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Former state Senator Joseph Schieffelin dies at 89

He served as a state senator from 1967 to 1978



Denver Post file

State Sen. Joseph Schieffelin in 1974.

By **NATALIE MUNIO** | nmunio@denverpost.com

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Joseph Schieffelin was as much a government man as he was a music man, something his family said had a hand in his both “confidently and humbly” serving his chosen state of Colorado for more than three decades.

“He was always humble, but never afraid to be in front of a crowd,” his daughter Janie Mueller said. “He could be hard and diligent, but always genuine. His favorite thing about being a state Senator was for him to use his ability to help others,”

Joseph Beggs Schieffelin died on June 11 in Lakewood while surrounded by family. He was 89.

His son, Joe Schieffelin, said even on his father’s last day, music was very much a part of his life, occasionally putting on a show for the staff of nurses who tended to him in his final weeks.

“Even when he was in college, the theme that kept coming back throughout his life was music and singing. He sang at a glee club at Yale University and even got involved in local community theaters when he first moved out here,” Schieffelin said. “He just loved to sing, you couldn’t stop him. He’d sing to waiters at restaurants, he’d sing to the nurses in the hospital. He was doing that up until a couple of weeks ago.”

Born on Jan. 18, 1927, in New York City, Schieffelin got the bulk of his musical influence from his dad and stepmom, who both urged him to play musical instruments like piano and guitar, which he learned through self-teaching.

After graduating with a degree in psychology from Yale, Schieffelin moved to Colorado in 1950, where he soon after met wife, Marilyn Preusse, during a ski trip at Cooper Hill Ski Area, and the two later married in 1956.



Joseph Schieffelin, a former state senator, died June 11.

Provided by Joe Schieffelin

Schieffelin began his career in the state legislature, a career which would span three decades, when he was elected as a state representative in 1963. He went on to serve in the state Senate from 1967 to 1978, during which time he served as majority leader from 1973 to 1974.

“He was truly a man of integrity. He loved being a public servant — that was his thing, that’s where he got the most fulfillment,” Joe Schieffelin said. “He was a big extrovert, the life of the party. He had a lot of energy and intellect and he just had a great desire to serve Colorado. He loved the state and he loved the people.”

Although recognized for many accomplishments throughout his time in office, perhaps none was so widely recognized as his creating the bill that required hunters to wear “blaze orange” hunting gear, something that has been attributed to saving many lives.

“When he ran for office, his campaign flier was in the shape of a blaze orange bow-tie,” his daughter said. “You couldn’t catch the man without a bow tie — it was his trademark.”

After retiring in 1997 at the age of 70, his daughter said his passion for government, the state and his faith never faltered, and that he represented “one of the last of a very unique generation, a special generation.”

“He always stood up when ‘The Star-Spangled Banner’ came on. He lived through the depression, the second World War and the Vietnam War. He just loved this nation,” Mueller said.

His son said despite his many travels after retirement, including to places such as China, South Korea and Greece, he loved no place as much as his “chosen state,” often referring to its outdoor beauty with observations like, “There is no color like the blue sky of Colorado.”

Schieffelin is survived by his wife, Marilyn; his three children, Joe, Janie and Ted; and 18 grandchildren.

A memorial service is scheduled for 7 p.m. Thursday at Beth Eden Baptist Church, 2600 Wadsworth Blvd. in Wheat Ridge. The service is open to the public.



Natalie Munio Natalie Munio is an intern with The Denver Post.

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