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Marin County Mourns the Passing of Hal Brown

Former Marin County Supervisor ends year-long battle with cancer

Former Marin County Supervisor Harold “Hal” Brown, who served County government for nearly 30 years, passed away this morning at his home in Sleepy Hollow after a long battle with cancer. Brown was 66 years old. He had been diagnosed in December 2010.

“Working with Hal taught me, taught all of us, as much about people and human nature, about loyalty and trust, as it did about government and politics,” said Supervisor Katie Rice, who succeeded Brown to the Second District seat on the Board of Supervisors. Rice was

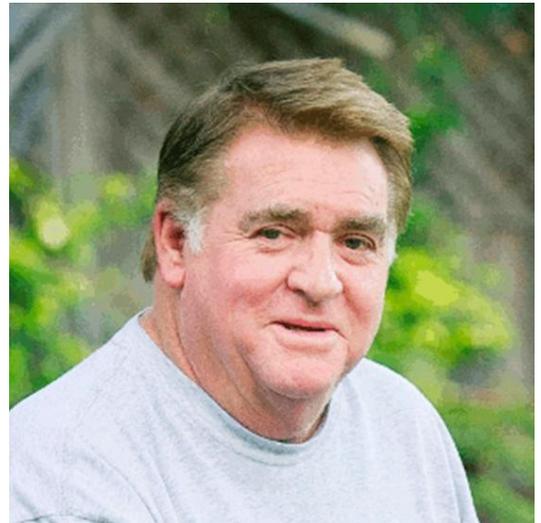
Brown’s aide for eight years and his recommended replacement. “He has been missed mightily, here at the Civic Center, and throughout the county by all who worked with him. He will be missed even more-so by his family and friends.”

In October, Brown retired from office and was recognized by the Board for his dedication and life-long service to the county. Brown was in his 7th term in office, having been appointed to the seat in 1983 by his cousin, then first time governor, Jerry Brown, to fill the seat being vacated by Barbara Boxer upon her election to U.S. House of Representatives.

After his diagnosis, Brown said he had hoped to return to office and complete his term, but “my medical condition makes that impossible,” he said in October. “As much as I will miss this job, I look forward to my retirement, and the opportunity to spend more time with my family and friends.”

“My father truly loved working for the people and County of Marin. He always said to us, ‘I’ve got the best job in the world.’ I know he loved it till the day he retired, and would have kept on working if he could have,” said Michael Brown, Supervisor Brown’s son.

“A local legend has left us. Because of his unwavering commitment to the needs of his district and his broader concern about the wellbeing of the entire county, Hal became the longest serving County Supervisor in Marin’s history. That is a fitting legacy for an astute politician and a caring community leader,” said Marin County



Board President Steve Kinsey, who served with Brown for close to 15 years, the longest of his colleagues.

“It was a privilege to work and learn alongside Hal,” said Kinsey. He defined himself through his work, and his commitment to his district’s needs will go unrivaled. He also did more to support our county’s non-profits than any other elected official I know. I was tremendously touched by the exceptional support his wife and sons provided throughout his extended illness. They deserve this peace.”

Brown was born in 1945 at the San Diego Naval Base, where his father was stationed until returning home to San Francisco. The family resided in Kent Woodlands for a short time in the early 50’s, before moving back to San Francisco, where he graduated from Lowell High School and then received a B.S. in Business from the University of San Francisco. Before becoming a Marin County Supervisor, he established a successful career in the commercial insurance industry.

He moved his own family to Sleepy Hollow in 1971, where he quickly became involved in local organizations and community service including serving on the Grand Jury and on the Sleepy Hollow Homes Association Board of Directors.

Brown’s interests and achievements spanned a broad range of issues. A champion of open space, he was involved in the acquisition and/or preservation of over 1700 acres of open space in the Ross Valley. He spearheaded the County’s original Integrated Pest Management policy in 1983, and founded FireSafe Marin in 1992. He was instrumental in the formation of the precedent setting Marin County Child Care Commission in 1995; and under his guidance, the very first Safe Routes to Schools program was formed in 2001, soon becoming a national model. In 2007, Brown galvanized support for flood control in the Ross Valley, paving the way for adoption of the Ross Valley Watershed and Flood Protection program.

Brown also served as the Board of Supervisors’ representative to the Golden Gate Bridge District Board of Directors for over 20 years, and was the senior member on the Bay Area Air Quality Management District Board of Directors.

Brown was known for his unique style, energetic leadership and always being available to his constituents. His front door, home phone and Civic Center office were open to any and all who sought his ear to complain or seek counsel.

He also had a reputation as a fiscal conservative –a leading advocate for financial prudence and ensuring reserves were set aside even during the leanest times. His commitment to fiscal restraint had been lauded as one reason the County has been in good stead through recent economic downturn.

He was chairman and founder of the Valentine’s Ball Foundation, a non-profit organization which raises roughly \$250,000 annually for local non-profits serving children, families, and seniors. Hal was also a passionate sports fan his entire life, a dedicated coach and recreation booster.

In October, Brown was reflective in looking back on his career, saying “My uncle liked to remind us that ‘Politics is a noble profession. I hope that my time in office reflects that sentiment, and encourages others to do the same.” “It has been a privilege to serve the people of District 2, and the county,” Brown added. “They have

demonstrated to me over and over again, all the best that people can be – caring for each other, and about the community they live in.”

Supervisor Brown is survived by his two sons, Michael and Chris Brown, and their wives, Julia Farren Coppersmith and Amy Breaux, grandchildren Ella and Abigail, his former wife Gloria Brown and beloved dog, Bo. He was preceded by his father, Justice Harold C. Brown of the California Appellate Court, mother Helen Louis Brown, and his sister Helen “weesie” Brown. The Brown family will be holding a private service and has requested privacy during this time. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Marin Valentine’s Ball Foundation at PO Box 1612, San Anselmo, CA 94979.

A public ceremony to commemorate and honor his life and service to the County is being planned for late March at the Marin Veterans’ Memorial Auditorium. More information will be provided on the County’s webpage at <http://www.marincounty.org/Home/Main/Hal%20Brown>.

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