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Frank and Ella Reesor
farmed on Markham's 10th
Line for several decades
and left the farm when the
Federal government
started expropriating land
for the Pickering Airport.
— Alex Newman



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Retired farmers have few regrets

By ALEX NEWMAN
Farming is a way of life — not a
way to get rich — according to two
farm couples who are currently
retired and living in Stouffville's
Parkview Village, a seniors
apartment complex.

In interviews with the Week-
ender, Frank and Ella Reesor and
Allan and Reta Meyer told about
the hard work, long hours — but
real joys of farming as a business
and a way of life.

Frank Reesor, born in 1908,
moved to his farm on the 10th Line
in 1925 and started farming with
his brother. In 1934 when Frank
married Ella, his childhood
sweetheart, his brother gave up
farming and moved to Milverton
to drive a bread truck.

"In those days," says Frank, "a
family could make a living on a
100-acre farm. We grew wheat,
oats, hay and corn — mostly
crops to feed the livestock."

Family used milk

Milk from 16 Holsteins was used
by the family and any heifer
calves born were kept to refurbish
the herd. "One cow'd wear out
and be replaced by a heifer," says
Frank in his laconic tone.

Approximately 150 chickens
provided the Reesors with enough
eggs for their own use and to sell.
Cash brought into the household
by sale of eggs and wheat was
used for household expenses.

Although the first tractor was
purchased in 1920 a pair of grey
Percheron horses were used for
sowing grain, cutting hay, draw-
ing the hay wagon and taking the
grain to the threshing machine
until the Reesors purchased a big-
ger Ford tractor in 1945.

The Percherons were sold to Eli
Shank as meat for his mink ranch.
"The tractor, though, made no
real difference in the size of crops,
but sure cut down on time and
labor," admits Frank.

Land expropriated

When the governments of Cana-
da and Ontario purchased land in
north Pickering for an airport in
1973, many Markham farmers
started selling. The Reesors' next
door neighbors, also farmers,
sold their farm.

"We used to trade labor so when
our neighbor sold, and left, the
work got too much for just us,"
says Frank. Without a hired man
or the resources to hire one, the
Reesors felt it best to sell and
move into town.

In 1975, the Reesors sold their
farm and moved to Markham.
Farm life isn't viewed through
rose-colored glasses by the in-
habitants the way it is by outsid-
ers. "Life in town was kind of
cramped," says Ella, "but we
liked it after living on the farm.
There was less to worry about."

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