



Frank W. Konkel

October 13, 1931 - December 19, 2022

Frank William Konkel, 91, of Fremont, died on Monday, December 19, 2022 outside in his yard by his bright red Silverado truck, of natural causes.

Frank was born on October 13, 1931 in Southfield MI, to Frank Joseph Konkel and Helen (Blotkamp) Konkel, the youngest of four children, raised in a blue-collar German Catholic community. His father was a superintendent at Kermath Manufacturing which made marine motors for PT boats and amphibious landing crafts, while his mother was a homemaker. As a youngster, Frank cared for chickens at the farm and had a paper route which he delivered via horseback. He remembered moving to Newaygo on the day after World War II ended, in 1945 when he was 14 years old. He helped his father build the home they settled in on M-82 just past the curve south of Fremont, even making their own bricks.

He attended Southfield Schools before the move, and briefly was a student at Newaygo Public Schools before quitting and deciding to work full-time. During his time at Newaygo, he first met the petite, feisty, black-haired Welsh girl, Carol Cole, who would later become his wife. A classmate set them up on a blind date while Carol was waitressing at a local restaurant after school. They married on April 1, 1952 at St. Bart's during Lent with the Bishop's permission.

Frank left within days for the Army's Camp Breckinridge KY cook school for his mess sergeant posting. Carol joined him there after she graduated at Newaygo later that spring, until Frank was sent overseas as part of the Army Command "Trieste United States Troops" or "TRUST" that was established as part of the *Treaty of Peace with Italy*, that ended hostilities between that country and the victors in World War II. Trieste was an independent territory, a "free city" between northern Italy and Yugoslavia under the U.N. Security Council from 1947 to 1954. During his months overseas, Frank spent some leave time in the cities of Naples and Venice, and the countries of Greece and Turkey; also went on military maneuvers in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. Returning to the U.S., Frank finished up his military career at Ft. Rucker AL, where he was discharged in April, 1954, remaining in the reserves into the 1960s, leaving the military with rank of E4 Corporal.

The couple came back to Michigan, settling in Fremont where Frank returned to the Newaygo County Road Commission where he had worked prior to his enlistment. They first lived on 56th St, then on Stewart, and Westwood, before buying their forever home on 32nd Street. Frank remained with the road commission until 1965 when he joined Reliable Truck & Crane. After a number of years there, he began his own excavating business, purchasing a grader, loader, and dump truck, storing the equipment in the barn of their place on 32nd. With his growing family, Frank needed steadier income and joined McQuestion & Sons among other employers in the years before he retired in 1993. During his road construction years, Frank helped build such roads as: Green Street to 32nd in Fremont; a 10 mile stretch north from Reed City on US 131; and I-696 from I-75 to the Detroit Zoo. He was an unabashedly staunch union-strong Democrat-leaning Independent which stood out after he moved to the conservative Dutch community of Fremont, and taught his kids by example to be free-thinkers.

Frank was active in All Saints Catholic Church in Fremont, serving as janitor several years and in the Knights of Columbus where he was Grand Knight for six years. Frank and Carol loved to square dance and became part of a group that toured and performed on weekends within the state and even into Canada. He had a passion for deer hunting and fishing, often going on extended trips because he was usually laid off in the winter, with friends and family into the Upper Peninsula (taking the ferry before the bridge was built), in particular Crystal Falls and Deer Lake. Frank was known locally as an avid hunter, showing up the youngsters bagging bucks well into his 80s with a crossbow and rifle both. He also spent time restoring antique tractors and participating in tractor shows around the state. Frank's road grading expertise was often called upon at his son's dairy farm in Hesperia and he enjoyed being useful.

Frank was a hard-working man, but always enjoyed laughing and joking around. He was a good friend to many, often driving them to appointments. As his wife's health deteriorated, Frank was her devoted caretaker. Carol died at age 83 in 2017. Frank loved his children and it hit him hard to lose his son Kyle to cancer in 2020. Frank absolutely treasured his grandchildren. When they were young, he would often take a few at a time out west in the summer. As they grew older, many times he would help them move to a new location, as he loved to drive and travel, proud of his impeccable driving record. Frank was a great listening ear as grandkids would call and talk until his cell battery would die. He was especially close to his grandson, Kyle's son Kelvin, who lived next door and relied on his grandfather so much after losing his own father.

Frank is survived by his children, Shannon (Craig) Sharp of Clarksville, Frank (Shari) Konkel of Branch, and Bryon (Sheral) Konkel of Mt. Pleasant; 12 grandchildren, 4 great-

grandchildren, and 1 great-great granddaughter. Also surviving Frank is his daughter-in-law, Edna Konkel of Fremont, his brother-in-law Max Philo, Sr., several nieces and nephews, and his traveling partner and friend, Jim Mason.

Frank was preceded in death by his wife, Carol (Cole) Konkel; his son, Kyle J. Konkel; and his siblings, Arthur Konkel of England, Mary (Konkel) Furr of Colorado, and Dorothy (Konkel) Philo of Fremont.

Per his request, cremation has taken place. A memorial service celebrating Frank's life will be held 11 a.m. on Friday, February 3, 2023 at All Saints Catholic Church in Fremont, with Fr. Peter Schafer officiating. Arrangements are with Crandell Funeral Home – Fremont Chapel. Guests can meet with family within the hour preceding the service at the church, and at the luncheon immediately afterwards. Memorial contributions may be given to the Knights of Columbus.