



South Okanagan  
Similkameen  
Medical Foundation

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## Pioneer rancher remembers wife with PRH gift

Tony Thompson's ties to the South Okanagan's pioneer years run deep.

Now the Okanagan Falls area rancher is donating \$30,000 in memory of his late wife Sharon to Penticton Regional Hospital.

Both Tony and Sharon have direct family links to the South Okanagan of the late 1800s. Tony was born on the family's Garrison Ranch on Hester Creek, just south of Oliver.

"Hester Creek was named after my great-aunt Hester Haynes," he said. "She was the oldest daughter of Judge (J.C.) Haynes." Hester married Dr. R.B. White - Penticton's first doctor who opened his medical practice around 1900, often making house calls on horseback.

Tony's grandfather, Val Haynes was born in 1875 in Osoyoos – the first white child born in the community.

"We grew up on the 69 Ranch – my grandfather's ranch which was part of the old Judge Haynes' holdings. That was just about all the property from Osoyoos to Penticton," he said.

Val Haynes had become a major rancher in the South Okanagan. At one point, he ran about 10,000 acres of ranch land throughout the Valley. For a few years he also operated a pack team serving the various mines in the area.

Tony's father Louis Thompson grew up in Sprague, Wash. southwest of Spokane. His mother, Alice Haynes Thompson was born in 1911 in the tiny Oroville area community of Dry Gulch, Wash., where a midwife was available.

Alice went to a Catholic school in Sprague where she met Louis, the son of the local sheriff. They later both moved to the South Okanagan and got married in the mid-1930s in Oliver, where they raised their family. Tony and his older brother worked with their grandfather Val on the 69 Ranch throughout much of their youth.

"I left home when I was 17 and went out on my own. I worked up on the Alaska Highway, driving dump truck for different construction companies."

Tony went on to spend much of his life behind the wheel, driving truck for Canadian Motorways for 29 years. "When they shut down I started my own small trucking company. I had seven rigs and we'd run down through the western states all the way to Texas."

Sharon was born in Penticton at the former hospital on Haven Hill in 1937 but moved with her parents to Washington state when she was a young girl. Growing up in Tonasket, Sharon would often accompany her father, Donald "Buster" Mallory who would take his race horses to various county fairs around the Pacific Northwest.

Tony met Sharon through mutual friends in 1957 shortly after she and her family had moved back to the South Okanagan. They married in 1959 and operated a small 30-acre ranch in OK Falls.

While Tony was out of town driving truck, Sharon would run the ranch and help out with the trucking business.

“When I was out on the road, my wife was running the dispatch and taking care of things at home,” he said. “She worked her butt off and I did too.”

Tony retired from trucking in 2010 and has since sold part of their ranch. Sharon died of spinal cancer on July 14, 2016.

Their son Kevin died at age 57 of complications from cancer of the esophagus in 2017, less than a year after Sharon had passed away. Their other son Wade lives in OK Falls.

Tony Thompson’s donation to the South Okanagan Similkameen Medical Foundation will help provide medical equipment for the \$312-million PRH expansion. The new hospital tower is set to open in April 2019.

**Photo cutline info:** Tony Thompson displays a photo of his late wife Sharon at their ranch near Vaseux Lake. Thompson, whose family roots in the South Okanagan date back to the late 1800s, has donated \$30,000 to the SOS Medical Foundation to help acquire medical equipment for the Penticton Regional Hospital expansion.

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