

Grills, Lee

# The Friendly Milkman called 'people person'

By HARRY MULHALL  
Staff Reporter

The Friendly Milkman politician was tendered final tributes Friday from his personal-life constituency—friendship.

Lee Grills' amiability was a common link for most of the public figures and private people who filled Bridge Street United Church for his funeral service.

In fact, church pastor Rev. Harold Wilson told the mourning Grills' family and relatives, for them now the memorial occasion was a "community sharing" of the "message of friendship."

Grills, he said, was a "people person"—and his funeral brought them from various walks of life in the community, and the public service where he'd been many years an active participant.

Grills, 78, died this week, a decade after he retired from public life.

Peak of his career came from the late 1950s to the early 1970s when—after a rise through local government politics—he went to Ottawa as a Belleville-area Conservative MP.

The farmer and dairy operator campaigned as The Friendly Milkman through nearly two decades to serve 13 years as an MP.

And, among the local, provincial and federal politicians at the service was another long-retired campaigner whose association with Grills was also one of challenge,

Nonetheless, theirs was a political rivalry that also was one of lasting cordial relationships—except maybe for a few hours in public on election day, said Frank Follwell, one-time local Liberal MP.

"Our situation always was that friendship always transcended politics," recollected Follwell. "We never had actually any politics between us except on election day—and



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then not all day either."

"In our campaigns we called each other friendly enemies."

Both men shared not only the same political era, but a similar rise through local affairs to the federal arena—Follwell as mayor of Belleville, Grills as reeve of neighboring Sidney Township.

Follwell, who became South Hastings MP in 1949, turned back Grills' first bid for the constituency in 1953. Grills finally won the contest in 1957. With a two-year absence—after losing the 1963 election—he remained as MP until a 1972 retirement.

Follwell, a Belleville Shriner along with Grills, stood in the honor guard from local lodges and clubs, of which The Friendly Milkman was a member, as the funeral cortege formed up for Belleville Cemetery.

Jack Ellis, MP Prince Edward-Hastings, Grills' Conservative successor as local federal represen-

tative, said his predecessor's work in office should also be recalled.

"That's equally important—how effective he was in the work he did for his constituents," stressed Ellis, whose connections with Grills went back to political support in Sidney Township elections.

"He looked after his constituency extremely well in Ottawa," agreed George Hees, veteran MP for Northumberland. "And, he was very much liked and respected—not only by Conservatives but all members of all parties in the House."

Ellis was one of the honorary bearers who also included Judge Russell Honey, Mac Smith, Dr. Bruce Cronk, Keith Brown and Fred Nelson.

Bearers were Bill Scott, MP Victoria-Haliburton, Ken Yorke, Thurlow Township reeve, Ken Jones, Ron Cass, Ernie Burnham and Mance Cathcart.

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