

Ok Sunday Aug 23 '07

BRIAN GIVEN MEMORIAL

Family came first

Family, friends pay tribute to Kelowna councillor who died Monday

By STEVE MacNAULL
The Okanagan Sunday

No matter how much Brian Given gave to this community — and he gave an awful lot — he was always able to give his family more.

“Brian refused to let public life overshadow his private life,”



Given

Pastor Tim Schroeder said at the Saturday memorial service for City of Kelowna councillor.

“His family always came first. Family

mattered more to him than everything else, no matter how good that everything else was.”

When Given's wife of 22 years, Gail, took to the podium at Trinity Baptist Church, she called him her “one true love.”

“You had the courage to do what's right for family and community,” she said in a clear, unflinching voice.

“You gave so much to so many, but your family was never left wanting.”

In fact, while Given's life ended on Monday at the age of 57 after a battle with cancer, his wife said he wasn't really gone.

“You've left this world, but you're not gone,” she explained.

“You'll always be with me in my heart and you left three amazing children.”

Those kids — Brianna, 20,



GARY NYLANDER/The Okanagan Sunday

City bylaw officers Len Ingvarsson, left, Kurt Szalla and Ken Black form an honour guard at Trinity Baptist Church on Saturday for Councillor Brian Given's memorial service. About 700 people attended the service for Given, who lost his battle to cancer last week.

Kaitlynn, 15, and Brendan, 13 — also took to the podium.

“You may have known him as a city councillor,” the eldest daughter told the crowd of about 700 mourners.

“But he's just our dad — our crazy, embarrassing, loving dad. Even though our time was cut short with him, the values he instilled in us and the lessons he taught us will live forever.”

To illustrate the “embarrassing” point, City of Kelowna manager Ron Mattiussi, who gave the eulogy, talked about Given's past as the “dancing flagman” when he worked on road crews and donned one of the hats from Given's collection of goofy head coverings

— a floppy red and yellow crocheted number.

“If you want to seek Brian's monument, just walk around the city,” Mattiussi said in all seriousness.

“His touch is everywhere. To see his legacy, just look around this room and see all the people he touched.”

Besides serving on city council for the past 10 years, Given has a long list of civic credits ranging from the Downtown Kelowna Association, Uptown Rutland Business Association and Okanagan Basin Water Board to Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission, Kelowna Chamber of Commerce and Kelowna Arts Foundation.

“Brian had a strong, quiet leadership,” Mattiussi said.

“He listened. He was fair. He listened and was principled. He was able to make a difference.”

Given was born in Guelph, Ont., in 1951 and grew up nearby in a small town.

His early work was on road crews as the aforementioned “dancing flagman” and then as a road inspector.

His work setting up photo studios at Bay department stores brought him west and in touch with a Bay employee who would eventually become his wife.

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He retrained to become a councillor and became district manager of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind.

Retired United Church Reverend Albert Baldeo also spoke and had the crowd laughing with his reference to meeting Given for "blind dates" in reference to Given's work with CNIB.

In 2006, Given was treated for liver cancer and beat it.

In 2007, cancer was back in his colon and he seemed to have conquered that, too, with an 18-month remission.

He retired from CNIB in 2007 to spend more time with his family, but continued to serve the community as a city councillor and on many committees and boards.

When Given found out the cancer had returned he remained on council until last month and then stepped away to spend his final days with his family.

Two slide shows set to music were played at the memorial.

At the beginning of the service, photos of Given's public life at CNIB, community and city events scrolled to Michael Buble's Everything.

The service closed with family photos clicking by to Rod Stewart's Forever Young.

A choir sang a hymn in German and then sang Let Your Spirit Sing, in English.