



Richard S. Frank

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1914-1986

By Gordon H. Millar

Richard S. Frank, a leading international mechanical engineer, director of research and engineering for Caterpillar Tractor Company, and a member of that company's senior executive staff, died on August 23, 1986, at the age of seventy-two.

From 1936 until his retirement in 1976, Dick Frank was a major motivating force in the development of heavy equipment technology that contributed to the Caterpillar Tractor Company becoming the world's premier heavy equipment manufacturer. The technology and the products for which Dick Frank was responsible are recognized throughout the world by their distinctively rugged design, their impeccable reputation for reliability, and for the corporate support structure that makes service available for Caterpillar machines wherever they are used.

There is no place in the world that people may travel where they have not been preceded by Caterpillar equipment ranging from the conventional crawler dozer used in the grading of roadways to the giant earthmoving machines and ore trucks that make the mining and transportation of earth's resources a practical and economically attractive activity. The distinctive Caterpillar yellow is generic to the earthmoving equipment industry, and the word "Caterpillar" is synonymous

with track-laying vehicles worldwide, no matter who their manufacturer.

The Alaska pipeline was built almost exclusively by Caterpillar machines. These same machines do their yeoman work not only in the Western world but also in the Soviet Union, Near East, China, South Africa, and South America. These machines and the technology that made them possible are the legacy Dick Frank leaves with the engineering community and also wherever a niche of civilization has taken root, even in parts of the world with the most hostile climates.

Dick Frank lived his entire professional life until his retirement years in the Middle West industrial heartland of our country. He graduated from Washington University in St. Louis with a B.S. in mechanical engineering and joined Caterpillar that same year. He became in succession a designer, supervising engineer, and general supervising engineer and was appointed assistant chief engineer of engine design in 1953.

In 1956 Dick Frank became assistant chief engineer of tractor design and seven years later was named chief engineer of the Joliet plant, serving in that capacity until April 1966. That year Dick Frank was appointed assistant director of engineering for all Caterpillar operations worldwide and in November of the same year was named director of engineering.

Dick Frank was elected a vice-president of Caterpillar in October 1970 and in that capacity directed all technical operations worldwide for research, design, and manufacture.

Dick Frank retired October 1, 1979, after forty-three years of continuous service and technical contribution to Caterpillar and the heavy equipment industry.

A major challenge in the later years of Dick Frank's active leadership was guiding Caterpillar technology to parry the thrust of heavy equipment producers from Europe and the Asian countries. Through Dick Frank's effective leadership, the Caterpillar organization met the competitive challenge head-on, and today remains the recognized leader

of heavy equipment manufacture throughout the world. The advanced product technology, development of advanced manufacturing techniques, continued development and recognition of employee skills, and the astute management of corporate assets places Caterpillar Tractor Company in the unique position of remaining a dominant North American force in the production of heavy equipment worldwide and an ongoing factor in making a positive contribution to the balance of trade for the United States.

Richard S. Frank was an active member of the Society of Automotive Engineers and one of the founders with G. Edwin Burks of the Earthmoving Conference in Peoria, which is recognized throughout the world as the single most important technical conference devoted to the heavy equipment industry. Richard Frank was also a fellow in the American Society of Mechanical Engineers and a director of the Lubricant Review Institute Board. It was through his work at the Caterpillar Tractor Company that definitive standards were established to measure the quality of lubricating oil for use in heavy duty diesel engines associated with the heavy equipment industry.

Richard Frank was active in community affairs, a member of the Peoria Chamber of Commerce, and a director of the Riverfront Action Forum of the Tricounty Planning Commission in Central Illinois. He was involved with Bradley University in Peoria and developed a close working relationship between Bradley and the Caterpillar Tractor Company that provided for a free exchange of information between the local academic world and industry.

Despite his intense corporate posture and his focus on manufactured products, Richard Frank never forgot that without solid academic engineering training, the world of manufacturing would not move forward. He maintained close associations with local universities and was recognized throughout the community not only as a successful corporate executive but also a human being of broad social understanding

and intellectual skills. He was an avid tennis player and pursued the sport of tennis with the same intensity as he pursued his career.

Richard Frank was elected to the National Academy of Engineering in 1980 as one of a very select group of engineers from the heavy equipment industry to become members of the Academy. The recognition on the part of his peers that his contributions to the world in which we live warranted his election pays lasting tribute to his effectiveness as an engineer, his statesmanlike quality as an administrator, and his recognized intellectual depth. Dick Frank's memory stands as a monument to all industrial executives and engineers of what can be accomplished in industry with the proper application of intellectual and practical effort.

Dick Frank is survived by his wife, Martha, three delightful daughters, and three grandchildren. His memory remains with all of us in the profession, and he will be remembered forever by his family and all of us who were his friends as a talented engineer, a superior executive, and a kind, warm, and thinking human being.

The squadrons of powerful machines that daily make the world a better place to live are Dick Frank's contribution to an ever-expanding civilization to be enjoyed by world populations for many years.

