

Betty Orten enlisted family in campaigns

By Virginia Culver
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Betty Orten had four sons and she managed to get them all involved in her races for the Colorado House of Representatives.

In fact, she even enlisted the aid of her then-3-year-old granddaughter Mackenzie Orten in at least one campaign. The little girl, carrying a sign with her grandmother's name on it, was a news photographer's dream.

Orten, who served four terms in the House, died Nov. 24 at age 79.

Before Mackenzie Orten was born, Orten and her sons leafleted throughout her Westminster district.

The state legislature was Orten's first run at political office, though she was active at every level of the Democratic Party. She began as a precinct committeewoman and went on to be Democratic state vice chairperson, Adams County Democratic chairperson and Democratic National Committee member.

While in the House she concentrated on issues concerning the disadvantaged, said her son Jerry Orten of Broomfield.

She fought for dental care for the elderly, help for battered women and displaced homemakers, housing for single-parent families, child care for single moms and prenatal exams.

During most of her eight years in the House her party was in the minority so her ideas didn't always become law.

But that didn't deter her. She never lost her gregariousness or ability to talk with people on any side of an issue, Jerry Orten said.

She loved people and she loved politics. "She was the die-hard type," Jerry Orten said.

But she could be "strong-willed," said her daughter-in-law, Jamie Orten. Nevertheless, "she'd drop everything" to help out with grandkids.



Betty Orten served four terms in the Colorado House.

"She had that way of introducing people and saying something nice about them," said another granddaughter, Mercedes Orten of Austin, Texas. "You'd have thought I was the most fabulous thing. It was very en-

dearing."

And until recently she never forgot a name or face, Jamie Orten said.

Elizabeth A. Kellogg was born Feb. 3, 1927, in Washington, D.C., and lived several places because her father was a career Army officer. They moved to Denver when he became commander of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal.

She graduated from the University of Colorado with a degree in history and sociology and for a time did social work.

She married Russell Sage Orten in 1951. He predeceased her.

She won her first race for the House in 1974. After four terms she ran for secretary of state, narrowly losing to Natalie Meyer.

"She was a tireless campaigner, going all over the state," Jerry Orten said.

His mother "always liked to have a hand in" and for several years after retiring she was a legislative aide to Ann Ragsdale, who had succeeded her in the legislature.

In addition to Jerry, she is survived by three other sons: Rusty Orten of Boulder, Frank Orten of Littleton and Bruce Orten of Westminster, and seven grandchildren.

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