

Couple dedicated to 'making a difference'

Victor and Sheila Goldbloom. Octogenarian activists share distinction of being honoured by both Canada and Quebec

BRETT BUNDALE

The Gazette

Wednesday, June 18, 2008

It's not often that a husband and wife both receive two of the highest distinctions available to Quebecers, but Victor and Sheila Goldbloom are not an ordinary couple.

Sheila Goldbloom will be awarded the National Order of Quebec today, making the Goldblooms one of the few couples to receive both the provincial honour and the Order of Canada.

"You live to be as old as I am and you learn to see most of these things coming, but I was just completely surprised," Sheila Goldbloom said. "My reaction was delight, but it's also incredibly humbling to be recognized in this way."

It seems that trying to change the world is a family affair. Victor's brother, Richard, and his wife, Ruth, were both also recognized with the Order of Canada.

"We share the common thread of wanting to make a difference," Goldbloom said.

With their 60th wedding anniversary on Sunday, you would think the Goldblooms would be ready to slow down.

But both octogenarians seem busier than ever. Last year, Sheila Goldbloom was appointed co-chairperson of a public consultation committee on the living conditions of Quebec seniors. And Victor Goldbloom continues his work as regional chairperson of the Canadian Jewish Congress, on top of many other engagements.

"We don't always agree, but we always support each other in everything we do," she said.

Born in New York City, Sheila Goldbloom learned at a young age that she had a responsibility to give back to her community.

"My parents were very active and concerned with social issues, like poverty and access to education," she said.

She attended Mount Holyoke College, where she gained a liberal-arts background that allowed her to "think outside the box."

"It was very interdisciplinary. The main focus was learning to be a critical thinker,"



CREDIT: DAVE SIDAWAY, THE GAZETTE

Sheila Goldbloom will be awarded the National Order of Quebec in the provincial capital tomorrow.

Goldbloom said.

In 1947, while she was working for the League of Women Voters in New York, she met Victor, who was in residence for pediatrics at the Morgan Stanley Babies and Children's Hospital of New York-Presbyterian, part of the Columbia University Medical Centre. The following year they married and moved to Montreal.

After their third child was born, Sheila Goldbloom went back to school to do her master's in social work at McGill.

"I was about to give up at the very end because my thesis was so demanding and I didn't have any time for the family. But Victor was very supportive. He got up early every morning to proofread what I had written the night before," Goldbloom said.

For more than 50 years, she has dedicated her time to organizations like Centraide, the Red Feather Foundation, Big Brothers, Big Sisters and Meals on Wheels. In addition to her volunteer work, she was a social worker and an associate professor at the McGill School of Social Work.

In 1999, she helped launch the Foundation of Greater Montreal, an organization that donates funds to such charities as Équiterre, the Atwater Library and the N.D.G. Senior Citizens' Council.

"Social work teaches you to focus on your strengths. That's how I approach the community: I look for the strengths and I try to build upon them," Goldbloom said.

Victor Goldbloom was the first member of Quebec's Jewish community to serve in the provincial cabinet under Premier Robert Bourassa. He has since held positions such as Commissioner of Official Languages of Canada and CEO of the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews.

He was awarded the National Order of Quebec in 1991. He also received the award of Officer of the Order of Canada in 1983 and then became a Companion, the highest award available, in 2000. Sheila Goldbloom became a Member of the Order of Canada in 1998.

"They're committed to the entire community," said Alice Herscovitch, on the board of directors of Centraide with Sheila Goldbloom.

"Both she and Victor have committed a great deal of their lives to causes they believe in."

Sheila Goldbloom will be presented the award at a ceremony in the Salon Rouge of Quebec's legislature building.

bbundale@thegazette.canwest.com

© The Gazette (Montreal) 2008

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2008 CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#). All rights reserved.
CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc.](#). All rights reserved.