

▼ POLITICAL COMRADE REMEMBERED

# Did he make a difference? That's a Given

**F**arewell to a fine person, a good colleague, a superb combatant and a giant of a man. There are not enough Brian Given's in our world.

On Saturday, the popular Kelowna city councillor was eulogized and honoured by hundreds of Kelowna residents attending his funeral service/celebration of life.

Those listening heard countless stories and lessons about the man many referred to as the 'friendly bear.' Brian was indeed both.

He was friendly to all, particularly taking pleasure in talking with seniors or youngsters. He was constantly shaking someone's hand, patting them on the shoulder, or sending them a friendly smile.

He loved to test, and thoroughly enjoyed the chance to fire out a friendly barb or a double entendre whimsical jab.

However, if you wanted a riddle in the way of a verbal debate Brian loved a good word brawl and was skilled at it.

Given wasted no words making it abundantly clear where he stood on certain issues.

If you were going to knock, block, or rock something Brian be-



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lieved in or championed then you'd face the tenacity and professionalism of a mother bear protecting her cubs.

For a decade Brian worked his butt off to make the City of Kelowna (and for that matter the entire valley) a better place to be.

His work with the Central Okanagan Regional District, Okanagan Basin Water Board, Uplown, Ruland Business Association, Kelowna Chamber of Commerce, the Kelowna Downtown Association, and so many other organizations, groups and committees was always carried out with a smile and a willingness to listen and help find solutions.

Given was an advocate for people and particularly those dealing with blindness.

He worked for the Canadian National Institute for the Blind for 17 years as a counsellor, district manager, and as prov-

incial manager in charge of fund development. Brian was driven to make a difference, to make things better.

Perhaps much of that was fostered by his complete love for wife Gail and their three kids.

Without question, family was of great pride to Brian and often was the focus of a kind comment or quick story shared at lunch. Ironically, for a man who did so much, had such an impact and worked so hard, I think Brian sometimes wondered if he was actually making a difference.

Like many folks who do so much, they often wonder if they are doing enough.

It's that sort of humbleness and caring that helped drive Brian to perform the outstanding community service which he provided for so many years.

It was that caring and dedication that helped him place very well in four civic elections.

When I was first elected to council some eight months ago Brian was one of the first to welcome me on board.

He shared an office with Coun. Graeme James and often shared his views, background

knowledge, and wisdom with both of us.

Brian loved to give me the gears knowing he had a willing combatant in the humour and sarcasm department and I have to admit he zinged me a few times more than I got him.

He had a tremendous wit that could sometimes contain a toothy bite—but always with class.

We often shared similar views—more than most would know—and we also often disagreed on certain issues.

Regardless, Brian was always wise enough and big enough to drop the last fight and enter then next issue or debate with an open mind.

It was not uncommon for us to totally disagree on one issue only to share a perspective and support one another on the next.

As colleague Coun. Robert Hobson recently said, "Brian's wisdom and insight will be deeply missed." He has left an important legacy to our city, region and valley. He will be missed by us all, but will not be forgotten.

A municipal by-election will be held this fall to fill the seat on city council vacated by Brian's death. It's an event that I cannot say I really

look forward to.

But I do know this: No matter who wins the election and fills the seat vacated by Brian—that person will have tremendous shoes to fill.

It would be both foolish and unfair to expect anyone to join council and attempt to replace Brian in style or personality. Given was certainly his own person.

However, Brian would likely hope that whoever it is brings all the right tools to the council table.

I suggest those tools include tenacity, backbone, a sense of fair play, energy, wisdom, wit, a sense of humour—and most of all passion and love for the community.

For all of that and so much more, I thank you. You truly made a difference. Farewell Brian.