

Highlights for Sid Fraleigh - Lambton Agricultural Hall of Fame Induction

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By Bryan Boyle

1. Contributions to the Agricultural Community within Lambton County

Sid has always been very active in Lambton County, whether at his neighborhood and Township level or across the large County. Agriculture and specifically the swine sector were of great interest to Sid throughout his life.

Sid's interest and ability to represent the wishes and concerns of fellow pork producers started in Lambton. As a local Director he developed his leadership skills and he was elected Chair of Lambton Pork Producers.

Sid was always actively promoting pork across Lambton County not only as a viable agricultural sector but as a nutritious product for consumers. For many years he and a good friend along with their spouses and families provided a pork barbecue service for groups across Lambton communities. Sid always did his best to prepare a quality product that left a lasting positive impression with consumers and encouraged them to "put pork on their fork!"

He was a 4-H Swine Club Leader where he not only enthused the young 4-H members about the potential of the swine sector but instilled in them practical knowledge relating to nutrition, housing, breeding, and health.

As an active member of the Forest Agricultural Society, who organizes the Forest Fair, he brought his business acumen to that organization and took a lead in fund raising to help ensure that it remains a very vibrant organization to this day.

As an elected Councillor on Bosanquet Township Council, Sid worked hard to ensure that the rural ratepayers were well represented in all council decisions. These local municipal council activities developed Sid's interest in wider political involvement.

2. Contributions to Agriculture Outside of Lambton County

Sid's greatest contributions to agriculture outside of Lambton County could best be described as "pork and politics". From his initial role as a Regional Director, he became Chairman of Ontario Pork Producers Marketing Board (OPPMB) for over 10 years. OPPMB represented all pork producers in Ontario and had the responsibility to market all hogs grown in Ontario. Sid presided over the OPPMB during some tumultuous times as the number of hog producers shrank substantially but the size of commercial operations remaining showed major growth.

His responsibilities and respect garnered in Ontario led him to represent Ontario for five years on the Canadian Pork Council, which represents swine producers across Canada.

In politics, Sid chose to represent farmers and the rural communities of Lambton-Middlesex area on the federal stage. Sid was elected to the 31st and 33rd Canadian parliaments between the years of 1979 and 1988. In both terms he was an active member of the agricultural committee at the House of Commons as one of the few MP's who had been actively farming. He shared his expertise in many areas such as trade issues, farm support, agricultural policy, quality control and inspection.

After his political career, his expertise was recognized as he was chosen to join several bodies including the Agriculture Research Institute of Ontario, a five-year term on the International Trade Tribunal, and the Appeal Board for Ontario Humane Societies.

3. Business Development

Sid was a farmer by choice. Born and raised in the town of Forest, at an early age he aspired to be a farmer. After their marriage, he and Vel made a modest start by purchasing their home farm near Forest. The farm grew continuously through buildings and land acquisitions to become a 400-acre unit with the crops grown to supply feed to an expanding farrow to finish swine operation that produced up to 4,000 finished hogs per year.

Sid was always looking for ways to do things better on the farm, more efficiently or with greater positive impact. He prided himself on running a commercially viable hog operation to demonstrate to all with whom he worked that he could “walk the talk”.

Sid and Vel always maintained an attractive yet functional farmstead with many buildings in their production facility.

One of Sid and Vel's goals was to create a viable farm operation that could be continued on by the next generation. In 1979 when Sid went into federal politics, his son Mark took over the farming and it still actively involved in operating it today.

4. Contribution to the Community Beyond Agriculture

In his 90 years of active living, Sid has always been an engaged and supportive community member outside of his agricultural interests. He has been an active member of the Anglican Church in Forest and during retirement has contributed by driving cancer patients to their appointments.

Sid was a member of the Finance Committee for both the Forest Curling Club expansion and the building of the \$8 million Shores Recreation Centre in Forest.

Sid has been a life member and an active participant in the Forest Curling Club. He also supported his children through many sports, school, and community activities during their youth.

5. Personal Development

When we think of Sid, many descriptors come to mind:

Strong Work Ethic: Sid always recognized the value of hard work and commitment to a task. When his farm organization work took him away from the farm for meetings, he would often return home after a day-long meeting to complete the farm chores and seasonal tasks at hand.

Leadership: From his high school days with coaching teams and acting as Commanding Officer for army cadets, through his work with local farm organizations, Chairman of Ontario Pork Producers Marketing Board, as well as during his political career, Sid has demonstrated strong leadership. He recognized that it was only by exemplifying integrity and innovation that he could gain the trust and respect of others.

Family Man: His wife Veland five children Lynda, Mike, David, Wendy, and Markall describe him as an excellent and loving husband, father, mentor, and a positive influence on their lives. Sid had the patience to be a good teacher and role model as he taught his children valuable skills and life lessons.

Good Listener: Sid realizes that good communication is a two-way process. His listening ability and sense of humour often allowed him to diffuse some potential conflict in organizational and political activities.

Working for the Collective Good: Sid was often involved in activities with community, farm, and political organizations for the collective good. Sid was always cognizant to maintain the balance between time and energy spent for the collective good with the time and energy required by his active farming operation and young family.

Progressive and Innovative: In many situations Sid demonstrated he could “think outside the box” and aim for goals that would be a benefit to many. One example was when, as Chair of Ontario Pork Producers Marketing Board, he helped develop an export market in Japan for Ontario pork that flourished and still exist today having a positive impact on the sustainable financial returns to Ontario swine farmers.

Success Oriented: Sid always gave any activity his determined “best shot”, but if it did not workout, he would learn from that experience to build other successes. Over his lifetime, his successes greatly outnumbered situations classified as learning experiences!

6. Length of Service to the Agricultural Community

Since his graduation from the University of Guelph, Sid has been serving the agricultural community for nearly 70 years.

7. Summary

Sid Fraleigh is a man of integrity who works for the common good. He made an exemplary contribution to the agricultural community in Lambton County and across Ontario and tonight we are inducting him as a very worthy member of the Lambton Agricultural Hall of Fame.