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Dead at 81 years of age

Ida Duffield: Super senior 'a very rare jewel'



The Mississauga Senior Citizens' Centre was one of Ida Duffield's favorite projects. Named Mississauga's Senior Citizen of the Year for 1989, the energetic community activist died at Mississauga Hospital at the age of 81 on New Year's Day.

Ida Duffield, a woman described by her family and friends as a pillar of the Mississauga community and an "instigator" of civic projects, died this week.

Last year's Mississauga Senior Citizen of the Year, Duffield, 81, died at Mississauga Hospital at 3 a.m. New Year's Day. Members of her family were at her bedside.

Marg Leslie, Mississauga's first Citizen of the Year and a friend for more than 35 years, said Duffield was a very remarkable woman. She was one of those people who had it in her nature to always be busy. She was always thoughtful and she had a way of making people feel good.

Mississauga South MP Don Blenkarn, who had the opportunity to work with Duffield on several civic projects, called her "a real organizer, an absolutely delightful woman."

And to Mississauga South MPP Margaret Marland, Duffield was a good friend, confidant and "a very rare jewel."

Duffield, one of seven children to Edwin and Elizabeth Follwell,

was born in Belleville on Oct. 31, 1909. She attended Belleville Collegiate and upon graduation went to work for the Belleville Intelligencer daily newspaper. Later, she worked with CN Rail where she met her future husband Archie. In 1931, the two were married.

It wasn't long before the Duffield family expanded with the births of George, Sidney and Ellen. Eventually, the family moved to Mississauga.

Though Ida Duffield's priorities lay first with her family, she had a boundless energy that led her to seek a variety of jobs and projects. Her daughter Ellen Betty said her mother, on a whim, decided to work at the Canadian National Exhibition one year. There, she met radio personality Kate Aitken.

Aitken was so impressed with Duffield's quick intelligence and giving nature that she virtually hired her on the spot. For years Duffield was a writer and researcher for Aitken's popular programs.

Perhaps a true measure of Duffield's strength was seen when her beloved husband died in 1968.

"Mom was devastated when he

died. They were each others' lives. They had each other and they never needed anyone else," Betty reminisced.

But she shook off the depression and sadness and delved into community work for which she never asked any recognition.

Duffield was one of those people who got a lot of things done and did them quietly without a lot of fanfare. The Mississauga Senior Citizen's Centre, the local and provincial levels of the Senior Citizen's Olympics, the Mississauga Senior Citizen's organization, Drama Plus theater group, curling and lawn bowling were just a few of Duffield's projects.

She was also a member of *The Mississauga News* Advisory Board.

Marland said Duffield's energy and character never dissipated even during her final days. A year ago, Duffield was hurt in a car accident. In hospital with a cast on her leg and mobile only with the aid of a wheel chair, she was making phone calls to organize the Senior Citizen's Olympics.

Diagnosed with cancer weeks later, Duffield still didn't slow down.

Though she couldn't make it to a Christmas sing-along for seniors she ensured there were new red table clothes on the tables and her punch bowl was there to serve drinks.

That's the kind of person she was. She was what every would picture as the perfect grandmother, Marland said of Duffield who leaves behind seven grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

Funeral and interment will be held tomorrow at St. John's Dixie Anglican Church. A reception will be held at the church at 2 p.m.