

THE HONORABLE CLIFFORD HANSEN REMEMBERED



Hon. Clifford P. Hansen

sory Board and is greatly missed.

Cliff was born in Zenith on Oct. 16, 1912, to Peter and Sylvia Hansen, just a few miles north of where he spent his last days on his beloved Spring Gulch Ranch. He graduated from the University of Wyoming with a degree in animal science in 1934, and married Martha Close of Sheridan later that year. He began in politics in 1943 as a Teton County Commissioner. From 1953 to 1955 he was president of the Wyoming Stockgrowers Association, and a University of Wyoming trustee from 1946 to 1963.

In 1962, Hansen was elected governor of Wyoming and served for one term before running for the U.S. Senate, where he served from 1966 until his retirement in 1978. In 1995 he was inducted into the National Cowboy Hall of Fame as a "Great Westerner." He retired to oversee his cattle ranching operation in Jackson Hole; enjoying the great Wyoming outdoors, the family he adored, and friends from all over.

When Hansen was elected governor, several newspapers in the Western states carried the story of Wyoming's new "cowboy governor." He brought both the down-to-earth pragmatism of a lifelong cattle

Clifford Peter "Cliff" Hansen died at home on his ranch in Jackson Hole on Oct. 20, with his wife of 75 years, Martha, by his side. At the time he was the nation's oldest living U.S. Senator. Hansen served as a member of the Wyoming Stock Growers Ag Land Trust Advi-

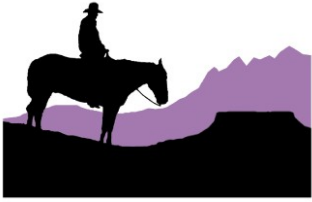
rancher and the affability of a small-town politician to Cheyenne and then to Washington, and he was on friendly and familiar terms throughout his career, not only with those on both sides of the political aisle, but also with elevator attendants, cafeteria workers and staff members throughout the Capitol who called him friend.

Cliff's proudest accomplishment was his 75-year partnership with Martha and the family and home they created together. He wrote to his mother when he and Martha met in Laramie, "Boy, I've really met a girl now," and from that moment there was no one else for either one of them.

Cliff gravitated to politics because he cared about Wyoming, and with an understanding that his job was to advance the welfare of the people he served in the state he so loved, and not to advance his own career. No one could have been more deeply attached to the land; he grew up more outdoors than in, and gave endless attention and energy to the stewardship, not only of the property his family owned but all the public land they used, and for that matter, all the land in Wyoming.

And no one could have been more deeply attached to the people of Wyoming. Cliff genuinely liked other people. He was interested in their backgrounds, their work, their families, and their opinions. Those thousands of different people he met from all over Wyoming, Washington D.C., and beyond, knew when he looked them in the eye that there was nothing practiced nor obligatory about his interest in what they had to say.

Cliff had been sent home from school at an early age as "uneducable," although his problem was not any lack of ability to learn, but with a severe stutter he was unable to communicate to the teacher how much he was learning or what he already knew. With tenacious will and, finally, the help of a special school, he eventually overcame his speech impediment, and he put



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HANSEN REMEMBERED, CONT.

nothing above the value of an education for the rest of his life. "It's the one thing no one can take away from you," he advised his grandson.

Cliff was known by his family, his colleagues and by the media as a wit. Typically his jokes were self-deprecating. He loved to tell the story of how, early in his career as governor, he returned from a meeting of other state officials and mused to his wife, "Martha, how many truly important people do you think there are in Wyoming?"

"I don't know," she replied without missing a beat.

"But I know there's one less than you think."

Cliff repeated that story several times over the ensuing decades and loved to laugh about it. But he told the rest of us quite frequently, "Everybody is important," and his actions both inside and outside politics bore that out.

Hansen is survived by his wife Martha and their son Peter Hansen, as well as a brother Robert Hansen and a sister Ordeen Hansen. Their daughter, Mary Hansen Mead, preceded them in death. He also leaves grandchildren Robert, Christine, Brad, Muffy and Matt, along with 10 great-grandchildren. Donations can be made to the University of Wyoming.

Taken from Clifford P. Hansen obituary written and distributed by Sen. Hansen's family.

Our parent organization, the Wyoming Stock Growers Association, has let us know that the WSGA Endowment Trust has established the Clifford P. Hansen WSGA Presidents' Scholarship Fund. Contributions to this fund can be sent to WSGA, PO Box 206, Cheyenne, WY 82003.

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