



Inducted: 2008

Bill is a well-respected businessman and community leader in the Hyde Park area. From its beginnings in 1955 as a feed dealership, Bill expanded and diversified Hyde Park Farm Supply Inc. so that by the 1960's he was also manufacturing and distributing livestock and poultry equipment to farmers across Canada and the United States. As a producer of poultry and eggs, he was actively involved with the Ontario Egg Producers' Marketing Board for many years. Bills' passion for politics resulted in him being elected as a member of parliament for the riding of Middlesex from 1972-1974. A long-time Mason, he is also a Past President of the Ilderton Agricultural Society and has served on several organizations within his community.

WILLIAM C. FRANK 1923-

Bill Frank was born July 24, 1923, at the farm (Lot 31, Con. 3 of London Township) where he still lives today, the fourth child of parents Charles and Rosella (McBain) Frank. His three sisters (Louelda aged 16, Marie 14, and Elsie 12) soon proved to be competent babysitters. Bill attended the Jury school also known as Lobo Township #9 and #13 London Township which was about a mile from the farm. His years there were happy even though no one had any money; that was accepted as normal. Even though there were eight classes in public school, they were made up of junior and senior years so it was common, if you were lucky, to skip the odd one. Bill apparently did just that as he headed to high school a little more than a month after his 12th birthday. It was decided that Bill would attend Beal Technical School taking the matriculation course which was the alternative to any technical courses. In order to get to Beal, Bill walked almost a mile to the Lobo station, (which was just a small shanty with a pot bellied stove which was never lit) where at 7:00 a.m. he caught a small passenger train to the CNR station in London and from there he walked to Beal Tech. Following the same route in reverse he made it home about 6:00 p.m. It made for a long day but gave lots of time for doing homework, if so inclined. Bill loved the few technical courses he had but hated the other classes which were the backbone of the matriculation course. After enduring three years of this it was jointly decided that Bill, now 15, would farm alongside his father taking the place of his hired man. Times were tough, money was in short supply in the 30's everybody pitched in to make the farm run. The family regularly took meat and produce to the Covent Garden Market and Bill worked out at odd jobs, such as sheep shearing, in order to make ends meet.

In May of 1945 Bill married Margaret Taylor and they began living together with his parents for a year before the older couple moved to Hyde Park. It made sense that Bill and Margaret would continue going to market which meant that for the first several years of their marriage, Friday was spent dressing poultry and preparing any other produce that was in season. On Saturday, the milking had to be done before they left to be at the wholesale market by 6:00a.m. Margaret looked after the retail market while Bill peddled his egg route. The size of dairy herd increased when they acquired a contract to supply a specified amount of milk to London's Ontario Hospital before 8:00 a.m. each day. The herd was to remain as part of the farm operation until 1986.

1950 was to be a significant year for Bill, first his father died suddenly and although he wasn't actively farming he had been always been available for consultation. Shortly thereafter, Bill was approached to sell Pioneer seed corn in London township. In the fall he was asked to sell Hyline chicks for Neuhauser Hatchery. Both of these required no money until the product had been delivered and money collected from the customer. These were Bill's first commercial ventures into business. Since he was growing corn and had a small flock of laying hens it made sense to use the products that he was selling and in this way he could truly become familiar with them. Bill had always liked the idea of selling an idea or product. With quality products and good support Bill took to it like a duck to water.

In late 1954 Bill was approached to possibly take on a Purina feed dealership. Financial constraints and the need for a separate building to house a new business led to an agreement whereby feed could be warehoused in the granary of the barn for the first year to see if the business would fly. The first feed was delivered in early 1955 and by September of that year it was apparent that Hyde Park Farm Supply would need a separate building to operate from. In 1956 a 24'x 60' store and warehouse was opened on the corner of the farm. Purina feeds were somewhat more expensive than many competitors. They needed to be marketed on the basis of more production for less overall feed costs rather than just the cost of a bag of feed alone. Bill used side by side feed trials with customers to entice them over to his dealership.

In 1957 a new two storey layer barn, capable of holding 5000 birds was built. The first storey would house half the flock in cages and the second floor would have the rest of the flock housed traditionally on litter with laying nests hanging on the walls. The result proved that caged hens could produce with less feed and this had two effects on the business. The first was a demand for cages. Hyde Park Farm Supply became the Canadian distributor for Pockman Laying Cages. The second was how to increase the volume of hen feed sales. Hyde Park Farm Supply began offering egg contracts whereby if you converted your space using their cages and ventilation then HPFS would supply you with 20week-old pullets, all the feed and medication needed and a guaranteed rate per dozen eggs per week, plus an annual bonus per dozen for production and quality above average. Over time these contracts amounted to upwards of 100,000 hens. Most flocks were in the range of 2,500-5,000 hens. This gave a large base volume of protected feed sales and a market for cages

As time progressed, Hyde Park Farm Supply expanded its poultry and livestock equipment lines. It included equipment designed and built by them as well as other brand names for which they acted as a distributor. They were a long-time exhibitor at the Western Fair Farm Show. The late 1960's saw the opening of a new manufacturing building as well as expansion of the egg laying operation with the purchase of two farm operations. By the 1970's, Hyde Park Farm Supply increased their involvement in the swine industry by

increasing their lines of hog equipment, using contract feeding similar to that which had been used in the egg business and buying a large farrowing operation . By the early 1980's, Hyde Park Farm Supply's operation had 70,000 layers, 22,000 chicks starting every eight weeks, 7,000 pigs on fattening contracts, a sow herd producing 250 piglets per week, a feed dealership and a livestock equipment manufacturing and distributing business.

Bill's involvement in politics started at an early age as his father was on township council in the early 1930's and Reeve of London Township from 1934 to 1936. As Bill grew older, he actively campaigned for the Conservative candidates in many elections. In 1968 he ran as the Conservative candidate for the newly redistributed riding of Middlesex. He lost this election by a slim margin but in 1972 was successful in becoming a member of Robert Stanfield's Conservative minority federal parliament. With the change of government in 1974 Bill lost his seat returning home to once again become fully immersed in his ongoing business. In the February 1980 election Bill lost in a Liberal sweep. While not running in any further elections, politics remains just barely under the surface of Bill's everyday life.

As with other parts of his life, Bill's community involvement has never been measured in halves. Once involved he has been fully involved. He was chair of the London Township's Planning Board, chair of the East Middlesex District High School Board in 1968, member and director of London's Chamber of Commerce, member of the Ontario Technology Centre in Chatham, a councilor on the Ontario Egg Marketing Board and chair of the London Housing Authority. He has been a great supporter of his church in Hyde Park and Oakridge Acres. He is a past president of the Ilderton Fair, a member of the Ilderton Curling Club, and was a co-chair of the International Plowing Match held in Lucan in 1982. If you ever went to a chicken barbeque in Middlesex County, good chances were that Bill's equipment was being used or more likely Bill was in charge. Bill has been and continues to be an extremely active member of the Masonic Lodge since 1945.

Bill and Margaret have four children; Ruth, David, Charles and Marianne All are married, and have families and much to their parents delight, live in the surrounding communities.

William C. Frank has been and continues to be a sparkplug in his community- fully committed, charging ahead. We join here today to acknowledge and applaud his life-long contributions to agriculture and community by inducting him into the Middlesex County Agricultural Hall of Fame.