

Chet Enstrom, senator and candy maker, dies

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and Ginger Rice
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Chet Enstrom, the Grand Junction man who created the legendary Enstrom's almond toffee, and led the effort to make Mesa State College a four-year institution, died Thursday at the age of 89.

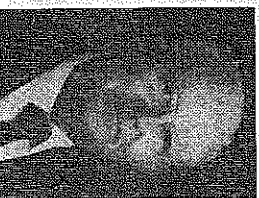
His death came from complications after hip surgery, family members said.

In addition to running two successful businesses, Enstrom was a community leader who was mayor of Grand Junction during the 1980s, and served nine years in the Colorado Senate.

Long-time friend Marietta Bengtson said Chet and his wife, Vernie, used to walk

downtown nearly every day.

"It was a ritual with them," she said. "They'd stop in the store (Bengtson's Shoes) and talk with Bruce and if I was around, talk with me," she recalled. "It's kind of hard. He was just always here."



Enstrom

"Chet was the kind of individual who really enjoyed being involved. He believed in working hard at every task he undertook," said state Sen. Tilman Bishop of Grand Junction, who replaced Enstrom in the Senate in 1975 when Enstrom chose

not to seek re-election.

Bishop also served in the state House while Enstrom was in the Senate, and worked closely with him on issues such as making Mesa a four-year college.

"I guess everyone around Capitol Hill remembers Chet and Enstrom's toffee. He was generous with it," Bishop said. "He was an outstanding individual with a tremendous range of interests. I would label him as a mover and shaker."

"He was very well-liked in the Legislature. The press called him 'Friendly Chet,'" recalled Mary Louise Henderson, former political reporter for The Daily Sentinel. "He always seemed like a very pliable man who agreed with everybody, but underneath he could be very steely. When he

made up his mind about something he would go right at it."

Henderson also said, "He was as enthusiastic as a 17-year-old about everything. He was enthusiastic about his candy and about his painting."

He painted primarily landscapes, particularly of scenes of the Grand Mesa, and one such painting hung for many years in former U.S. Sen. William Armstrong's office in Washington, D.C.

He was an ardent outdoorsman, fisherman and golfer. But more than anything, he remained excited about the candy business.

"Chet stayed active as a candy maker

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