

Silver Willow .... Someone asked, how did you come up with that company name?

What is in a name? That is a great question.

It's years of competitive clay target shooting by Don and Gwen Day.

It's years of dreaming of building a business they could do together on the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation family farm.

It's years of serving clients with quality live pheasant hunts on their property while still working full time.

It's the traditional family value of hard work that led them and Don's parents to develop the Silver Willow grounds.

"Silver Willow" is the name of a native prairie tree that grows on the property.

Don's grandfather, Percy Day, purchased several quarters of land just west of Carstairs during the dirty 30's. He was a butcher and English immigrant, who moved his cattle and family from the Beiseker area of Alberta to their new location. It was a typical family farm in those days, pigs, cattle, horses, chickens, and gardens. Don's dad Buster continued to farm 2 quarters of the family land, which is the half section that Silver Willow now occupies. Then in the late 1990's Don and Gwen gained ownership.

Buster helped immensely in supporting Don and Gwen to develop Silver Willow. He was a clay target shooter as well. Allowing the use of his land for the Carstairs Gun Club, which is still operating to this day on the Day's land. He was also an enthusiastic upland and waterfowl hunter.

Don and Gwen started raising pheasants with a partner Ken Bills, from Carstairs. In the 1980's, they began hatching pheasants from eggs to full grown birds. All during this time they were raising their three small children. Don worked full time in Calgary, while they developed Silver Willow Pheasant Farm Ltd. They raised and released pheasants for hunting for private clients and bird clubs for 20 years. At its peak they were raising nearly 2,000 birds in several large flight pens.

In 1987 Don and Gwen bought out their partner. Around the same time Don tried sporting clays near Sundre. He fell in love with the new challenge. Don and Gwen both, have been competitive trap shooters and traveled throughout Alberta, BC and Montana. They competed almost weekly in the summer months, with their three children in tow. Grandma Bessie was the caregiver. She prepared and served all the meals their motorhome. While Buster proudly cheered for his sons and Gwen! Don's brother Allan was also a serious trap shooting competitor. The two brothers often ended up "shooting off" to win a competition.

In the summer of 1988, they opened Silver Willow Sporting Club. They operated out of Don's Toyota pick-up truck until the small, "off the grid" building was completed. The shoots were manned by local "trap" kids who worked from each machine throwing the clays manually on each command of "Pull!" Don, with some help from Gwen, threw the clays the rest of the week manually. Their three kids grew up, picking hulls and clays, answering the phone from their home "Silver Willow, how can I help you?" They learned how to make change at the little café that served pop and coffee, right alongside their parents.

Chantal, their oldest, became a Social Worker, Josh, now the manager of Silver Willow had his own pipeline welding business. Andrea the youngest, is a Chartered Accountant and works on the books for Silver Willow. Both Andrea and Josh are excellent shots. They have competed in sporting clays, love shotgun shooting, bird hunting, and big game hunting with their dad and Uncle Allan.

Proudly the next generation of Day's who are the 5<sup>th</sup> generation on their property, ( Don and Gwen's grandchildren) have begun to join in the business, picking hulls and clays, watering trees, working in the café, selling lemon aid, bird hunting and clay shooting !