

Frank John McKechnie

~1931 - August 22, 1997

Worked For:

A. V. Roe as a Toolmaker from 1946 - 1959

Other:

Frank John McKechnie (1931-1997) was a long-time Ward 5 councillor for Toronto Township, Town of Mississauga and City of Mississauga.



Born in Glasgow, Scotland, he immigrated to Canada in 1946 and worked as a tool maker for A.V. Roe in Malton during the Avro Arrow program. In 1958 he entered politics where he served as a local councillor for the Malton area for almost 39 years.

McKechnie lost his job with A.V. Roe in 1959 after the Avro Arrow program was cancelled by the Canadian government. He then started his insurance and real estate company.

Affectionately known as 'Mayor of Malton' McKechnie oversaw and was involved in many projects that helped grow and development of the area. Councillor McKechnie passed away on August 22nd, 1997 while still in office.

Ref: "Mayor Of Malton is 25 Years young", Mississauga News, Jan 4, 1984

<http://www7.mississauga.ca/documents/library/biographies/Scans/Peel%20Biography%20Scans%20-%20M/McKechnie,%20Frank/McKechnie,%20Frank%20MN%2019840104.pdf> & 'Malton: Farms to Flying', Kathleen Hicks, 2006.

Above from: <https://mississauga.pastperfectonline.com/byperson?keyword=McKechnie%2C%20Frank>

Researched by: Barry Copp (2023)



'Mayor of Malton' is 25 years young

By JOHN STEWART
Staff Writer

When Frank McKechnie applied for a "part-time job" in Malton a quarter century ago, he had no intention of making it a career.

But this week he will celebrate his 25th consecutive year of elected office as a councillor for Malton — the second longest active service by any municipal politician in Ontario. Toronto alderman Fred Beavis has been in office one year longer than McKechnie.

Surviving a quarter century in elected politics is accomplishment enough, but McKechnie has done it in a community which has probably changed more in the last 25 years than any other in Mississauga.

TOOL MAKER

McKechnie first came to work and live in Malton in 1951 when he was a boarder. He was a toolmaker at the Douglas Aircraft plant on Airport Rd. He subsequently moved into

Toronto, but returned to Malton with his wife Annette in 1957 to take up permanent residence.

When he decided to run for office at age 27, Malton was a police village of 3,000 people, 1,500 in the old portion and 1,500 in the new.

The Malton representative on township of Toronto council was Tom Sills, who announced he was running for deputy reeve but changed his mind on nomination day and again ran in Malton. McKechnie won by 14 votes over Harold Langford, a third candidate who'd run as a "spoiler" to ensure Sills wouldn't be re-elected. Langford didn't ask for a recount. It was the closest result McKechnie ever had.

He served on that first council with Reeve Mary Fix, Deputy Reeve Robert Speck and Councillors Vic Vignale, Bob Harrison, Chic Murray and Roy McMillan.

McKechnie spent the first decade

of his career in hot water with his colleagues.

BETTER BREAK

His election platform, like that of his competitors, was that he would see Malton get a better break in getting money from the township. "The issue was that those guys in Cooksville weren't giving any money to Malton," recalls McKechnie. "That was the only issue."

The police village was still being run by three elected trustees who had their own ideas about what should happen. They often didn't jibe with what Township of Toronto councillors thought. And McKechnie was usually in the middle.

But there was never any question about where the Malton councillor's sympathies lay. It was always with the interest of his constituents. Over the years, McKechnie has earned a well-deserved reputation for this

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Malton councillor Frank McKechnie lives on the street in his ward which was renamed in his honor. He is celebrating 25 years in office, the second longest consecutive service of any current municipal politician in Ontario . . . For more, see Rob Beintema's column on page 7. (Staff photo by Rob Beintema)

McKechnie Street started as a joke

When Frank McKechnie gives out his address to people, they are always suspicious.

That's because McKechnie lives on McKechnie Ct. in Malton, named after himself.

But he says people seem to have a difficult time accepting that. He'll receive mail with his name spelled correctly, which spells the name of the street in a different way. It's as if people can't accept that a living person could reside on a street named after them.

McKechnie says the street name was the result of a joke.

About a decade ago, Mississauga councillors were discussing the difficulty they were having finding suitable street names. McKechnie suggested that a contest be held in local schools to come up with good names.

Fellow councillor Grant Clarkson then suggested that there was at least one name he knew of which wasn't being used — McKechnie.

He put a motion to change the name of the street on which McKechnie lived from Donlevy to McKechnie and it was passed by council.

The idea was challenged in court by Rudie Jansen, who twice ran against McKechnie in municipal elections. But the name was approved.

McKechnie says many municipal politicians have streets named after them in Ontario, but as far as he knows, he is the only politician who actually lives on a street named in his honor.

Kids hold McKechnie to his word

By SANDY MCLEAN
Special

Several Nahani Way Public School students reminded a visiting city councillor of an old campaign promise last week.

The students greeted veteran councillor Frank McKechnie by waving old campaign posters that listed his promise to preserve the woodlot located at Kennedy Rd. and Matheson Rd.

McKechnie was at the school to talk to the Kindergarten-Grade 6 children regarding their concerns about cutting down trees in the woodlot situated north of the school.

The City wants to build a community centre, tennis courts, a softball field, a baseball field and parking lot — at the expense of some of the trees.

Community services department planner John Spencer told the gathering in the school's gymnasium the original plans also included a soccer field, but that was deleted to save more vegetation.

City officials are considering two other possible sites for the community centre, including the Britannia

Farm land between Hurontario St. and McLaughlin Rd. on the north side of Bristol Rd., currently owned by the Peel Board Of Education.

The third location, owned by the City, is at the northeast corner of Hurontario St. and Eglinton Ave., an area that has been designated by the local sports council for a possible sports complex.

"We aren't going to cut down the trees — certainly not all of them, anyway," McKechnie told the students. "I'm not in favor of cutting the trees down. None of the City officials are interested in cutting down any trees that are living. I don't believe a single tree will be cut down, unless it's dead."

One student asked Spencer, "Why can't we leave the forest as it is?"

The planner replied that the City would be forced to relocate all the facilities and that isn't possible. It would cost the City money to buy land elsewhere, if any is even available. "This is our best foot forward, so to speak," Spencer said.

McKechnie told the students that if they wanted to give up a baseball diamond to save the trees, he would work to find another location.

Am News April 20, 1994

Peel Blog: The McKECHNIE, Frank



Staff photo by Rob Beirns

The environmental club at Nahani Way Public School took Ward 5 councillor Frank McKechnie for a walk in the woods behind the school to impress upon him why students want the woodlot preserved. Shown with some of the students are, from left, teacher Paul Vander Helm, John Spencer of the Peel Board community services department and councillor McKechnie.

ews — Sunday, August 24, 1997

McKechnie held office for 39 years

By JOHN STEWART
Staff

Ask Frank McKechnie how he was doing and you'd always get the same chipper answer: "First class, thank you."

Even in recent months after he suffered another heart attack, McKechnie couldn't help but answer greetings with his trademark cheery retort.

That was typical of the 67-year-old

who always seemed to have a ready smile and a handshake for everyone from VIPs to just ordinary folks.

The Ward 5 City councillor, who would have celebrated 39 years in public office Dec. 6, died early Friday morning at Toronto General Hospital.

No other municipal politician still in office in Ontario had served longer than the native of Glasgow, Scotland.

"There aren't enough pages in your newspaper to say what everybody feels," Ward 1 Councillor Carmen Corbasson said later Friday morning as City Hall staffers tried to absorb the shocking news.

"What impressed me the most about Frank is that as much as he gave his life to politics and the community, he always put people first. A lot of politicians can't say that honestly," added Corbasson. "But that was our Frank: the support, the friendly smile, the helping hand."

Trademark smile

Ward 4 Councillor Frank Dale and McKechnie's long-time secretary Angela DiLegge visited McKechnie shortly before he died. Despite his weakness, McKechnie flashed his trademark big smile, Dale said.

"He was a real statesman on council," Dale said. "He was a devoted family man. He always had the community at heart."

He attributed the councillor's longevity in office to the fact that, "he always

treated every resident with the same respect. And he made sure the community's needs were met."

Mississauga South MPP and former City councillor Margaret Marland called it "an enormous loss. He was so fair in his judgment and was always a very caring person."

McKechnie and Marland designed the City's coat of arms together, the one that is reproduced on the huge gold image that graces the City council chambers. Together they donated the registered design to Mississauga.

"We always said that if we never left anything else as a mark of being involved, that would always be a permanent remembrance," Marland said.

The former self-employed real estate and insurance man had been in and out of hospital since a heart attack at City Hall struck him April 22.

He had his first such attack in 1975, which was followed by bypass surgery that forced him to miss three months of work.

He had other health setbacks over the years, including a circulation problem in his leg in 1994 that also required surgery.

Despite urgings from many to retire, McKechnie would never consider the idea. He told *The News* shortly after being admitted to Credit Valley Hospital this spring that he had every intention of campaigning this fall and wasn't considering quitting unless doctors ordered him to do so.

The man who would become known as "the Mayor of Malton" first came to the police village to work and board in 1951 when he was a toolmaker at the A. V. Roe Company (later Douglas Aircraft) plant on Airport Rd.

McKechnie, Frank April 20th, 1994 Peel Biography Book

PEEL BIOGRAPHY McKECHNIE, FRANK The Miss. News Aug. 24/97

Time won't forget Frank McKechnie

Rob Beintema, a staff photographer and occasional writer for The Mississauga News, wrote this column about Frank McKechnie in 1984. With the death of the Ward 5 councillor last week, we thought re-running the piece would be a fitting tribute.

One cold morning just after Christmas, I turned into McKechnie Court to visit with the namesake of



ROB

BEINTEMA

Guest
column

that street, Frank McKechnie, the councillor for Ward 5. My editor had sent me to snap a photo of the "Mayor of Malton", the man who has successfully held onto his riding longer than any politician in Mississauga. The dawning of 1984 marks Frank's 25th consecutive year in office, quite a milestone for anyone in politics.

Frank met me at the door and invited me in. I asked if we could take the shot at the end of the road, beneath the street sign bearing his name. As he dressed to go outside, he said he wasn't sure whether he should wear the new fur and leather coat his wife had bought him for Christmas.

"I really like it," he grinned, "but my son was over for Christmas and he said it looked like something a pimp would wear." I told Frank it was up to him. He thought about it, then grabbed his old sheepskin coat and a hat.

As we walked down the street, we discussed the photograph to mark his 25th year in office. Reaching the signpost, he stepped into the snow, turned and faced me, his arms hanging at his sides.

Some of the glossier politicians are very photographically aware, consciously striking poses whenever a camera is aimed anywhere near them. Others are like the rest of us, they stiffen and don't know quite how to stand. Frank is one of the latter. He stood awkwardly rigid, unsure of where to put his hands. I asked him to turn a bit, cross his arms and relax.

As I looked through the viewfinder, I noticed the shadows of Frank and the signpost mixing in the background, liked the pattern and shifted to keep them in the picture. Those aren't the only shadows Frank McKechnie has had behind him over the years, when you think of the long list of contenders that have tried in vain to wrest political office from his grasp.

We took a few shots, made some changes in angle and position and Frank relaxed enough for me to get the picture I wanted. As we started back up the street, we made some small talk about Malton, its changes and rapid growth in the past few years.

"How old are you?" he asked me. I told him. He nodded. "I thought you were under 30. So you were only 4 years old when I started." He thought about that for a second. "It sure doesn't seem that long," he added.

I thanked him for his time and we parted at my car.

As I drove down the street and stopped by the signpost again, I remembered something I'd mentioned to him. There were two street names on the signpost by the intersection. The one above McKechnie Court read Twilight St. In light of his 25 years of service, those two names in the photo had struck me as quite a coincidence. Frank seemed somewhat surprised over the connection I had made. But, as he said, 25 years doesn't seem that long after it's passed. I don't think he considers himself to be in the twilight of his career.

I drove out of the street wondering if maybe in another 10 years some other photographer would arrive on a similar assignment, notice the two signs, and make the same connection. Maybe it would fit better then. But then again, by that time maybe someone will have renamed the other road Frank St.

Author's note: I wrote this column in early '84.

And Frank was right. He certainly wasn't in the twilight of his career at the time. Instead, he went on to serve his constituents for more than another dozen years. And while the legacy of his work and dedication may live on as Mississauga swells its boundaries, this growing busy city will miss the home-spun charm and small-town geniality of Councillor Frank McKechnie.

McKechnie, Frank July 24th, 1994 MN

McKechnie on the mend after surgery

Peel Region
Veteran Councillor Frank McKechnie is ready to hit the campaign trail after successful surgery on his leg.

McKechnie, 63, came home from a Toronto hospital Thursday following elective surgery to improve the circulation in his left thigh.



McKECHNIE

Doctors inserted a six to eight-inch long piece of plastic vein at that point to eliminate a blockage.

"Everything is A one," McKechnie told *The News* Friday afternoon from his home where he's recovering. "The doctor said the other veins around it look healthy so I should be in shape for running around to the doors this fall."

The ward 5 councillor, often referred to as the mayor of Malton, is the longest-serving municipal politician still in office in Ontario. He was first elected Dec. 6, 1958 and will celebrate 36 years in office later this year if he is re-elected Nov. 14.

Several years ago McKechnie had heart bypass surgery but he quickly bounced back to a full schedule of meetings, representing ward 5 at city hall and on Peel regional council.

The councillor expects to be back on the job next week.

A first class guy

Peel Bio. Sep. 24/97 MN

It's hard to imagine any politician more synonymous with a community than Frank McKechnie was with Malton.

McKechnie came to be known as "the Mayor of Malton," but he never forgot that he came to the police village in 1951 as a toolmaker for A.V. Roe Co.

Although his colleagues jokingly chided McKechnie for his Scottish thriftiness in saving election signs from campaign to campaign, that was symbolic of his common sense, down-to-earth approach to everything he did.

It's probably what kept him in office for more than 38 years. There's not much doubt that if he had stayed in good health, McKechnie would have extended that amazing electoral record this Nov.

While he made many outstanding acquisitions for Malton, he will be remembered most for his sunny personality.

The councillor could take umbrage with the best of them at the perceived injustices of the world, but he couldn't stay mad at anyone for long. The most vociferous of debates with colleagues were quickly forgotten in the back room.

It was not just his political skills or his record of achievement that kept the voters of ward 5 returning McKechnie through 17 elections. It was also his engaging personality.

What we'll remember most about Frank McKechnie is that he was a kind, decent man who always had a big smile and a sincere interest in everyone he ever met.