



## **FRANK WALL** **Windsor, Ontario**

**2010 Inductee**



The Canadian Street Rodding Hall of Fame is composed primarily of three different groups of people.

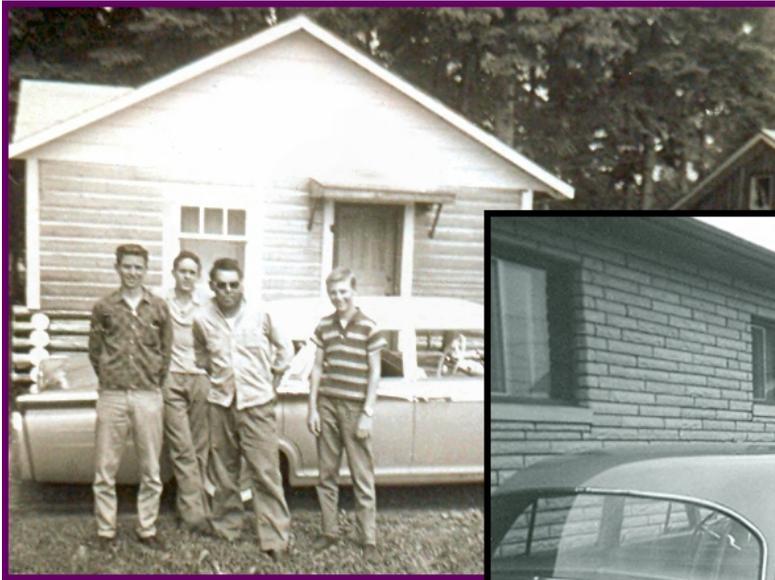
One group is known for building outstanding street rods, another group is renowned for building the hobby through various venues from clubs and associations to events and activities while the third is best known for building a business that helps other street rodders with their projects and grows the hobby that way.

Tonight's inductee blurs the line between all three of these groups.

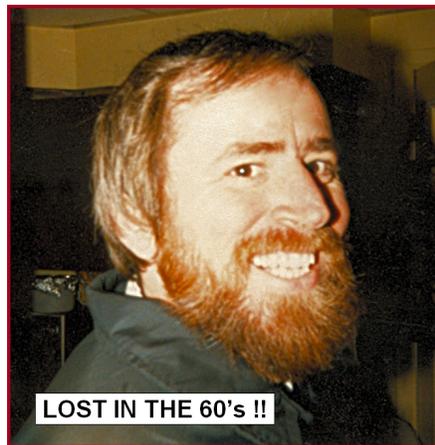
Not only did Frank Wall build and enjoy dynamite street rods, he actively grew the sport in a host of ways by working through his club, various associations and organizations, in addition he built a street rod business that garnered international acclaim.

Frank was born in 1944 and raised in Tecumseh, a small community just outside of Windsor, Ontario. He was the oldest of five children. His parents, Bill and Florence, realized very early that young Frank was drawn to cars. As a child he loved building model cars in fact the family had a card table permanently set up in the living room to accommodate his works in process. And as expected, he didn't just follow the directions.





He chopped and channeled the bodies, did engine swaps and got real creative with paint schemes.



After the model cars he moved on to modifying his bicycle and ultimately to Go Carts with his brother Bill. They spent countless hours making their carts the fastest and best looking in the neighborhood.

The whole family remembers the day 10 year old Frank decided to wash his fathers brand new white Buick. He was having trouble getting the bugs off the grill and hood so he took an SOS pad to the car. He did get it clean but he literally put hundreds of scratches all over that new car. A few years later he painted his first car in that same driveway with a vacuum cleaner. Clearly, cars were to be a large part of his life.

After graduation from St. Anne's High School in Tecumseh, Frank enrolled at the University of Waterloo where he majored in beer drinking and pub crawling. He came to the decision that academia was not in his future. It was time to get to work, so he dropped out, returned home and went to work for Union Gas. He quickly became frustrated with all standing around and departmentalized responsibilities of a union shop so he changed direction and started a career at Tepperman's Furniture where he worked for the next 26 plus years.

Starting as a clerk, his focus, hard work, smarts and easy going personality saw him climb the corporate ladder culminating in being named Vice President of Administration and Finance. With Frank as a key part of the management team, the company grew and prospered adding product lines, volume and locations.

During these times Frank was busy not only with his career but with life. He married Doris in 1965 and began a family with first daughter Kerry in 1969 followed by Melissa in 1972. He also got heavily into the street rodding scene that was enjoying a huge rebirth at that time. He built a 1931 Ford Model A Coach powered it with a big block Buick, painted it purple and drove it everywhere.

Wanting to meet other like minded people he contemplated joining a club but none really fit his needs. So, being a pragmatic type, he got together with fellow rodder and friend Rick Robinson, they put an ad in the Windsor Star about forming a street rod club and waited. 21 people showed up for the inaugural meeting and they formed Windsor Area Street Rods that September in 1974.

Frank was elected as the first President and under his leadership Windsor Area Street Rods grew and prospered hosting many events, car shows, charity runs and even hosting the Canadian Street Rod Nationals. The club continues today, a lasting legacy to the solid foundation that Frank was instrumental in developing.

Frank believed in giving to others, not only did he insure that the Windsor Area Street Rods support a number of charities; he took that attitude to his job where he chaired the United Way campaign.

Not surprising that under his direction Tepperman's had 100% participation in their annual campaigns. It was very difficult to say no to Frank when he came calling on behalf of the many causes that he worked for.

With the Windsor Area Street Rods these included: Spina Bifida, the Cancer Society, the Children's Aid Society and the Essex County Community Living Organization. Not content to just support charities with cash donations, they participated with the Windsor Star Newspaper's "Christmas Toy Drive" and delivered the toys for needy children in a street rod!

If all that charity work wasn't enough, they helped families in trouble. A family in Tilbury who lost everything the week before Christmas got cash, clothes and furniture, another family who lost a child in a pool accident received cash to help with funeral costs. All from the Windsor Area Street Rods.....Frank Wall's club.

Frank often joked that he was not the marrying kind.... but he kept trying.

He separated and ultimately divorced Doris in the late 70's and married Anita in 1983. It looks as though Frank was right, as this marriage didn't last either.

But the union did produce a son, Andrew, in 1985 who has inherited a lot of Frank's talent and skill and who shares the passion for all things "hot rod".

Over the years Frank built a number of fine cars for himself, friends and customers and though he owned many street rod and other hot rod inspired vehicles, the three cars that are most often mentioned are the 1931 Model A Ford Coach referred to earlier.



His chopped 1934 Ford 3 Window Coupe.



And his outstanding 1933 Ford Vicky that won numerous awards including: Participant's Choice, Best Interior, Club Choice and the Safety Engineering Award at the CANATS in London in 1989. It also graced the cover of Canadian Street Rodder.



Awards from CANATS '89:

- Competitor's Choice
- Safety Engineering
- Best Interior
- Club Choice



Cover car for October '89 issue of Canadian Street Rodder magazine

The car also received the Canadian Country Pick at the NSRA Nats North in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

All of these cars were driven, as Frank believed that more than half the fun was getting there and that being able to say "I Drove" was, and is, important.



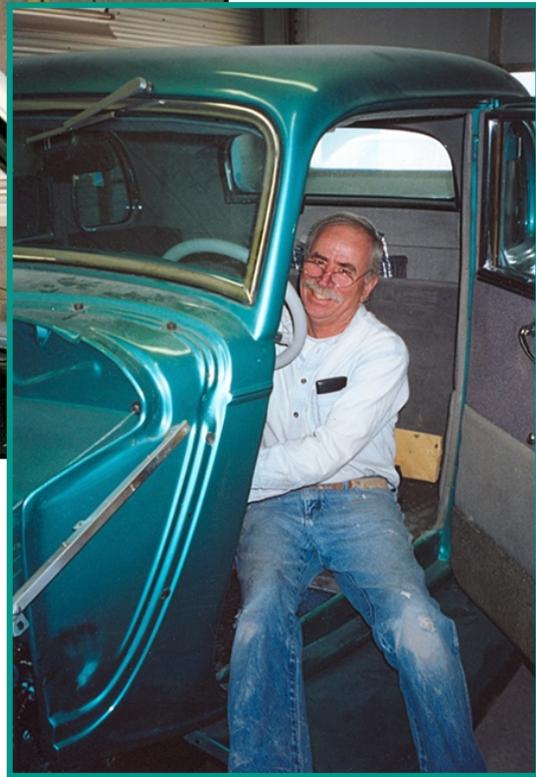
Throughout his life Frank had a number of health issues. It was during one of these situations that he decided that he needed to relook his life and priorities. Once back on his feet from a stay in the hospital, he resigned from the corporate world and set out to do what he really loved..... working on cars.

So in 1992 he opened "Wall Fabrication" initially a one man shop doing all types of building and repairs from welding to body work and painting, literally whatever came in through the door, even repairing the cities Fiberglas lamp posts.



This evolved into a shop that built outstanding cars from the ground up but still would fix the small problems for a host of friends and customers.

Frank always maintained an open door policy after 6 PM for bench racing and general car talk. Through these casual conversations he helped many with their projects with his practical advice and recommendations. In effect he was a mentor to many of today's hot rodders.



Wall's outstanding work caught the eye of noted General Motors designer Larry Erickson of "CadZZilla" and "Aluma Coupe" fame. When Erickson's father gave him a rust free 1955 Buick Special, he wanted the car to make a statement so he had this personal project shipped to Windsor, Ontario's Baillie Customs.

## THE GREAT CANADIAN/AMERICAN CUSTOM ROD CHALLENGE . . .

### BUILD A '55 BUICK FOR CRUISING FUN

BY LARRY ERICKSON

A renowned automotive designer Larry Erickson's day-to-day job is coming up with the Chevrolests you'll be driving several years down the road. Can you guess what Larry does when he goes home? That's right, designs cars, but not cars for the masses — he designs street and custom rods. These cars are usually for clients, but every once in a while Larry gives himself the luxury of thinking "what if?" Well, when it got hold of a virtually rust-free California car and built himself a "better Buick?" The idea stuck, the car was found, and good friend and co-conspirator on Rodina (Pat Harley's radical '53 Buick — see CRM, September '94 for features) Jim Baillie, went to work. The results of their efforts so far are spread before you.

Enjoy, take notes, and plan to do likewise while there are still a few, big old American cars left to have fun with.

An artist's concept sketch is intended to set the character for a project, but it should be used for guidance only, not as a rigid set of rules, even in any case. The team building the car (owner, designer, and craftsmen) must work together to create the best results possible with available resources — both material-wise and financial, without compromising quality.

**ILLUSTRATION: LARRY ERICKSON**

Raw material is next, in this case a 1955 Buick Special two-door hardtop — high mileage, low rust. Purchased from Richard Erickson of 850 Motors in Cloverdale, California, for \$400. "Honest Dad, I'll take good care of it!"

The plan: With sketch and car in hand, off we go to Jim Baillie's shop in Windsor, Canada. This is where the true success of the project will be determined. Jim's experience and expertise will take an artist's theme (in this case, my rendering) and turn it into a REAL plan.

NOVEMBER 1995 CUSTOM RODDER

Before any serious metalwork begins, i.e., top lowering, the floors were removed, and rectangular steel tubing laced between the jamba for bracing. For this procedure to work, nothing can move out of place. The dashboard is also removed at this time. Note how low car sits in front.

Determining exactly where cuts were to be made came next (that's Jim's job). Note marking tape cut line on "tulip" panel (donut, that's what it's called). It was decided to keep the backlite in place during the top sinking operation, so cardboard was taped on for protection. The same goes for windshield.

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The top was cut loose at the cowl and tulip panel, and gently lowered into its new position. Note temporary bracing welded under the cowl. Note too the package shelf has been cut free, supports shortened, and welded back in place. Also check out the new relationship of C-pillar to quarter panel.

NOVEMBER 1995 CUSTOM RODDER 67

Jim Baillie contracted all the chassis and fabrication work along with engine, wiring and air conditioning to Wall Fabrication. Frank spent over two months building the Buick into an award winning custom.

That project, along with the major media coverage it generated, really put Wall Fabrications on the map and verified Frank's reputation as an outstanding car builder.

Wall Fabrication continues today under son Andrew's capable direction, the name out front now says "A.Wall Customs" but the focus on building safe, dependable, great looking rides continues. Andrew's skill and talent amazed his dad and he often asked the rhetorical question, "Where did he learn to do that?"

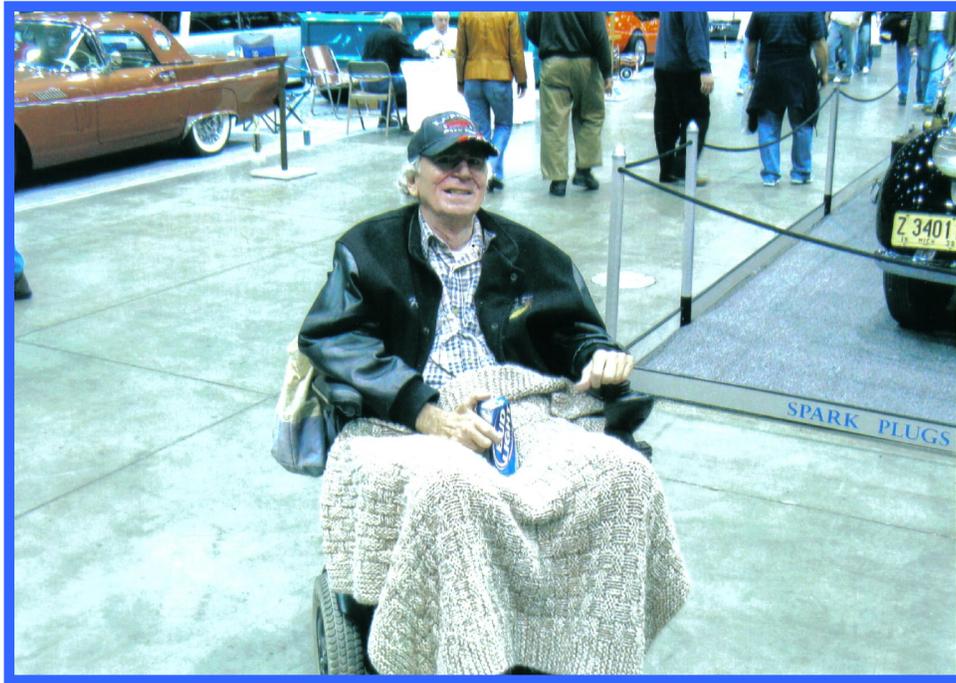


Well, we all are products of our environment and Andrew spent many hours at his father's side attending events, working in the shop and learning an appreciation for all things automotive.

I think it's safe to say that Andrew inherited much of his skill from his father and the rest through osmosis.

In March 2005 Frank was finally diagnosed with AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCEROSIS – ALS, a degenerative condition commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

Later that year the street rod community came together in a fund raiser to help Frank and his family. He was overwhelmed and brought to tears as more than 400 friends packed the Legion Hall in Windsor that December.



The money raised that day helped provide some of the special medical aids Frank would require.

He did not want sympathy; he wanted to focus on the positives and get out and do things as long as he was able.

The Windsor Area Street Rods chose ALS as their charity and worked hard to raise funds and awareness through activities and volunteer work. Frank was appreciative of their efforts and proud of their accomplishments. With their help and the assistance of ALS Canada and the incredible support of family and friends Frank was determined to see some good come out of his misfortune.



He was inspirational and right to the end of his battle he wanted to be treated just as “one of the guys”. He believed that laughter truly was the best medicine and he certainly laughed ...a lot.



Frank Wall passed away on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

Not only is he remembered for his passion for all things automotive,

The cars he built,

The club he formed,

The business he created,

And for the street rodding hobby that he loved and nurtured.

But also for his generosity and his unselfish support and assistance for all of those who need help. He leaves a legacy beyond the street rod community.

Frank was a natural leader with an easy going, calm demeanor.

In business and life Frank was a brave man, he was never afraid to try something new, to go in a different direction and there was never any panic in these actions.

He touched a lot people's lives and he is missed by his family, his friends and the entire street rod world.

Tonight we proudly induct Frank Wall as the 43<sup>rd</sup> member of the Canadian Street Rodding Hall of Fame.

Receiving the award on behalf of their father are Frank's daughters Kerry and Melissa and son Andrew.

