

Keith Saunders; Presidency is culmination of his life's work

WHEN Keith Saunders stepped up on Monday 16 October to be sworn in as President of Yeovil Amateur Operatic Society, it was, he says, the highlight in a long and very busy association with amateur dramatics.

"I joined YAOS back in 1950, and I am particularly thrilled and honoured that my Presidency will coincide with the Society's centenary celebrations in 2002."

Few, if any, would dispute the aptness of Keith being President at such a significant time, given his long-serving and considerable contribution to the Society.

He sees himself as "Yeovillian through and through", and this latest chapter is the culmination of a life rich in rewards. Keith received a special Evening Post Rose Bowl award in 1992, for his "outstanding contribution to the amateur theatre", and a year later was given the Yeovil Mayor's Award for services rendered to the town.

Keith puts the increasing

recognition he has received down to his wife, Ruth: "She has been incredibly supportive, willing me on when I needed it most and keeping me on track."

"People wonder why I stay involved in societies so long. Well, I have always been a great believer in the philosophy held by my dear parents; that the more you put into life, the more you get out of it, which may seem simple enough, but I've found it to be so true."

And Keith has certainly put a great deal into a lot of people's lives. He has been involved in 81 shows put on by YAOS, 31 of which have included stage appearances.

Shy

"I remember how shy I was at first, loathe to venture out of the chorus, but a wonderful director from Leicester called Lillian Dunkley really brought me out of my shell." Before long, Keith was playing lead roles, including

his favourite character, Bennie, in Desert Song.

Even when he became chairman for 22 years in 1974, people at YAOS knew they could call on him to play a part, and outside the theatre many Yeovillians have had Keith to thank for his wide-ranging contributions to local charity work.

Active

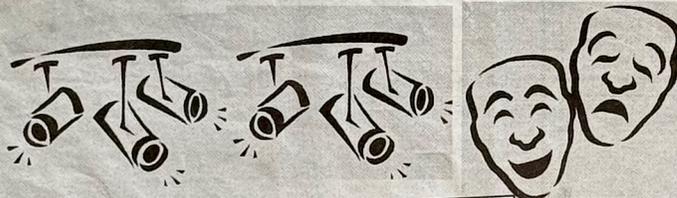
Keith is a very active member of Moose International Yeovil Lodge; a voluntary family-based organisation which has fun raising money for charities.

"I am so lucky to have been involved in another organisation where people get together from all walks of life, who can have so much fun together and, hopefully, bring that fun into the lives of other people," says Keith.

And in this role, as well as in his presidency of YAOS, having and sharing fun is something that Keith intends to continue doing for a long time to come.



PRESIDENT ELECT: After more than 50 years serving YAOS, Keith Saunders, with his wife Ruth, and Tony Smeal, is sworn in as President of the Society, above. Below he is again pictured with Ruth, with whom he shares the credit for the two awards he is holding, the Evening Post Rose Bowl Award, 1992, and the Yeovil Mayor's Award from 1993.



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SHOW TIME: Keith's many roles for YAOS have included, left, Frank in Show Boat (1977) and, right, Hans in Goodnight Vienna (1971).



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