



## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

### Frank Ney:

## The Notary, Mayor, Ambassador, *and* Businessman *from* Nanaimo!

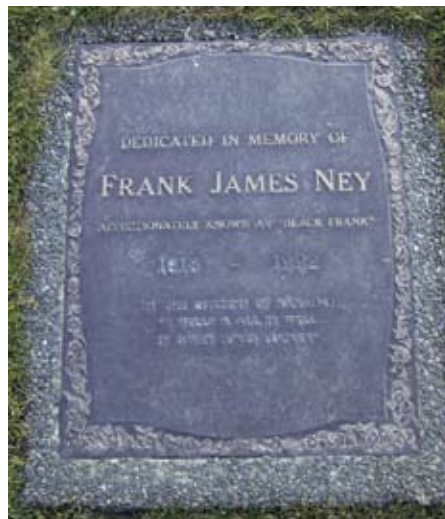
**F**rank James Ney was an intelligent, witty, charming, thoughtful, and visionary man with a zest for life.

There was never a dull moment when you were with Frank. Wherever he was, he made a point of introducing himself to people and engaging them in conversations through innocent, probing questions.

Frank was born in England, May 12, 1918, and died in Nanaimo, November 24, 1992. He led an extremely full life, as evidenced by his record of activities and accomplishments.

- Professional hockey player in England, Scotland, and Poland prior to WWII. Coached Poland's National Hockey Team.
- Pilot, Royal Air Force (Britain), Oct 22, 1940, to January 1, 1942 (Flying time 576 hours and 40 minutes)
- Pilot, Royal Canadian Air Force Canada: January 1, 1942, to March 30, 1944  
Britain: March 30, 1944, to November 2, 1944  
Logged 2167 hours 30 minutes as a flight instructor.
- Moved to Nanaimo in 1946; started real estate and insurance business with his father, brother, and uncle. Founded Nanaimo Realty in 1946 and later Great National Land & Investments Ltd.
- Commissioned as a BC Notary Public in 1956

- President of the Vancouver Island Real Estate Board, 1964 to 1965
- First elected Mayor of Nanaimo December 9, 1967



- Helped launch and promote the annual Nanaimo-to-Vancouver Bathtub Race in 1967, as part of the Canadian Centennial celebrations
- President of The Society of Notaries Public of BC, 1968 to 1969
- Given honorary title of Admiral of the Bathtub Fleet
- Social Credit MLA, 1969 to 1972
- Named Freeman of the City of Nanaimo shortly after his November 1984 election defeat in the mayoralty race
- Re-elected Mayor, November 1986



- Named Nanaimo's Goodwill Ambassador following 1990 election defeat
- Canada 125 Medal Recipient 1992

There are many stories about Frank and his legendary schedule of activities. He seemed to be everywhere because he attended so many weddings, funerals, retirements, civic functions, hockey games, ribbon-cuttings, and so on.

He was famous for attending many functions and infamous for being late. For example, in the late '80s, I asked Frank to join us at a party for a lady retiring from BC Assessment Authority. We saved a seat for Frank at our table next to the guest of honour. She was convinced Frank would not show because she only knew him in passing.

Frank arrived—typically late—had a bite to eat, and informed us he had to leave to drop the puck at the opening game of the Clipper's hockey season. He said he would return and asked the guest of honour to save dessert for him. She didn't believe he would return—but he did! That lady never forgot the event and spoke about it often for the rest of her life. Literally thousands of Nanaimo residents have similar stories about Frank.

Frank was extremely proud to be a Notary Public. He served as President of The Society in 1968 and 1969 and, as such, was involved with the hiring of Dr. Bernard J. Hoeter to replace Alex Matthew as Secretary of The Society.

Frank always attended the annual Notary conferences—if only for a short while. Mind you, the way Frank greeted everybody, most conference delegates thought he was there the whole time.

When I attended a Notary conference in Victoria, with my wife and infant daughter, Frank showed up at my room and asked me to help get some things from his car. He kept various costumes in his trunk—Pirate, River Boat Gambler, Indian Chief, and so on.

Returning to my room, he donned his pirate costume. He said he going down to the Victoria waterfront to conduct a TV interview about the improvements planned for the Nanaimo Harbour. He claimed that when he dressed in his costume and waived his plastic sword while talking about all the marvellous things happening in Nanaimo, TV viewers would never notice he was standing on the Victoria waterfront and not in Nanaimo—and he was right. None of his critics commented on the venue.

Frank was a promoter and good at delegating jobs. He stood up at the end of the Notary conference in September 1990 and invited everyone to attend the next conference—in Nanaimo in 1991! As soon as he finished the invitation, he walked over to me and said something like, “You can work with the other local Notaries to take care of the details.”

All those who attended the 1991 Notary conference in Nanaimo will remember Frank at Newcastle Island with his beloved boat, greeting everybody on the dock by handing them a shot of rum as they got off the ferry to attend a dance in the Pavilion.



*With Queen Elizabeth II*

Anybody who ever heard Frank’s “sizzle speech” got a true sense of his energy and enthusiasm—and he lived the philosophy of his speech. He gave his Toastmaster’s award-winning speech to many groups and could change it to suit the crowd. During the mid-1970s, he gave a speech in the Richmond Inn at the conference of the Insurance Brokers Association of BC (Insurance Agent’s Association, as it was then). To emphasize his points, he tossed umbrellas, bottles of Coca Cola, and various other items into the crowd. In the 1970s, he could act that way but, by the next decade, he switched to softer items, due to liability fears. The speech was still effective, in spite of the change in missile types.



Many people called Frank a clown because of his conduct, but those who knew him understood he was an intelligent, caring man. He may have talked about “corn before culture” but it was all about promoting Nanaimo.

Frank was a person who could telephone head offices in Ontario and Quebec and get responses because people knew of him—and wanted to speak with him. Because of his flamboyance and high recognition level, the BC Grey Cup Committee flew Frank to Toronto in 1982 to participate in the Grey Cup festivities and promote the City of Vancouver as host of the 1983 game.

Frank had vision. In his maiden speech in the Provincial Legislative Assembly in 1969, he urged the government to conduct a survey of water resources and create industry guidelines for the use of water: “There

is logging taking place now in some rivers that, in the future, we may be sorry we didn’t preserve for spawning.”

Frank did not like cutting down trees. When our firm was developing new subdivisions in Nanaimo, Frank drove our project supervisors nuts by insisting trees be left standing, rather than clear-cutting the lots, as is common practice today.

It was amazing how Frank could handle criticism and insults; he would simply turn the other cheek. He felt people were entitled to their opinions—they were just doing their jobs and he did not harbour animosity. His actions often disarmed his critics.

One thing Frank demanded was that you treat everybody with respect—regardless of their circumstances or station in life. He demonstrated respect for others every day. He could comfortably engage in conversations with homeless people on the street or with the Queen of England, when she visited Nanaimo.

Frank’s favourite place to relax was aboard his 36’ boat “Blue Girl.” He liked lots of company while boating; you could see many adults and children all over the boat as he slowly cruised around Nanaimo Harbour, Malaspina Galleries at Gabriola Island, or the area around Mudge, DeCoursey, Ruxton, and Pylades Islands. If you went boating with Frank and did not want to be steering his boat for the day, you learned to stay off the Command Bridge. He was famous for handing the helm to somebody, then disappearing to circulate with his guests.

Frank truly loved Nanaimo and did much to make our city the success it is today. We miss him and will never forget him. He was a credit to the social, political, and business communities of our city and province. ▲

**Ted Lewis is President of Nanaimo Insurance Brokers and President of the Insurance Brokers Association of British Columbia. He was a BC Notary Public from 1985 to 2004.**

Voice: 250 758-1751  
tlewis@nanaimoinsurance.ca