



Streetsville resident Eric Silk was a lawyer and an OPP commissioner. At 90, he fills his days with woodworking, cabinet-making and good deeds.

Former top cop turns 90

Still smooth as Silk

By TOM MICHIBATA
Staff

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Whether it was during his tenure as commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police or now as a retired citizen, Eric Silk is synonymous with the word decorum.

The man responsible for getting the OPP's house in order from 1963-1973, a decade when the force was in a state of disarray, will celebrate his 90th birthday this Friday, March 13.

About 50 immediate family and friends will attend a party for Silk at his Streetsville home, where he's been living since he retired from the force in 1975.

His wife Barbara died on his 89th birthday last year.

Silk now fills his time making cabinets and doing woodworking.

"When I retired I was looking for something to do," Silk said.

Silk's heart is, as always, in the right place. He gives away many of the things he makes, including table tops and quilt racks.

Silk has made quilt hangers for his friends from Meals On Wheels.

"The girls from Meals On Wheels have been a great help to me," he said.

Silk has three children, sons Mike, 61, and Robert, 58, and daughter Barbara Jane Reynolds. He also has six grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Silk was born in Hamilton. His family moved to Toronto in 1917. He became a lawyer, gradu-

ating from University of Toronto's Osgoode Hall. He started working for the province as an assistant law clerk in 1934. He re-organized what eventually became Office of the Legislative Counsel. He was responsible for forming the Revised Statutes of Ontario and honored as King's Counsel in 1939.

Silk would become a senior solicitor in the Attorney General's office, acting as Crown Counsel on many inquests and royal commissions.

In 1957 he became Assistant Deputy to the Attorney-General. He was instrumental in getting proper driving instruction mandated, bringing in what would become the point system.

His ability to refine and re-structure got the attention of the OPP, which was in a shambles.

He was appointed commissioner in 1963, much to the chagrin of those already in the force because Silk didn't come up through the ranks.

But he was armed with a thick skin and plenty of resolve, and Silk wasn't afraid to put forth fresh ideas.

He visited something like 100 detachments in his first year, meeting the officers and passing along his views.

Silk's daughter-in-law, Joan, says his inner strength is his greatest asset.

"He's very clever and strong-minded. Family is very important to him.

"There was a lot of criticism at the time he became OPP commissioner. He had no experience with the force, but coming in from the outside, he had no favorites or loyalties. It turned out to be a very smart move for the OPP."

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BIOGRAPHY

SILK, ERIC

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