

Britton, Neil

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Many people remember Neil Britton for his 31 years with the Belleville Utilities Commission, including two decades as its general manager.

But only a few know him for his other passion in life — Masonry.

The Southview Avenue resident recently marked 50 years as a Mason and the fraternal organization marked the occasion with a gala celebration at the Masonic Temple on Foster Avenue.

There were around 150 Masons and their wives at the April 20 banquet from as far away as Niagara Falls, London, Ottawa and Hunstville and points in-between to "roast" Britton and present him with his 50-year pin.

"I felt honoured that the lodge initiated and planned such an evening that was joined in by brethren and ladies from the area and beyond," said Britton, who joined the Durham Lodge in 1951 at the age of 21.

He joined the Eureka Lodge No. 283 in Belleville after he moved here in the late 1950s.

"I'm proud to be a Mason," Britton said with a gleam in his eyes.

"We often say that we receive good men into masonry and we make them better men...I feel I'm a better person because I'm a Mason and I would encourage others to consider Masonry as well."

Britton was master of the Eureka Lodge in 1967 and was appointed district deputy grand master of the Prince Edward District in 1984. Four years later, he became member of the board of general purposes of the Grand Lodge, the governing body of Masonry in Ontario. He remains on this board to this day and serves on its management committee.

Britton is especially proud of his term as president of the Masonic Foundation of Ontario from 1996-99. He oversaw the distribution of bursaries to post-secondary students who ran into financial difficulties in their final two years of studies and grants to support hearing research at the Hospital for Sick Children and Kerry's Place (group homes for autistic children).

"And we just finished raising in excess of \$2 million for further hearing research projects," he said.

The foundation, he noted, currently has about \$7 million.

"Masons are devoted to doing good work just for the cause of good and I'm honoured to be a part of that."

Locally, each district adopts a charitable program every year. This year, Masons are raising money for prostate research.

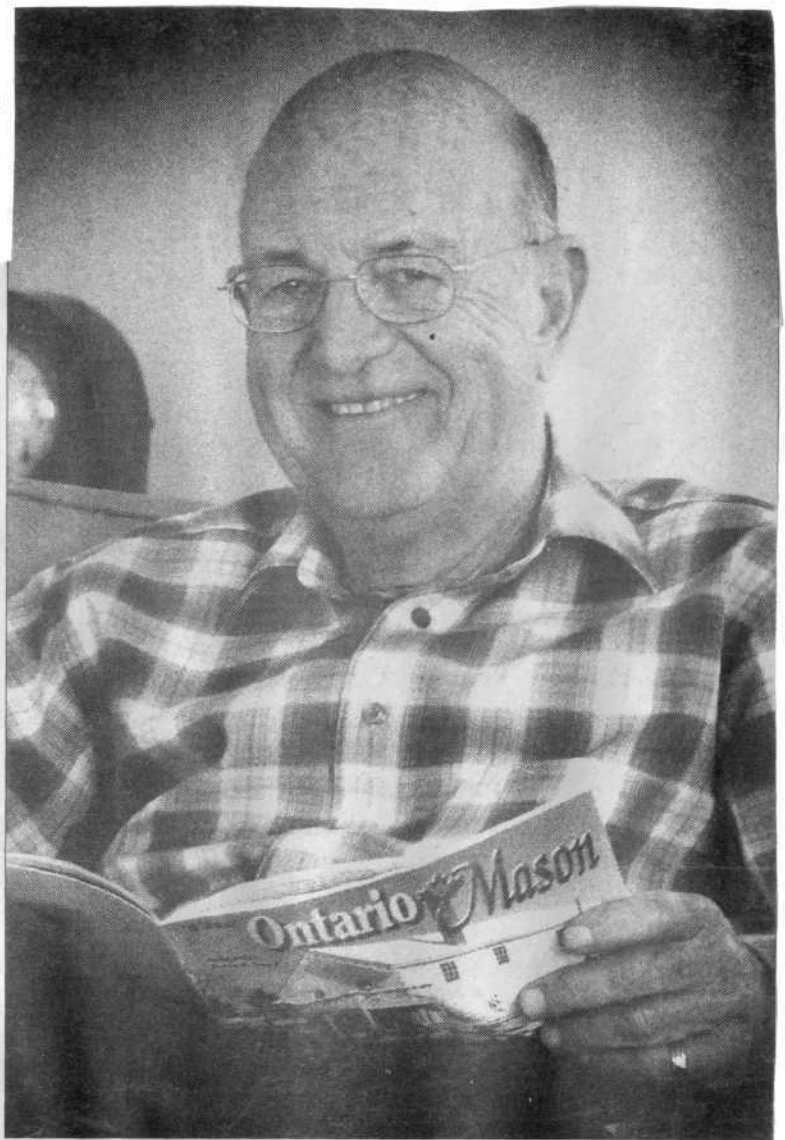


PHOTO - CROMBIE MCNEILL

Neil Britton

What powers Neil

STORY BY HENRY BURY, THE INTELLIGENCER

Britton continues to talk fondly of his career in the electricity and water industry — initially with Ontario Hydro and then with the Belleville Utilities Commission.

Born and raised in Newcastle, he remembers being five years old and helping his father, Harvey, electrically wire the school where he attended.

His father looked after the Newcastle electric system for many years and Britton climbed many poles, dug holes, read meters, collected bills "and did whatever had to be done to install power lines and do general utility work."

Britton entered the University of Toronto's electrical engineering program after finishing Grade 13 in Bowmanville.

Intelligencer - May 12/02 p.3 Sunday