

# A lifetime of volunteerism

The Canadian motorcycling community lost a great friend in April when Ride for Sight co-founder Syd Collier passed away. He was 91.

Past chair of the Ride for Sight Syd Collier passed away Apr. 11 at the age of 91. In 2009 Collier rolled into his 30th Ride for Sight on his Honda Gold Wing trike at the age of 89, decked out in his signature gold leather vest. It was a bike that had won more than 70 awards. But in 2007 the Ride's long-time ambassador was himself honoured with Ontario's June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for a lifetime of volunteerism.

Collier, who owned his first bike at the age of 16—a 1940 Harley-Davidson 74—was a lifer in the fight against blindness. Many credit him with building the motorcycling community that later spawned a host of charitable events.

He was one of the ride's earliest organizers and served as co-chair starting in Minden in the early 1980s when the ride attracted about 600 riders and raised \$165,000 nationally. Collier and his wife Sue held weekly Ride meetings in their house, and he traveled the province with other Ride friends recruiting volunteers and creating Ride media events.

Within two years, the Ride grew to \$600,000 annually. He personally raised more than \$100,000 for the Ride for Sight and became a member of The Foundation Fighting Blindness' Board of Directors for 10 years in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Collier later received the "Founder Awards" from both the Ride for Sight and the Foundation Fighting Blindness, and was proud that the ride had grown to annually attract about 7,000 riders and raise one million dollars from across Canada.

He continued to stay active as a dedicated regional co-ordinator for the Mississauga/Brampton area and continued to act as advisor to the Ride for Sight's volunteer planners.

In addition to 30 years of volunteerism and fundraising, Collier made a personal donation to Ride for Sight of more than \$40,000 in 2008. And in 2009, his nephew Sean Rice and Sean's wife Jodeyne Higgins appeared on the TV show "Battle of the Blades" along with former New Jersey Devils' defenceman Ken Daneyko. Together, they raised \$25,000 for Ride for Sight in honour of "Uncle Syd."

Syd Collier once said he "would rather wear out than rust out." In April, his great life wore out. **B**

