

NOBLE SERVICE

by Jane Panet

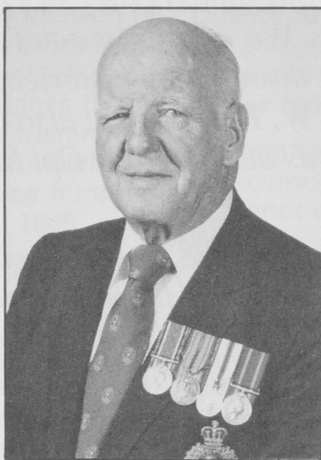
John Smaridge lives his life by a maxim his father taught him back in England at the beginning of the century: "Whatever you put into your life you get out of it." It's a simple principle but one that has served him well throughout his 61 years of service to the RCMP, 29 of them as an active member of the Force and 32 as a veteran.

Proof of what he has put into his life could be seen in the genuine affection that the crowd of well wishers displayed for him last May 15, 1985, on the occasion of his 86th birthday. The tidy, white bungalow, designed and built for him by his wife in a treed corner of a middle-class Ottawa subdivision, a stone's throw from RCMP HQ, overflowed with old friends and new ones who had come to pay their respects to a man they loved and admired.

John Eric Thomas Smaridge joined the RCMP in 1920 at Ottawa, Ontario, at the age of 21. A remittance man — by his own confession — and a survivor of trench warfare and mustard gas on the front line during World War I, John saw the RCMP as an opportunity to build a promising new future not possible by following his father's footsteps and becoming a tenant farmer in southern England. His first posting was to "N" Division where he rode in the Musical Ride. His horsemanship led to his next posting at an Indian reserve near Brantford, Ont., where he, along with five other constables and a sergeant, performed horseback patrol. He then served

briefly with C.I.B., Toronto, "O" Division, before leaving the Force to try bank clerking in Detroit, Mich., U.S.A. In 1932 he reengaged in Ottawa and was assigned to C.I.B., "A" Division.

Four years after he was transferred to Brockville as NCO i/c and promoted lance corporal — with a telephone allowance of 10¢ per day. When war broke out in 1939 he was sent to Cornwall in charge of 150 men and tasked with the responsibility of ensuring civil security along the canal. In 1945 he came to Ottawa as a desk sergeant and the following year was promoted sergeant major of "O" Division, a position he held until his retirement in 1953. His secret for success as a sergeant major: "Be tough, but soft hearted. Men respect you if you're kind."



**Ex-Sgt. Major John Eric
Thomas Smaridge,
Regimental No. 9476**

His service to the Force did not stop with his retirement. In 1954 he joined the Ottawa Branch of the RCMP Veterans Association and in 1962 became its welfare officer. His days are spent visiting the sick and infirm and when necessary arranging for home care and cleaning services. He is also in charge of presenting life memberships to veterans when they turn 75 — a ceremony he performs with some glee and which consists of tapping the vet on the back and informing him, if he stands up straight afterwards, that he is "not eligible for life membership because he is still alive."

Good deeds laced with a sharp wit: It's a magic recipe for many happy returns.