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Life stories Dave Hamil helped electrify U.S.

The Denver Post - Thursday, August 1, 2002

Author: Kit Miniclier Denver Post Staff Writer

After the eulogies, friends and family gathered in the parking lot of the First Presbyterian Church of Sterling on Wednesday to enjoy freshly barbecued steak with all the trimmings, in celebration of the life of Dave **Hamil** .

Hamil helped bring electricity to tens of thousands of rural homes across America as director of the Rural Electrification Administration under Presidents Eisenhower, Nixon, Ford and Carter.

He died Saturday in Sterling at 93.

Hamil 's family moved to Colorado from Tennessee at the turn of the previous century. Born in Proctor on Dec. 3, 1908, **Hamil** attended a one-room schoolhouse through eighth grade and later graduated with honors from Hastings College in Nebraska in 1930 with degrees in English and philosophy.

Upon graduation, he started farming, ranching and running a cattle feeding operation in Logan County. On Christmas Eve 1933, he married Genevieve Robinson. They had three children and were married 64 years before she died.

He served 16 years in the state House and was speaker of the House from 1951 to 1956. On his watch, the Air Force Academy settled in Colorado Springs and Interstate 70 pushed through the Eisenhower Tunnel and on to the West.

His first bid for the governorship was lost, in the general election, to Lee Knous. His second bid, after running the Rural Electrification Administration for five years under Eisenhower, was lost in the Republican primary to John Love.

However, the two men, who had not met before the primary battle, became the best of friends, and Gov. Love appointed **Hamil** to run the state Department of Institutions.

He joked that he took the job because at the time, it paid more than the governor's salary. During his tenure, mental health clinics were set up around the state, earning it national recognition for innovative health care.

Survivors include sons Don of Sterling and Jack of Canyon, Texas; daughter Jo Ann Ostwald of Fort Morgan; nine grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. Memorial contributions may be sent to the Scholarship Fund of the First Presbyterian Church of Sterling or the Logan County Historical Society.

Caption: PHOTO: **Hamil**

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