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Paul Nguyen and Robert Sargent (left) celebrating Paul's honour at the National Ethnic Press and Media Council of Canada Awards at Queen's Park in Toronto in 2012.

Photo Credit: Paul Nguyen

Paul Nguyen remembers mentor with new honour

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Paul Nguyen started the [Jane-Finch.com](#) website 10 years ago. On December 11th he'll be honoured for this labour of love for the second time. Nguyen will be at [Rideau Hall](#) in Ottawa, to receive the Governor General's [Meritorious Service Decoration](#).



But on this occasion, along with bringing his father to witness the ceremony, Paul Nguyen will be remembering another man. Robert Sargent played a special role in the lives of many Viet Nameese refugees soon after they arrived in Canada.

As Paul tells the story, Sargent was in



downtown Toronto and saw a group of Viet Nameese people outside a hotel with all their belongings in shopping bags. They were an unsponsored group, but Sargent was moved to act. He befriended the newcomers, asking what they needed. He helped several find jobs, and welcomed them into his home for their first Canadian Christmas. And so began a lifelong friendship.



Paul Nguyen between his parents at “Uncle Bob’s place” in 1983. © Paul Nguyen

“He helped them feel really welcome and he helped integrate them into Canada”

“He helped them feel really welcome and he helped integrate them into Canada” said Paul, who was born here and grew up knowing him as “Uncle Bob”. Robert Sargent died on November 1st at the age of 90.

Paul Nguyen started the website for the area he still calls home. Jane and Finch is the intersection of the two major thoroughfares in northwestern Toronto. Several highrise apartment buildings in the area are home to hundreds of new immigrant and refugee families.

The area developed a bad reputation after several alleged gang showdowns and murders, but with several community leaders, like Paul, the residents work hard to keep the neighbourhood a good place to live and fight the stereotype.

Paul Nguyen was previously honoured with the **Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Medal** in 2012. It was created to honour the 60th anniversary of the Queen’s accessatopn to the Throne

“For me, a kid who grew up in Jane-Finch, walking the streets of Jane-Finch, and I’m

inside Rideau Hall, it's quite a big change. But it also makes a direct connection from my community to Rideau Hall and Sussex Drive and all that kind of stuff. So for me, I feel like yeah, I am part of Canada and it doesn't matter where you come from we can all contribute."

The website has played a role in this process for others. It channels the talents of young residents and focuses their efforts in learning the skills involved in maintaining a website while featuring the talent and happenings in the community.

Paul Nguyen intends to pay it all forward with an open embrace of the new Syrian families that are beginning to arrive in Canada from refugee camps in the middle east.



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