

The Sinclair Street resident said he's learned not to believe the so-called experts.

"I've done whatever came up. My disability sometimes restricted my chances but it didn't stop me from pursuing my interests in life," Leggat said.

"I've just taken what I've done in life as a matter of course, not so much as a blessing."

Leggat's physical saga began at birth.

His parents were living in an isolated community in Northern Ontario and decided to travel to Toronto for the birth of their son.

The date was Oct. 5, 1927. It was no ordinary birth because Leggat was a breech birth (came out feet first).

"The doctor somehow damaged my head with one of his medical instruments causing my brain cavity to malform...the doctors didn't figure I would survive the night because of the damage to my brain," he said.

He pulled through the night. But as Leggat was growing up, his brain cavity didn't grow normally "and because it didn't grow as it should, my right side did not develop properly and my disability became more pronounced."

By the age of five, the left side of Leggat's head protruded by up to two inches. His parents — living in Hornepayne in Northern Ontario at the time — knew they had to get medical help. So they took him to Toronto's Medical Arts Building, one of the leading medical facilities in North America.

"I worked my way up to the top floor before they found a doctor willing to try the operation," he laughed.

The operation was to cut the bone on the left side of his head and replace it with a steel plate.

Dr. K.G. McKenzie, North America's leading neurologist and who was later instrumental in setting up the medical school at Queen's University, performed the delicate procedure Oct. 31, 1933.

"It was the first time this particular operation was a success in

Canada," Leggat said proudly. "In fact, my operation was written up in a medical journal."

Leggat, though, doesn't recall anything about the operation.

"All I remember is that I was a kid in Toronto General Hospital and I got the royal treatment from medical staff and other patients."

The importance of the historical operation was also lost on the youngster.

"I didn't have a clue of what was going to happen. What do you know at the age of five. The world is your oyster at that age."

Four years after the surgery, Leggat's family moved to Sault Ste. Marie and, on D-Day, June 6, 1944, arrived in Belleville so his dad could start a job with the federal government's excise depart-

ment at Corby Distilleries.

After graduating from Belleville Collegiate Institute in 1948, Leggat went to work for Belleville city hall as switchboard operator and assistant to the welfare officer. Five years later, he joined the federal government at CFB Trenton.

Thus began a 35-year civil service career at the local airbase. Much of that time was spent as a clerk, initially with the transport section, then with the central registry and finally with the supply section.

He retired in October of 1988 and "to keep busy", started volunteering in Belleville.

He was on the board of the Council of Aging for about five years and then joined Community

Care for Seniors five years ago. He's been president these past two years.

Leggat has also been a member of the Belleville Toastmasters Club for 20 years, honing up his public speaking skills.

He's been married to Mary for 43 years and the couple has three daughters.

Leggat's passion has been writing and photography. He's written on a freelance basis for trade publications and magazines on a variety of topics, from concrete and shoes to clothing and jewelry.

Leggat also got heavily involved in photography after he retired.

"I needed a hobby and photography was a natural. I had taken pictures for my articles and knew I could do it."

Leggat has become quite well-known for his photographic skills. He's had several exhibits at the Belleville Public Library.

He belongs to Photo Mat, a nature photography group.

"I enjoy taking photographs. It's another way of using my artistic talents. And it gives me a chance to do something I'm not supposed to be able to do and that's taking pictures with only one hand and no tripod."