

Whig correspondent honored with awards

SYDENHAM JAN 6, 1991

No one has been more dedicated to his beat — the rural and agricultural community — than Sydenham-based Whig-Standard correspondent Reg Whitty. And this fall his 42 years of service to that community was recognized by three rural-based organizations.

The Women's Institute in three counties presented him with an honorary membership and an award of merit in October for the 33 years of coverage that he has given to the rural women's organization. Then Branch 496 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Sydenham presented him with another honorary life membership. And in the latest award, Mr. Whitty was named a Good-fellow by the Athena Lodge, Princess Elizabeth Rebekahs at Harrowsmith, another rural women's organization.

Senior executive members of the Women's Institute believe that Mr. Whitty is the first man ever presented with a life membership.

"Reg Whitty has done more to promote the image of the Women's Institute than many of its women members," said Marion Wannamaker, a publicist with the Lennox and Addington District Women's Institute. The woman who promoted the idea for the award, Fredde Clarke, the area president for Frontenac, Lennox and Addington and Leeds counties, said that she feels strongly about letting

people know that they are appreciated before, and not after, they pass away.

Mr. Whitty's newspaper career began in 1948 when he answered an ad in The Whig-Standard for a Sydenham correspondent. As an organizer for a United Church youth rally, Mr. Whitty



HARRY KILFOYLE

decided to write about the rally, and it was printed by then-district editor George Bryant.

Mr. Whitty's flow of correspondence, still written in long-hand, has only been interrupted twice in 42 years. The first time was when his mother, the late Florence Whitty, died in 1972.

And the second time was his honeymoon when he married Wilma Nugent, in 1974.

Mr. Whitty covered his first Women's Institute meeting in 1957 in Harrowsmith. He said that he quickly

learned that the organization gave the rural community a continuing sense of identity.

"The one-room schools, the post offices and churches began to close," Mr. Whitty said. "The disappearing community names such as Moscow and Wilton were changed to RR 3, Yarker, and RR 2, Odessa, but the place names were retained by the Women's Institutes."

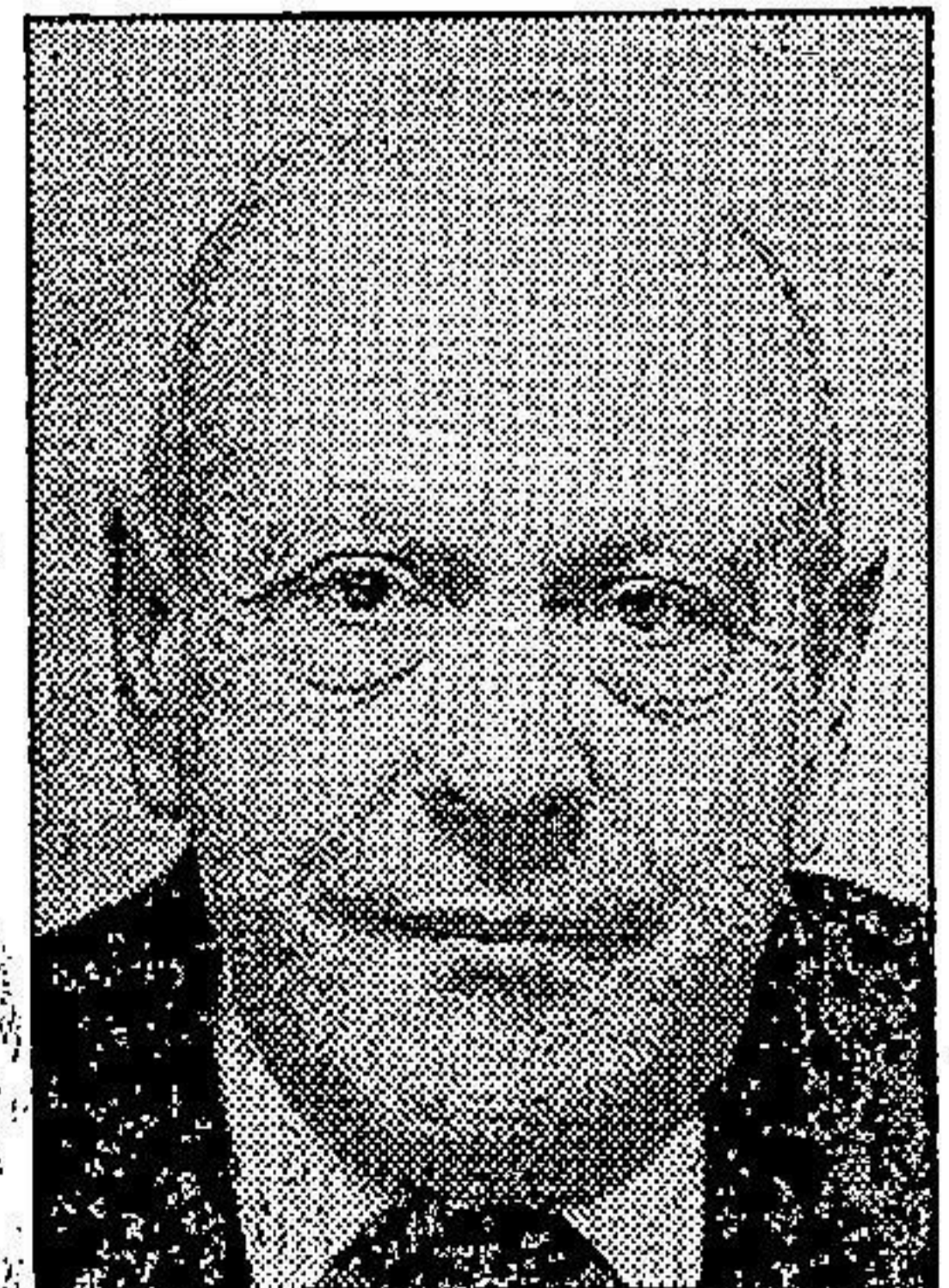
The honorary membership and the award of merit presentation caught the modest, shy reporter by surprise. Normally Mr. Whitty is focusing the spotlight on other people in his column, which he started writing in 1962.

As the Women's Institute is gearing up for its 100th anniversary in 1997, that year will also be an important milestone for Mr. Whitty. He will mark 50 years in rural reporting — a goal that he is determined to achieve.

Longevity was not on his mind when he accepted the position of rural correspondent in 1948. He remains the last surviving working member of this newspaper's rural correspondents — a group of part-time writers hired to report community events.

His agricultural background as a dairy farmer and egg producer has always been an asset in reporting rural news. He operated an egg route for 20 customers in Kingston for 25 years.

Mr. Whitty retired from active farming in the late 1960s.



Whitty: honorary member