

Former Longmont Mayor Bill Swenson remembered for his integrity, kindness

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When former Longmont Mayor Bill Swenson ran for state representative in the mid-1990s, he repurposed his wife Betty's old campaign signs as his own.

Longmont Mayor Bill Swenson is seen in this Aug. 17, 1983, photo

After all, in addition to sharing a same last name and first initial, Bill was also running for the seat Betty held in the Colorado House of Representatives from 1985 to 1992.

"They both loved the color red, and so they would use the same signs," Joy Swenson, the youngest of the Swenson family's children, said in an interview Monday. "My parents, and dad in particular, really drilled it into us ... how important it is to be aware of what's going on politically; to be involved; to vote."

Swenson, a Republican, went on to win the House District 12 race and subsequently represented Longmont in the state Legislature from 1995 to 2002.

Prior to being a state representative, Swenson served on the Longmont City Council and as the city's mayor from 1981 to 1985.

"For a long time, it was kind of the Swenson dynasty both in Longmont and ... at the State House representing Longmont," Swenson said.

Bill Swenson died Thursday in Longmont at the age of 90. His death came six years after Betty Swenson died in 2016 at the age of 83.

"My dad was typically really shy and a little bit reticent," Swenson said. "That he would even go into politics where he has to get up in front of people and talk always seemed a little unusual but when he decided to do it he did very well."

Swenson relocated his family from Poughkeepsie, N.Y., to Longmont in the mid-1960s to work as an electrical engineer at the IBM plant in Boulder County.

In addition to working at IBM, Swenson was an active member of the Twin Peaks Rotary Club and First Lutheran Church in Longmont.

Swenson briefly served in the U.S. Army in the 1950s after getting drafted but never deployed overseas.

“Dad was ... a man of action and a man of service, and that’s what just keeps going through my head. He never liked to leave anything undone,” Swenson said. “As far as what he did for the city of Longmont, I don’t know anybody who was more community active than he was in every aspect of the city.”

Leona Stoecker, who like Swenson served as mayor of Longmont from 1993 until 2001, recalled Swenson as a particularly kind and very active member of the community.

“I guess if I had one word to describe him, I would say a man of integrity,” Stoecker said. “As many years as I knew him, I never heard him raise his voice or become angry.”

Swenson, like many of the city’s mayors, dealt with growth-related issues, and when he served as mayor in the early ’80s, at the time, Longmont’s population was roughly 43,000 after having been approximately 23,000 a little more than a decade earlier.

As of the latest U.S. census estimate, Longmont’s population had surpassed 100,000.

“Because of his calm demeanor, I think Bill could have handled anything that came up,” Stoecker said.

A service for Swenson will be held at 2 p.m. July 30 at the First Lutheran Church in Longmont (803 Third Ave.), and all are welcome to attend.

“Dad was always very proud of the way Longmont has kept its sense of self,” Joy Swenson said. “I think his spirit will live on in all of the people that he’s touched and all of his friends. ... He’d be humbled by the number of people that will remember him and that loved him.”