

The Coeur d' Alene Press
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Athol mayor dies

MAUREEN DOLAN/Staff writer | Posted: Thursday, February 20, 2014 12:00 am

This year, Lanny Spurlock would have celebrated two full decades of service as mayor of Athol, but Spurlock, 76, died in office Jan. 23, following a short illness.

Athol City Clerk Sally Hansen reported the news of Spurlock's death to The Press on Wednesday. She said she did not report it earlier because she was waiting for the longtime mayor's children to decide if they would report it themselves.

Hansen said Spurlock was hospitalized Jan. 8 after collapsing in Super 1 Foods. He was in Spokane at Hospice House at the time of his death. She said Spurlock had experienced bouts of low blood pressure and physicians eventually discovered blood clots in his lungs and other parts of his body.

"I was pretty devastated," said Hansen, who worked closely with Spurlock every day, since she was hired by the mayor and the Athol City Council in 2009.

"He cared about everybody and always wanted to keep peace between everyone," Hansen said. "I'd always ask him how he was, and he'd say, 'Well, I'm still above the dirt.' He was like a second dad to me."

When Spurlock took office in 1994, many of the roads in Athol were gravel. Through the years, he often told reporters that he considered getting the roads paved to be one of the northern Kootenai County city's most significant developments. He was also proud to say that when he took office, the town was about \$150,000 in debt, and by his fourth term, they were breaking even.

Spurlock served in the U.S. Air Force from September 1955 to September 1975, and that career sent him to live in places around the globe including Turkey and England. His wife, Elaine, who died in 1997, was from England.

Hansen said that when Elaine died, Spurlock and his son, Corey, traveled to England to bring Elaine's ashes back to her native country.

Spurlock also had a daughter, Cheri, and another son, Robert.

"He had his dog, Zack, who he loved very much," Hansen said. "He fed him doughnut holes every day. It was a ritual."

Hansen said that before becoming mayor, Spurlock was employed as a cemetery caretaker and worked as a cab driver in Chicago.

"He did all different things," Hansen said. "He wore lots of different hats."

The Athol City Council recently appointed council president Darla Kuhman to fill the position of mayor.

Hansen said the council plans to appoint a new council member to fill Kuhman's seat, likely in March.

A memorial for Spurlock will be held sometime in the future, Hansen said. A date has not yet been set.