



Inducted: 2004

Fred Lewis, a successful poultry and cash crop farmer from London Township, is recognized for his diverse contributions to agriculture. Through his “Frans Livestock Inc.” Fred crops 2300 acres of land and markets 3 million broiler chicks annually. A former reeve of London Township and Warden of Middlesex County, he has been and is actively involved in many of the County’s organizations. His intimate knowledge of agricultural issues both locally and at a provincial level has led to him being appointed to and chairing several provincial boards and panels. His unassuming manner belies his true role as a real “mover and shaker” in the agricultural industry. Fred Lewis is indeed an outstanding ambassador for agriculture.

FRED A. LEWIS
1938-

Fred, the youngest of four children born to Clarence and Jennie Lewis, grew up in the Denfield area, attending London Township’s S.S. #2 Southgate school. His entrepreneurial spirit emerged as a young boy when he purchased old bicycles, fixed them and sold them to unsuspecting clients. Fred began in the poultry industry at an early age. He was at a sale and knew the hens were worth more than what was being bid, so he decided to raise his hand. This presented two problems: 1- he was the proud owner of these hens, and 2- he didn’t have any money to buy them. Fred’s father Clarence refused to bail him out as this was a good lesson not to spend money that you don’t have. Luckily, Grandma Reycraft took an interest and helped him pay for the hens.

He attended Medway High School where he played hockey for the Cowboys and despite the lack of emphasis on studying, he always seemed to do well in school. During the summer holidays, Fred worked with Mr. Loyens as a bricklayer.

After graduating from Medway, he accompanied a friend into London and they applied for a position with the Toronto Dominion Bank. Fred believed the primary reason for getting the position was that he finished his application before his friend. Transportation was his next concern. How would he get to work every day without a car? He was fortunate enough to hitch a ride with a gentleman who was working in London. Perhaps luck was involved with getting the position but Fred had to scurry around for transportation to turn the offer of a position into an actual job.

Fred continued his education and learned many valuable life experiences at Ridgetown Agricultural College. He became the sales manager for a one-dorm room barbershop. This was a straight commission job. He split the proceeds 50/50 with the student barber. Perhaps Fred is partly to blame for the hairstyles of the 1960's.

After graduating from Ridgetown in 1959, Fred became a salesman with United Co-operatives of Ontario in the Elmira, St. Jacobs, and Caledon Hill's area. A sales position in the feed business had its ups and downs. Conn Smythe was one of his customers. Fred was able to sell him feed but didn't end up in hockey. Another customer told him he knew nothing about feeding chickens and to never come back.

In 1968, Fred purchased his first farm from his sister-in-law following the untimely death of his brother Bob. His father had told him "not to let that farm get away". Those words must be still ringing in his ears as his holdings have grown from that first 100 acres to now owning 2300 acres in the Denfield area. In the beginning, Fred was involved in both beef and poultry production but over time he has concentrated on poultry and cash crop production. Today his poultry operation handles 3 million broiler chicks annually.

Fred entered municipal politics in 1973 as a councilor in London Township. He was Deputy Reeve from 1975-1978, Reeve from 1978-1982 and County Warden in 1980. As a result of his council input he was appointed a member of the Ontario Farm Drainage Tribunal from 1975-1982.

At the inaugural meeting of the Ontario Corn Producers Association in March of 1983, Fred Lewis was elected a provincial director representing the Middlesex region. He served on this board until March 1992. While on the board, Fred served as a representative on the Canada Grains Council, Chair of the OCPA Grain, Trade and Marketing Committee, chair of the Convention committee and was instrumental in the preparatory launch of the Corn Industry Advisory Committee.

From 1985-92 Fred was panel chairperson of the Ontario Debt Review Board.

Fred was the first Chair of the Ontario Farm Implements Board, from 1988 to 1994, the initial years of the board. During that first year the board developed regulations for the implementation of the Act and the registration of farm machinery dealers and distributors. Fred proved quite expert in achieving compromise solutions in difficult negotiations between different sectors and interests in the farm machinery industry. Fred also chaired the first Board hearings to resolve machinery disputes between farmers, dealers and distributors. These disputes were about warranty, performance, parts supply and repairs. Of particular significance to dealers were the disputes between dealers and distributors regarding repurchase of inventory by distributors when a dealer was terminated. The decisions of the Board in these issues established precedence and standards which are still in use today in the implementation of the Act.

For 28 years from 1974-2002, Fred was a member of the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority. He served as vice chair from 1988-1989 and chair from 1990-1991. Fred also served on Conservation Ontario from 1990-2002 being its chairperson from 1998-99. The mid to late 1990's were tough times with the relationship between the Ministry of Natural Resources and Conservation Authorities as a result of massive cuts to the transfer payments from the province to the conservation authorities. The strategies developed with the help of Fred's leadership have played a key role in positioning Conservation Ontario for the future.

Today, Conservation Ontario enjoys a positive working relationship with several provincial government agencies and the agricultural community.

While serving on many outside boards, Fred's farming interests in cash cropping and broilers was also increasing and as a result he was elected as a director of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario from 1990-1999. This board oversees the rapidly expanding but relatively stable production of broiler chickens within the province. Fred was involved with customer /processor relations, price negotiations and represented the board at the national level. He was instrumental in bringing together the Canadian Broiler Council, a farm organization designed to help stabilize the broiler industry by farmers working together to ensure their awareness of changes within the industry.

The Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission is an agency of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food which supervises 23 marketing boards and associations in the province. Collectively, these boards and associations represent commodities worth \$4.5 billion at the farm gate. The commodities range from dairy to asparagus and turkeys to processed tomatoes. Fred was appointed to this body in 2001, and is currently, one of six members who meet monthly to deal with regulatory and marketing issues involving the 23 boards and associations.

In 1994, as a result of his dedication to agriculture Fred was awarded an Honourary Life Membership in the Ontario Institute of Agrologists.

Fred married Anne Cronyn and they had two children – Julie and Brian. He is the proud grandfather of one grandson – Carson.

His long term involvement with the many organizations has required unique and special commitments. It has entailed major sacrifices on the part of both Fred and his family, and has put pressures on the farm operation. Fred Lewis is highly regarded for his breadth of agricultural knowledge; his keen business sense; and his desire to work as a team to tackle issues that are very important to individuals and to the overall agricultural economy of this province.

When you first meet Fred, he reminds you of the proverbial kid in the candy store or bakery being found with a twinkle in his eye and a finger in many pies but in reality **he is** the baker, **the** candy maker and many segments of the Canadian agrifood industry have benefited from his dedication and creativity.

Today we acknowledge that dedication and creativity by at this time inducting **Fred A. Lewis** to our Hall of Fame.