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Remembering Ron Simpson

Bradford West Gwillimbury pays tribute to longtime community builder who died from cancer Sunday / **PAGE 3**

Councillor, builder Ron Simpson did things his way

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St. John's Presbyterian Church was filled yesterday with people mourning the death and celebrating the life of longtime Bradford West Gwillimbury Councillor Ron Simpson.

Mr. Simpson died Sunday at age 69 after battling cancer.

"Looking around at everyone here today, I can see that my dad impacted many lives," his daughter, Jodi Simpson, said during her eulogy.

"He accomplished many great things over the last 69 years. I am confident that his friends and relatives will continue ... his legacy."

Mr. Simpson, a custom home-builder by profession, has been a councillor since 1985 for all but one term.

Many homes have been built by him, which Jodi said she's proud to show to friends and relatives. Her favourite construction project, however, is the addition he made on her home, which was one of the last projects he did before he retired.

The man was also a member of the local Lions and Probus clubs and he gave back to the community.

"The community and the people meant a lot to my dad," she said.



STAFF PHOTO/DOMINIK KUREK

A table featuring photographs and personal effects of the late Bradford West Gwillimbury Councillor Ron Simpson greets people as they enter St. John's Presbyterian Church in Bradford.

three hours and, quite often, when he got home, he didn't have that item because he got sidetracked."

Her father loved hosting parties, especially after an election, and

more.

Mr. Simpson's sister, Sheila Visser, said when she was growing up, her brothers and sisters looked up to him, as Mr. Simpson was one of

town and not just in the buildings he helped build, but in the lives he touched as well.

When he learned of his cancer, Mr. Simpson took the time to try to

WHAT THEY SAID

SAYING GOODBYE: Long-time Bradford West Gwillimbury Councillor Ron Simpson died Sunday after battling cancer.

He was 69.

The married father and grandfather spent nearly three decades on local council and while he helped guide the town's development as a community leader, he also helped build it personally.

"The community is losing someone who has been very instrumental in what this town has become. Ron, by trade, was a home builder, so there's many houses in this municipality that he actually built and then there's all that he built as a member of council," Mayor Doug White said.

Mr. White said when he was first elected to council, Mr. Simpson was the first to welcome him aboard and that they've since formed a bond.

"The thing I always respected about him is that he spoke his mind: he didn't sugar coat anything. He was candid and, to me, he was always someone who offered great advice. I'll always be grateful for that," Mr. White said.

Fellow longtime Councillor Peter Dykie said area politicians will miss the leadership, knowledge and business sense Mr. Simpson provided around the council table.

"He will be greatly missed. He passed on a wealth of knowledge and experience to council," Mr. Dykie said.

Both were first elected in 1985; Mr. Simpson to West Gwillimbury council and Mr. Dykie to Bradford council.

Despite them being elected in different townships, Mr. Simpson invited Mr. Dykie out for coffee so they could get to know each other.

"What I admired about Ron back then, is I just

“He’s the only man I know who was busier in retirement than he was when he worked.”

Her father was thrifty, social, offered advice and liked to do things his way.

He loved having coffee breaks, spending time with family at the cottage and travelling.

If she ever needed to find her dad, Jodi would look in at the local Tim Hortons and nine out of 10 times he’d be there.

When they travelled to Cuba as a family, he knew the resort staff by name and they knew him.

“I soon learned as a young child that going anywhere with my dad meant a long wait in the truck,” Jodi said. “He’d say, ‘I’ll only be a minute,’ and his visit turned into hours of talking. He’s the only person I know that running into Home Hardware for one item would take

found any excuse to have a gathering in his home.

“He did find it was easy to host these events. All you had to do was invite the people, open the door and offer a drink and that was it,” she said.

“Dad never thought about all the other organizing that mom and I had to do, but we didn’t mind. He was always calling to ask for some butter tarts or a cherry cheesecake that he promised someone he would bring. I didn’t mind making it for him because I loved to cook and bake.”

When Mr. Simpson was in the middle of a project, his entire family would get involved. Being one of 17 siblings, he recruited the others when he built his family home. When he ran in an election, his family was recruited to put up signs, hand out brochures and

the eldest.

“He gave good advice, not always what we wanted to hear, but we respected him for that and he was always willing to help any of the family,” Ms Visser said.

She said when the family learned of Mr. Simpson’s cancer, it was a big blow, but he was determined to beat it. He knew all the doctors, nurses and receptionists by name at his appointments and kept a file of every visit he made to the hospital.

“He fought his battle against cancer with the same determination he has shown throughout his life and he did this to the very end and was always so positive,” she said.

Rev. Richard Bodini, who officiated the service, said Mr. Simpson was a pillar in the community, whose footprints are all over the

accomplish all that he wanted.

“Elizabeth and Jodi and Clayton and Joan have been, are and will continue to be blessed by Ron,” Rev. Bodini said.

“Ron used the very short period of time that he was given to bless, to grow, to build and to unite, to mend and to gather together.

“We would all honour Ron and God by taking the time we have, the time we have been given, to serve our communities, to unite our neighbourhoods, to bless our children, encourage our grandchildren and great-grandchildren, bless our nieces, nephews, join with our siblings, be reunited with our siblings and love our spouses just a little bit more.”

Mr. Simpson is survived by his wife Joan, daughter Jodi, son-in-law Clayton Hillis, and granddaughter Elizabeth.

“What I admired about Ron back then, is I just turned 19-years-old and he took the time to reach out to me and get to know me. He was very kind. He wanted to know the other councillors,” Mr. Dykie said.

“Here I was, less than half the age of the other councillors, but Ron never judged me for my age. He was open minded, a very smart man and a very smart businessman.”

Mr. Simpson was a self-employed contractor and he brought his business sense and construction knowledge to council, something that was a great asset when he headed the local building committee.

Furthermore, Mr. Simpson did not carry political disputes beyond the council table.

“He was one of those councillors, if you had a disagreement in the council meeting, he’d be able to walk out of the room and put your differences aside and talk to you.”

Mr. Simpson was active in the community in other areas, as well. He was a former Bradford Lions Club member and a Probus Club of Bradford member.

He enjoyed spending time at his cottage with his family and travelling.