

PENTICTON WESTERN NEWS

Princeton remembers former mayor Frank Armitage



[Andrea DeMeer](#)

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Frank Armitage was mayor of Princeton from 2012 to 2018. (Andrea DeMeer photo) Frank Armitage was mayor of Princeton from 2012 to 2018. Photo Andrea DeMeer

A piece of Princeton's history and heart left the community Thursday, Aug. 10, 2023.

Frank Armitage, former mayor, died after a brief illness, as the flag at municipal hall was lowered in his memory.

“Frank was one of a kind. Quick to shake hands and tell a story, always with his trademark sparkle in his eye,” reflected Dan Albas, MP for Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola.

“He was constantly charming people to come live and invest in Princeton, for its natural beauty and lifestyle.

“He was a huge booster for mining and for its benefits. He was very proud to expand Princeton’s borders to make Copper Mountain Mine literally part of Princeton. I will miss his smile, his wit and hospitality.”

Town councillor Randy McLean, also a former mayor, had much praise for his close friend and colleague.

“As far as I’m concerned you look up the word ‘gentleman’ in the dictionary and there should be a picture of Frank...He was very, very classy.”

The two met in their school days, and in recent years met twice every day for coffee, at McLean’s establishment Billy’s Restaurant.

“We spent a lot of time swapping stories and just exchanging experiences and talking about the approach to municipal government and how the town was doing and what we thought we could do to help.”

Armitage, who first served as a town councillor, was mayor for two-and-a-half terms, from 2012 to 2018, and McLean admired his contributions.

During his last term, Armitage oversaw the relocation of the visitors’ centre, significant renovations at town hall, the improvement to local parks including the building of the dog park, and airport improvements.

He also spent two years pursuing a municipal boundary expansion to make Copper Mountain Mine part of the community, resulting in a \$350,000 annual diversion of tax revenue from Victoria to Princeton.

Legion chaplain Sandra Lawlor counted Armitage as a friend of both veterans and first responders.

“Whether the occasion was our Legion’s Remembrance Day community luncheon, veterans luncheon or the first responders appreciation dinner, Frank was always sincerely expressive of his thanks and gratitude of those who serve and have served.

“When I would introduce Frank to offer his words of appreciation at the (first responders dinner), I would say, ‘And now a few short words from our mayor, Frank Armitage’ and the two of us would look at each

other and laugh because we both knew that there was going to be nothing 'short' about it. Frank did have a way with words but also a great sense of humour and quick wit.”

Mayor Spencer Coyne said Armitage’s impact on Princeton will be long remembered.

“Frank wasn’t just the former mayor but a friend. His dedication to the community, leadership and commitment to making our town a better place have left an enduring legacy.

“Frank always had time for a coffee and a story. He will be truly missed by all who knew him.”

Raised in Princeton, Armitage spent his working life in towns across Canada as a human resource specialist in the mining industry. “While my career took me away for a number of years we always maintained a home here...We came home in 2001 and I was pleased, after retiring, to join Copper Mountain Mine where I spent four-and-a-half years in human resources,” he told the Spotlight in a 2016 interview.

He and his wife Darnella – whom he frequently referred to as “the best thing that ever happened” to him – raised three children. The many accomplishments of his offspring, and their offspring, were one of his favourite topics of conversation were he met at a Princeton Posse game (he almost never missed one) a turkey supper, a kids’ swim meet or a fundraiser.

Armitage was barely out of Princeton Secondary School when Copper Mountain Mine, then owned by the Grandy Company, closed in 1957.

While he didn’t work for the mine at that time, he felt the pressure of the resulting economic decline.

“Really, I’m an example of a Princeton boy who had to leave when the mine closed.”

Armitage eventually earned a university degree in human resources, and held senior positions at mines in B.C., Ontario and Newfoundland. Yet he always maintained Princeton was “the best place in the world to live.”

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