

Richard C. Loll, Elmira mayor during flood, dies

Richard C. Loll was in office less than six months when he faced a nightmare that would challenge the most experienced mayor -- his community was devastated by a flood.

Mr. Loll, who helped guide Elmira's recovery from the 1972 Tropical Storm Agnes flood, died Wednesday morning at Arnot Ogden Medical Center in Elmira after a long illness.

He was 76.

Mr. Loll, a Republican, won an upset victory over 10-year incumbent Mayor Edward Lagonegro in the November 1971 election. On June 22, 1972, Mr. Loll faced his biggest crisis.

"The flood occurred in his first year of office. And I was appointed city manager in June. So we were both kind of new when the flood came," said former Elmira City Manager Joseph E. Sartori. "Dick did a great job. When Vice President (Spiro) Agnew came to town, he was very outspoken, saying that we needed help here. And we did get a lot of federal help."

Mr. Loll had no political experience when he ran for mayor in 1971. His only government service was a stint in the U.S. Army, where he served as a field medic during the Korean War.

Mr. Loll was a pharmacist by trade and owned Loll's Pharmacy and Campus Corner on the corner of Davis Street and West Washington Avenue in Elmira for many years. He was approached by the city Republican Committee to run against Lagonegro and turned out to be a devoted public servant, said close friend Bob Chapman, who was mayor of Horseheads at the time.

"I know he did an excellent job. His first priority was the city of Elmira. What a devoted guy," Chapman said. "He spent a lot of his own money. I know he never got reimbursed from the city. He was a busy guy during the flood. The city wasn't his livelihood, but he was really dedicated to it. It's tough to find a guy like that anymore."

Mr. Loll won re-election in 1973 but was defeated in a bid for a third term in 1975. He dropped out of politics after that but briefly considered another run for mayor in 1979.

Mr. Loll sold his store in the late 1970s and later worked as a supervising pharmacist at Nichols Inc. on Upper Lake Road in Horseheads.

The one blemish on his record occurred in 1982, when he tried to help out a client by giving her prescription painkillers, and then altered documents to cover the transaction.

"I'm very ashamed," Mr. Loll told the judge who sentenced him to one year in the Chemung County Jail.

But that one incident should not be what Mr. Loll is remembered for, said his son, Kevin Loll of Texas.

Instead, he should be recalled for his leadership and dedication in the wake of the 1972 flood, Kevin Loll said.

"One of his legacies was he evacuated everybody in time. There was very little injury," he said. "His legacy was getting everyone through the flood, getting money and support from Washington. He got Bob Hope to do flood relief for the victims also.

"He initiated the emergency plan and got everyone evacuated and out of their homes in time so no one died because of the flood," Kevin Loll said. "So that was really his legacy as far as what he's done for the community and what he did to help."

Loll was a decent guy and a fine example about how a good deed never goes unpunished.

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Posted by: unhappysociety on Thu May 31, 2007 10:56 am

About the Author

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