



A Lasting Legacy

Fraternalist of the Year is committed to his community and volunteering

WHAT MAKES RECEIVING the Fraternalist of the Year award so special? This award recognizes a person who goes above and beyond the call of duty when it comes to volunteering. Fraternalists who attend branch functions and volunteer their services are special and unique in their own right, but this award goes to a person who is willing to go that extra mile. This year's Fraternalist of the Year is Lester Pearson of Philip Branch 85 in South Dakota, a genuinely caring person who is always willing to lend a hand.

One of Lester's most memorable and favorite branch projects is the Lasting Legacy memorial wall. This memorial was built by the city of Philip and Branch 85 to honor the past, present,

and future pioneers of South Dakota. The Lasting Legacy was dedicated in June of 1989 to the people of Philip and the state of South Dakota. This wall has special meaning to Lester because it



Fraternalist of the Year Lester Pearson receives the President's Award and congratulations from NMB President George Yanna.

honors members of his family that go back generations. "My grandparents, parents, and my family's names are all honored on the wall," Lester relates. Branch 85, along with the city of Philip, continue to maintain and improve the area surrounding this special memorial site.

Another one of Lester's outstanding volunteer efforts is the time he spends working with youth. Lester and the Philip branch were instrumental in helping install a new backstop for the local baseball field. Branch 85 members tore down the existing backstop and did the ground work for the new one. Then the high school baseball team and the branch worked side-by-side to install the new backstop. This job was not easy, but

The Lasting Legacy wall stands at the north end of Philip, South Dakota, in honor of past, present, and future residents of the Philip community. Lester Pearson's name appears on a plaque as the charter president of Philip Branch 85.

very rewarding in the end; to have something new for the baseball team.

One of the most significant commitments to benefit youth made by Lester is to the community wrestling program. He has been involved with the program ever since his son began wrestling. His son is now an adult and, coincidentally, is the wrestling coach for Rapid City Central, and Lester's involvement with the program continues. Every year he is the announcer at the Philip wrestling tournament.

When the Philip branch was first founded in 1985, Lester was an active member from the start. He was the charter president of the branch and has held that position three different times since the branch was formed. The dedicated members of National Mutual Benefit Branch 85 have helped many people and made significant improvements to the Philip area.



Lester Pearson pours a wheelbarrow full of cement as he, Don Haynes, and Mike Moses install a new flagpole, expanding the row of memorial flagpoles at the entrance of the Philip cemetery.

Philip is a small town of about 800 people, and NMB Branch 85 is well known throughout the area. "In a small community, everyone knows what everyone else is doing and when something happens, word gets around and the branch is there to help," states Lester. "The community knows it can come to Branch 85 for help."

One ongoing project the branch has undertaken has been to erect memorial flagpoles in the community cemetery.

There are now eight or nine flagpoles at the Philip cemetery installed by Branch 85 members in memory of a deceased loved one in the community.

Lester Pearson is not a rookie when it comes to winning awards or being involved with different volunteer organizations. In 2002, he was named South Dakota Fraternalist of the Year through the statewide awards program. Lester is a member of the Knights of Columbus, the finance officer for the American Legion, and a member of the Philip Community Betterment Committee. On weekends, he volunteers his time driving the county bus so that the elderly in the community can get to Saturday night church services.

Although Lester has accomplished many things through his volunteer efforts, the legacy he is most proud of is his family—his wife, Joann, and their three children and four grandchildren.

NMB President George Yanna was proud to present Lester Pearson with the 2003 President's Award at the Dakotas Fraternal Leadership Seminar. With his involvement in Philip Branch 85 from day one—to his commitment to volunteerism and his community—Lester Pearson really is a lasting legacy. ♦



You can often find Lester Pearson working with the youth in his community. He is shown here with a group of young people who are about to enjoy a cookout after completing a gun safety program.