

Nov. 30, 1981: Ernest Manning named to Alberta Order of Excellence

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Senator Ernest Manning and Lt.-Gov Frank Lynch-Staunton

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EDMONTON - Ernest Charles Manning, Alberta's longest-serving premier and later a senator, broke new ground by becoming the first member of the Alberta Order of Excellence.

In a stately ceremony at Government House before 80 guests, including Premier Peter Lougheed, the 73-year-old Manning was acclaimed for his "extraordinary and illustrious record of dedicated service to the province."

Manning began his political career in 1935 when he was appointed provincial secretary in William Aberhart's Social Credit government. At 26, Manning became the youngest cabinet minister in British parliamentary history since 18th-century politician William Pitt the Younger. When Manning became premier in 1943 at the age of 35, he was the youngest first minister since Pitt.

The Saskatchewan-born lay preacher resigned from the legislature in 1968 after 25 years as Alberta's premier. Two years later, he was appointed to the Senate.

A beaming Manning said of the new honour that "Alberta has been my life and I'm delighted the award will be identified with the province."

The prestigious award — the provincial equivalent of the Order of Canada — came into being in 1979 through the Alberta Order of Excellence Act.

Manning, whose son Preston went on to found the Reform party, served in the Senate until 1983. He died in February 1996 at age 87.

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