

Oldest Thameslink employee gets second lifetime achievement award

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Thameslink's oldest employee has won another Lifetime Achievement award

This time it was the turn of the Railway Benefit Fund (RBF) to recognise station assistant Siggy Cragwell for his outstanding customer service, and music mogul and president Pete Waterman met him to hand over the trophy.

Siggy, who works at Elstree & Borehamwood station, won the award after huge numbers of passengers and colleagues voted for the 82-year-old station assistant as part of the annual Heart Of Gold Awards, sponsored by Abellio Rail Replacement.

Less than two years ago, he received a similar accolade in the National Rail Awards.

Surrounded by the Town Mayor, residents, colleagues and other well-wishers at the station, Pete Waterman said he was bowled over by Siggy's 60 years of service to the railway: "Siggy is an inspiration to us all. Everyone here at the Railway Benefit Fund is so impressed by his amazing dedication. He is a truly deserving winner of our Heart of Gold Lifetime Achievement Award, and it has been an honour to meet

him.

“The RBF not only celebrates people like Siggy but supports them through tough times too, as we do all current, retired and former railway employees and their families. We’ve been doing this for over 160 years.”

Pete, who was part of the massively successful production team Stock Aitken Waterman and scored 22 UK number one hits for '80s stars such as Kylie Minogue, Bananarama and Rick Astley, recalls commuting to Elstree to record Top Of The Pops.

Siggy has worked on the railway since the day after he landed in England from Barbados. He was part of the Windrush generation, almost 60 years ago. He gets up at 4am to do the 6-11am shift and then does gym and Tai Chi (now at home due to Covid), to keep him fit for cricket – which he still plays at an international level.

Siggy landed in Southampton on 7 March 1962 after an 11-day trip, and he started work as a cleaner in Marylebone station the very next day. “I remember it was strange because it was very cold,” he said. “They paid for everything, found us somewhere to live and we paid it back as we worked.”

His track record is impressive. Over the next 17 years at Marylebone, he worked as a fireman, stoking steam engines, and a chargeman, supervising cleaners and the men who shunted the trains around the yard. He was then promoted to supervisor at Cricklewood Yard, where he also shunted trains himself.

He was at Bedford when he was poached to be a stores manager at Luton, then someone saw his abilities and approached him again, this time to be a platform supervisor at St Albans, in 1990.

In 2002 he joined the team at Elstree & Borehamwood. “They needed someone with experience because the station was getting busier and busier,” he said. He’s been there ever since and is known by hundreds of commuters.

“I used to see them coming through the station when there were seven or eight; now they are big men or women, taller than me, with children of their own.

“What I like is mixing with people and conversing with them, getting to know them. I have hundreds of friends, and I don’t even know their names. Even the youngest come looking for me.”

Siggy’s dedication was honoured in 2020 with a Lifetime Achievement Award in the National Rail Awards, which are widely held up as the railway industry’s answer to the Oscars.

Jenny Saunders, customer services director, said: “Siggy is such an inspirational person and a true public servant here at Thameslink. The fact that this latest award was the result of a public vote speaks volumes about how highly he is regarded by his customers and his colleagues. We really are honoured to have him as part of our railway family.”

Borehamwood resident Lisa Minot posted Siggy’s award nomination on the Facebook site What’s Coming

To The Wood, and she was inundated with over 700 'likes'.

She said: "It had that response because everyone knows Siggy. He's a local legend, always there, always with a smile on his face and happy to have a chat. He knows what trains are running. I feel everything's OK when he's there."

Town Mayor Cllr Farida Turner added: "Siggy is a true gentleman who has been working at Elstree & Borehamwood for two decades now. In that time, our townsfolk have come to know and love him for his supreme customer service. He has his own unofficial fan club and is an inspiration to us all!"