first day in Fort Frances, Dr. Pierroz recalls extremely cold weather and crunch of snow under his feet.

One year after his move, Dr. Pierroz purchased the Nor-West Animal Clinic, a mixed animal practice serving the Rainy River District.

“Overall, it was the opportunity here that the large animal practice was starting to grow very well with the increasing dairy industry and the small animal practice had a lot of potential. So it was just a good place to relocate,” he said.

Mrs. Pierroz had also received teaching offers at both the public and Catholic school boards in the area, she says, making the “jump” easier.

Over the span of his 48-year career, Dr. Pierroz served the needs of animals across the district, often as the only practitioner in the area. With no access to emergency clinics nearby, he worked on-call to provide after-hours care.

Mrs. Pierroz recalls being at home and answering emergency phone calls after-hours for her husband late at night because back then, they didn’t have cell phones.

Due to the large geographical area of the Rainy River District, and to respond to emergencies in a timely manner, Mrs. Pierroz would try to reach Dr. Pierroz about new emergency calls while he was already out at a farm.

The newlyweds worked together as best as they could. But oftentimes, Dr. Pierroz would return home, only to learn that another call had come in not too far from the farm he was just at.

“He used to have to go to a farm call late at night sometimes as far as Rainy River,” Mrs. Pierroz said. “After he finished the call, he would phone somehow from the farmer’s house, ask [me] if there was another call, and I’d say there probably wasn’t. But by the time he got back, there was. So he’d have to go back somewhere.”

“We had no two-way communication,” Dr. Pierroz added. “Later on, we got FM radios and now, of course, the cell phones. So communication is so much better in how we operate.”

Committed to improving animal welfare in the northwest, Dr. Pierroz organized travel clinics in more isolated and remote areas, including Indigenous communities. Without a humane society in the district, he provided aid to local rescue organizations helping to find forever homes.

Dr. Pierroz was also a lead in the formation of the Designated Area Veterinary Association representing the Designated Practices in Ontario. His, like many other designated areas, often lacked adequate animal welfare resources and struggled to attract veterinary professionals.

As an advocate for mental health and mentorship throughout his career, Dr. Pierroz mentored colleagues and interns, employed summer veterinary students and offered support in various ways. He often checked-in on colleagues and created a safe environment for staff to express their emotions and discuss challenges.

“We tease Dr. Pierroz about being a legend—that’s probably the best way



Dr Daniel Pierroz, known affectionately as Dr. Dan, was honoured by the Ontario Veterinary Medical Association with the Golden Life Membership Award, for a lifetime of extraordinary service to his patients.



If you’ve had animals in your life, chances are, you have a Dr. Dan story. Dr Dan moved to Fort Frances in 1975 as a newly graduated vet. He didn’t intend to stay long, but quickly became a fixture in the community.

to describe his influence in this area after practicing veterinary medicine here for almost 50 years,” said Dr. Veldhuisen. “His integrity, perseverance and genuine care for people and pets is worthy of great recognition.”

The Nor-West Animal Clinic received the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year Award in 2013, and won a 2021 OVMA Practice Management Award.

Dr. Pierroz has also been an active member of his community, serving a decade as a School Board Trustee with four years as Chair. He helped lead the steering committee for the construction of the current Fort Frances High School, was on the Townshend Theatre Auditorium fundraising committee, is a former Boy Scout Leader, and was involved in developing the multi-sport field project in the Town of Fort Frances.

Today, he continues to be a strong advocate and financial supporter of local organizations and service groups, including Tour de Fort concert series, district 4-H programs, and the annual agricultural fair.

In 2017, Dr. Pierroz renovated the former market building into a new 5000 sq. ft. clinic, with a detached isolation building and a community use Pet Wash—one of the accomplishments he feels most proud of.

On June 30, 2023, current owner Dr. Laurella purchased Nor-West Animal Clinic from Dr. Pierroz.

In December 2023, Dr. Pierroz officially retired.

He had felt the need to slow down

for a while. Now that the Nor-West Animal Clinic was in a “good place,” serviced by seven technicians and two associates, rebuilt with a new facility equipped with the latest technology, Dr. Pierroz felt the time to retire was right.

“It’s a really, really great office to continue to serve northwestern Ontario and the Rainy River District. And it was just time,” he said. “All the things were in place that I had wanted to leave for the district...I really feel good about leaving the district with just a wonderful facility and great former staff.”

Dr. Pierroz reflects on his career with pride and fulfillment, saying he met many great clients and pets. Many residents recall experiences when “Dr. Dan” played a key role in the life of their furry loved ones.

In retirement, Dr. Pierroz looks forward to his 50th class reunion in 2025, visits to the grandkids, home renovations, and doing all the “stuff” he says he’s put off for 25 years.

“I might even go fishing with some buddies next Spring,” he said.

Most of all, Dr. Pierroz holds immense gratitude for the community that welcomed him and supported him throughout the years.

“I just want to thank the community, the whole district for their support over the years and I’m really happy that we stayed with the community and worked with the community. And I’m really pleased that we’re retiring in Fort Frances and going forward from there,” he said.

Busy week in the beef world

We had a couple hours of winter this morning as the snow was blowing around. I spread fresh straw yesterday which takes a fair bit of time and sweat and so of course the snow had to come in and make a mess of that. The wind helps the calves find the calf huts and it is a relief to find them tucked into a shelter. Sounds like we are expected to have a couple of cold nights this week and back to spring weather. Mother Nature is struggling to make up her mind. I listened to a presentation on 2024 weather last week and it sounds like next winter will be much more normal and we will see more cold days. As for the summer predictions, a lot depends on the transition time from El Nina to La Nina. We are right on the edge of some dryer predictions at this point.

The BFO staff were able to get me set up last week and participated in most of the meetings. I was even able to vote from home. This year they had used a company that was able to set up voting through your smart phones. They are consid-



MOO'S FROM THE HERD
KIM JO BLISS



ering a hybrid AGM in the future so for the most part I was the tester. It worked very slick. I missed out on all the good conversations and social time but when the meeting adjourned on Thursday, I was already home! No driving, no flight! I nominated the Circle H Farms – Shawn & Tracy and Gordie and Pat Hyatt for the TESA Award and they won and were given the award at the BFO AGM banquet. Shawn, Kerry, and Brodie along with James Gibson and Delton Martin were there as well. Linda Debney represented the Kenora District but originally from Emo – she was on team Rainy River as well. We had great representation there and James said Rainy River District was done proud! The Hyatt family is well deserving of this award, and I am very proud and excited

for them.

Clayton spent most of the week in the hospital and was flown to Thunder Bay for an angiogram on Thursday. He did not have any stents. My mom is off Thunder Bay for more testing this week, but I am thankful that Shane can take her. She is feeling fine, but she has a knee that is slowing her down. She had to get a new oven and she is still not overly happy with it. She does a lot of baking, and it is taking her longer to bake because of the way it heats and cools. She gets a little cranky when she can’t power through batches and bathes of cookies and such. This is not a trait that I inherited.

I was notified on Friday that I had entered the Community Cash Contest through Cloverleaf Grocery and I had won! I was excited. I will receive \$500 in groceries, and I get to pick a food bank that they will donate \$5000 to! I enter these things mainly because if my dad was alive, he would be telling me to. It paid off very well this time! I only entered once!

Circle H Farms family receives recognition award

The family of Circle H Farms, received the Recognition Award at the Beef Farmers of Ontario annual general meeting and banquet held in Toronto last week. This is sponsored by the RBC Royal Bank.

Shawn, Tracy Gord and Pat are the hard hard working, long time farmers that earned this prestigious award. Congratulations to CIRCLE H farms for earning and being the chosen receptionist of the award. A full article will follow regarding this big achievement for Circle H.

Sincere sympathy to the family and friend of Mary Lou Allen. Mary Lou was a wonderful, friendly lady. She will be sadly missed by many. She always had a hello for everyone she met. She made the world a happier place. Our community is sending caring thoughts and prayers to all those grieving her passing.

The first Emo Coffee with Friends held last Tuesday (February 20) was well attended with 40 people attending. People 55 and over enjoyed an afternoon of catching up with neighbours, friends, a great show of folks from the dis-



ROBIN M'CORMICK
DEVLIN CORRESPONDENT

trict made for a lighthearted afternoon. The following Coffee with Friends will be March 5th. and March 19th from 1-3 p.m.

Come out and enjoy the afternoons. Maybe pick up a person who doesn't have access to a ride.

The Devlin Coffee Gatherings and other planned events have been put on hold for the time being, due to hall renovations. The renovations are coming along nicely. It's hoped the renovations will allow us to have a coffee gathering in the near future. Emo and Devlin (once Devlin's renovations are completed) will rotate coffee dates making it that there's always a Senior's coffee event every Tuesday.

Last Friday's Emo Legion's Beer and Burger meat draw was won by Gerald Gamie and Mavis St. Hilaire. The next Beer and Burger takes place March 8th.

There will be a bingo at the Emo Legion on March 19th. Doors open at 5:30p.m. Early bird game at 6:45 p.m. and first game is at 7 p.m.

The Emo Legion will hosts its annual Good Friday Fish Fry on March 29th. More information to follow.

The Emo United Church extends a warm welcome to all churches to attend Lenten Services. A short service will take place at noon, followed by a soup and sandwich lunch.

March 6- World Day of Prayer

March 13- service by Marno Retief

March 20- services by Peggy Mason.

There will be a Shamrock Tea and Bake Sale March 19 at the Emo Hospital Cafeteria. Admission is \$5. All monies raised help with hospital projects.

Robins 2 cents.

Senior wife to husband: “Let’s run upstairs and be romantic.”

Senior husband: “Good grief. I can’t do both!”