



OCA Wall of Honour

Thomas (Tommy) Sullivan (1931–2012)



A businessman, a politician, a philanthropist, a friend, a family member, and a construction-industry leader: Thomas Sullivan wore many hats throughout his life. And in each role, he carried himself always with fairness, humility and unwavering dedication.

Tommy, as he was universally known, was born in 1931. He started working in the family business, M. Sullivan & Son Limited, at age 16. Like his father and his uncles before him, he worked his way up through the ranks of the business to the role of president – a position he held until the day he passed.

Under his stewardship, the company evolved in new directions and achieved new heights, delivering city-building projects across the Ottawa Valley. And under Tommy's direction, M. Sullivan & Son was named among the 50 Best Managed Companies in Canada.

Tommy was more than a transformative leader. He had an uncanny ability to get the most out of every single person that he touched. He was a mentor to anyone who stepped foot in his car. He was generous without seeking recognition. He spoke straight to the point and always gave his opinion. He was hard but fair, and his word meant more than any signature on a piece of paper.

Away from the office, he gave tirelessly of his time. He sat on countless boards and committees through various organizations and was a pivotal part of many trade union agreement negotiations. He was a philanthropist by nature. He encouraged everyone around him to volunteer and give back to the community that he cared for so deeply.

Tommy's role and influence was not limited to the construction sector. He served in politics, and played a key role in helping the Town of Arnprior grow and thrive. As a town councillor in the late 1960s, he helped found and develop the Sullivan Industrial Park. In so doing, he helped pave the way for several businesses to open shop and create jobs for several hundred people. He would go on to serve as Mayor of Arnprior for a 10-year period in the 1980s before being called back to oversee the family business.

Underpinning everything, Tommy lived by the Golden Rule: to treat others the way he wanted to be treated. No matter the role or stature of anyone he met or dealt with, everyone was treated the same way: with the utmost respect.

He was fond of saying, "For me, it's always about a relationship. A friendship. An offer of hospitality. If, after that, I get to build a building that someone needs, so much better. But I never make that the priority."