

Quiet community leader honoured

What does a man do with his time once he becomes an octogenarian? The answer is quite simple — the same types of community-focused projects he has been involved in since he was in his 20s.

Gerald (Gerry) Siddall was recently honoured by the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario with the highly coveted William Mercer Wilson Medal for his tireless commitment to freemasonry for nearly 60 years. The word “no” is not in his vocabulary.

Locally, Gerry Siddall's private life has involved many Thunder Bay-area not-for-profit organizations. In 1949 he was one of the founding members of The Happy Handicap's Society. This was a group that together with the St. John Ambulance transported, entertained and provided summer picnics for patients who were bedridden and/or were handicapped. The group provided many of these individuals with the only social contact they had. Gerry Siddall was the auxiliary president four times.

In 1966 Siddall was one of the founding members of the Lakehead Search and Rescue Unit. The purpose of the unit was to train local volunteers to search for lost or miss-

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Gerry Siddall

ing persons. He was an active member for over 40 years and rose to the rank of deputy area commander. He also taught survival skills at Confederation College for approximately 25 years to those requiring them. After his retirement, he has continued to teach, without remuneration, survival courses and techniques to aviation students because of his bush experience in the Lakehead Search and Rescue Unit.

In 1986 the North Western Ontario Air Search and Rescue Association was founded. This group was begun by the Civil Air Search & Rescue in Trenton, Ont. This was a volunteer group of pilots and spotters of which Siddall was one. He was

trained by the Department of National Defence in Trenton, with the primary objective of the program to be dispatched as first response to an aviation accident. Even though Siddall was trained as a spotter 20 years earlier, it did not stop him from contributing many weekends maintaining the hanger that was opened in 1986.

In addition to these community organizations, Siddall has been the kitchen general for nearly 50 years at Shuniah Lodge No. 287 G.R.C. directing the volunteers to stage another successful meal for attending Masonic members. It can be safely said that in all those years of relentless volunteering, not a meal has been served that did not pass through his hands. Siddall is the epitome of a tireless community servant.

— Submitted by Craig Wolverton

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