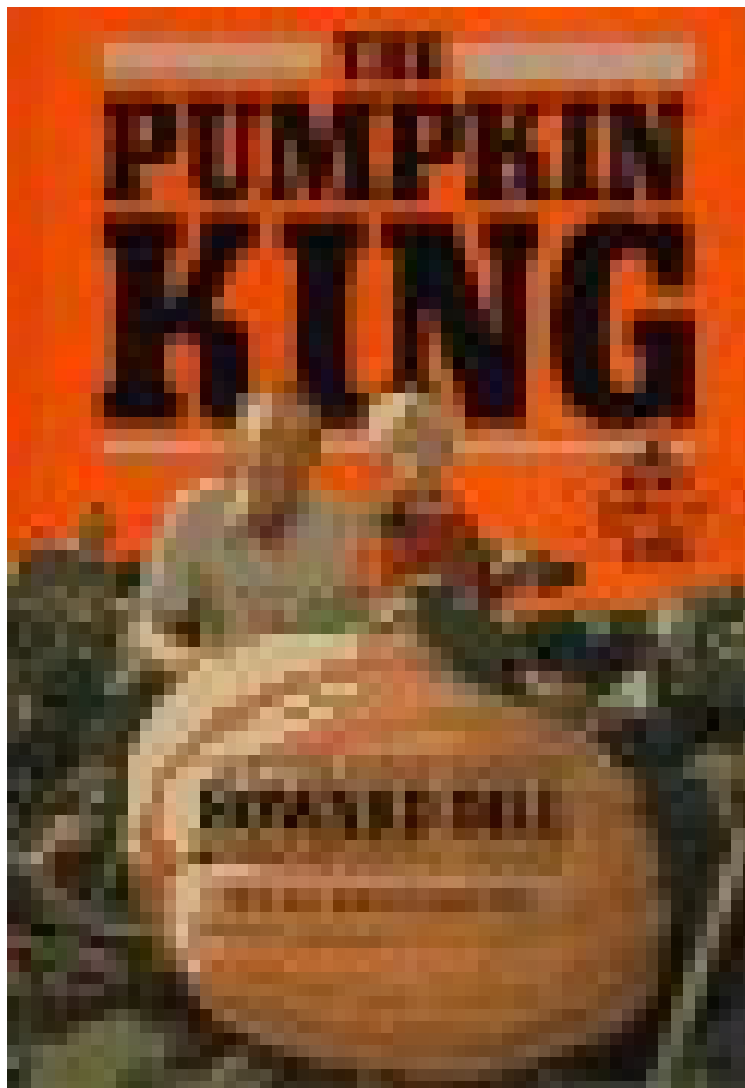


[E-BOOK] The Pumpkin King

The Pumpkin King

Al Kingsbury

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Al Kingsbury : The Pumpkin King before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Pumpkin King:

Once upon a time, giant pumpkins existed only in story books or in the tall tales of legends. Then along came Howard Dill. This Nova Scotia farmer inherited his father's passion for growing big pumpkins, and bred his own Dill's Atlantic Giant seeds which have produced world-record pumpkins weighing more than 1,000 pounds. Laced with pictures

collected over two decades, *The Pumpkin King* traces Dill's exploits from the quiet of his own pumpkin patch to the glory of international competition. It also reveals his astute development of a thriving seed business. Along the way, relevant facts are given about this increasingly popular product of autumn. The book includes tips on how to grow the big ones, statistics on world-record weights, and takes readers through the excitement of a local pumpkin weighoff day.

From the Publisher *The Pumpkin King* is the first book published on the sport/hobby of giant pumpkin growing. It brings together for the first time the story of the development of weighoff competitions which are held annually at numerous sites around the world. First published in 1992, *The Pumpkin King* continued to be one of the top selling books by its original publisher. In 1996, following the startling news that two pumpkins weighing more than 1,000 pounds had been grown, the book was revised to include all current weighoff results and pictures of the two record-setting pumpkins and their growers. Howard Dill continues to expand his market of Dill's Atlantic Giant pumpkin seeds, so every year more and more growers around the world are getting caught up in the intriguing and fascinating quest to grow giant pumpkins.

About the Author Al Kingsbury was born in Sydney, Nova Scotia, and followed a newspaper career first as a compositor at *The Cape Breton Post*, and then at *The Chronicle-Herald* and *The Mail-Star*. He transferred to the editorial department of *The Chronicle-Herald* in 1980, and was named chief of the paper's Annapolis Valley bureau. He has done public relations work, and compiled history books for United Memorial Church and Halifax Typographical Union, which he also served as secretary-treasurer and president. He retired from the newspaper business in 1994, and now does public relations and marketing work through his own business, *A Way With Words*. He is active in community and provincial organizations.

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From the Foreword By Peter J. Nancy Rigoloso: **THE BELOVED HOWARD DILL** Howard Dill is singularly the most important person in the world of championship pumpkin growing. If it were not for this remarkable, soft spoken man, the World Pumpkin Confederation would have little upon which to base its existence. Howard is part and parcel of our *raison d'etre* (our reason for being). Without Howard's Atlantic Giant, the variety which took him most of his lifetime to breed, giant pumpkin aficionados around the world would be struggling to grow 200 pound specimens, considering themselves lucky if they were able to do that. We are fortunate, indeed, that it was Howard who developed the Atlantic Giant we use in our mighty pursuits. If we have received national and international acclaim for our mastery as pumpkin growers and gardeners, then we are constrained to confess the name of Howard Dill to one and all. The fact that Howard is the only individual to be jointly honored with the World Pumpkin Confederation's highest tribute, the Lifetime Service and Achievement Award, and simultaneously inducted into our Hall of Fame, was no accident. This was a contrived, deliberate action designed to permanently set Howard apart from the rest of us for the sake of history. It was meant to give to him an honor that will remain, for all practical purposes, an unachievable prize; it is unlikely that the two awards will ever be given to an individual in the same year again. Howard Dill, four times in succession World Champion, is unquestionably the Babe Ruth of pumpkin growers, the Sultan of Squash, the King of Cucurbits. We crown him the Reigning Monarch of Landwhalers: Moby Dill. There are noble characteristics of great men we esteem that strike us to the core and, no matter how muddled our lives may be, we are inspired to pay witness to them: humility, compassion, honesty, charity and wisdom are among the virtues we hold most dear. These words are the expressions of integrity we are compelled to apply to one of the finest men it has ever been our privilege to know. These are the expressions people use to raise up, shoulder high, the best of us -- the words that write down Howard Dill, the Atlantic Giant. Where do such men come from, and why do we love them so? Their lives are a gift of the heart, an offering of the spirit. These rare individuals remind us that we can be greater than ourselves. Their honor is public property, their achievement is our glory. Special people, like Howard Dill, represent Everyman. Howard has always been there for us, offering kind words of encouragement, and because he does not forget us, we will not forget him. For all that he has given of himself to others, for so many years, the World Pumpkin Confederation has bestowed upon him this recognition -- offering Howard our appreciation of his worthiness of praise, for, truly, people like Howard Dill are a light to the world. Howard, on behalf of your multitude of friends worldwide, we say to you the words that are rightfully yours. You are a great man, revered and cherished in our hearts. You have earned the right to live within us, and for your graciousness, kindness and humanity, you will live within the hearts of all who love the light, and shun the darkness. The impact of your life, long after you have passed, will remain alive in the spirit that drives mankind to decency, compassion and brotherhood. The footprints of your life will not be washed away by water, blown away by wind, or erased from our memory by time. God bless you for what you have given us, and what you will give future generations. And with people like you, Howard, the best is yet to come! The following is excerpted from Chapter One: **FROM CINDERELLA TO HOWARD DILL** From the time that Cinderella's fairy godmother first waved her magic wand in the centuries-old fairytale, giant pumpkins have been a part of the world's folklore and fascination. Perhaps it's because they are by nature the largest of fruits and command attention in any display. Or maybe it has something to do with their brilliant color. Or perhaps a combination of the two. Whatever the reason, big pumpkins have intrigued generations, both in folklore and real life. Jack's beanstalk has been the only substantial rival for prolific growth and fantasy. Giant pumpkins have been the subject of legends through the centuries, and in recent years have found their way into comic strips. The big pumpkin which the fairy

godmother transformed into a golden coach for Cinderella has continued to be the best known of all, but there have been others which have captured our imagination, and been the subject of tall tales. Cinderella's seems to be the only one that has provided transportation, but several have been used for shelter. Like the one in the nursery rhyme: Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater Had a wife and couldn't keep her; He put her in a pumpkin shell, And there he kept her very well. In a legend of India, a devoted father used a huge pumpkin as a tomb for his only son. In time, the pumpkin was found to be filled with fish. In an attempt to take the fish, four brothers tried to carry the pumpkin away but became frightened and dropped it. A flood of water poured out of the cracked shell, inundating the earth. America gave the pumpkin a special place in its folklore by associating it with the celebration of Thanksgiving, and in the Legend of Sleepy Hollow. In that classic, the Headless Horseman lifts his pumpkin head from the pommel of his saddle and hurls it at the fleeing Ichabod Crane. Pumpkins have a special place in Hallowe'en celebrations when they are hollowed out for use as jack-o'-lanterns. That custom goes back to early England, when an order of Celtic priests, called Druids, burned fires to ward off evil spirits. During the Middle Ages, the Irish thought that pale swamp fires they saw rising over marshes as swamp gas spontaneously ignited on damp evenings were the wandering souls of the dead. To ward off the wicked spirits, they hollowed out potatoes and turnips, inserted tiny candles to form lanterns, and placed them in the window on All Hallow's Eve. To round out the custom, they created the Tale of Jack. It tells of a homeless soul who couldn't get into Heaven because he was stingy, and wasn't allowed into Hell, because he tried to trick the devil. The tale continues as Jack searches for the rest he would never find. The Irish brought their Tale of Jack to America, and continued the tradition of gathering on October 31 to tell ghost stories, and sing songs. The settlers adapted their potato and turnip carving traditions to fit the American pumpkin. Shakespeare refers to the pumpkin in Merry Wives of Windsor as a "gross, watery pumpion," and other stories focus on the prolific growth of pumpkin vines. There's the legend of the youth named Jack who mounted his horse one spring to plant pumpkins. As he dropped seed in prepared hills, he spurred his mount at top speed, but still was unable to keep ahead of the fast-growing vines. The Old Farmer's Almanac of 1966 recalled the tale of the Racer Pumpkin of 1763. That prolific plant is said to have sent its vines across the Connecticut River into the town of Vernon, Vermont. A sow from the farm where the pumpkin was planted disappeared in the fall, and apparently scampered across the river on the vine. She was found the following spring, living inside a huge Racer Pumpkin, which had sheltered and fed her and her 101 babies all winter. Pumpkins have no less of a fascination today. In an elaborate, annual fall ceremony at University of New Brunswick in Canada, residents of Harrison House carry out the Ceremonial Sacrifice of the Great Pumpkin. A huge pumpkin is carried on a litter to the courtyard of Lady Dunn Hall, where it is blessed and illuminated. It is then taken to the roof of the Upper Lounge, from where, following more ceremony, it is hurled to the ground, bursting in a pillar of flame. Spectators then toss their candles into the burning remains before heading to the bar for pumpkin punch and festive celebrations. Cartoonist Charles Schulz brought the fascination for pumpkins to a whole new generation in his Peanuts comic strip. He has Linus begin a never-ending search for the Great Pumpkin, which will bring candy for all the children. In real life, a few individuals have made attempts over the years to develop and grow the great pumpkin, but only one has had consistent success, and he has been acknowledged as the world's Pumpkin King. Canadian farmer Howard Dill, who operates a small farm in Windsor, Nova Scotia, has developed a variety of pumpkin seeds called Dill's Atlantic Giant. His seeds have enabled him to claim the title for growing the world's heaviest pumpkin in four successive years, and other growers have used his seeds to set world records over the past decade. He has his own philosophy on the pumpkin's lure. "Giant pumpkins get people out, and take them away from the world's bad news. "There's something about pumpkins, especially when they're big, that makes people happy. The bigger the pumpkin, the happier it seems to make them feel. If they see one at an exhibition, it gives them a day to get all the bad things off their minds. "It plays a vital role in more ways than one. What else can you grow that has the power to make people happy?"