

Opinion: Bill Crawford left an impression

By Kathryn Reed

A friend died Friday.

Some might be surprised I would consider Bill Crawford a friend. He was. And I hope he considered me one.

The last time I spoke to him one-on-one was just before the election. His house is on one of my dog walks. Whenever he was out front we'd chat. Ninety-six percent of the time it was about South Lake Tahoe politics, 2 percent about his kids, 1 percent about the books he was reading, another 1 percent about something entirely different.

I didn't always agree with him. But I knew he spoke from the heart and historical knowledge.

On the phone our conversations could at times get heated. We had that ability to agree to disagree. I can't remember a time when I didn't learn something from our talks. Or were they lectures?

He would often leave long messages on my voicemail. Some were telling me I got a story wrong, sometimes he added background to what I had written, other messages were suggestions for future stories.

Our conversations had diminished in recent times. We didn't agree on some things and so he stopped communicating.

At this fall's editorial board meeting for *Lake Tahoe News* someone compared one of the candidates to Bill. I took issue with their statement. I defended Bill. Ornerly as he could be, his institutional knowledge was spot on. Bill really can't be compared to others.

Yes, he had his faults. We all do. He wasn't always nice. And most who knew him well knew not to take his call after about 6pm.

No one was ever left second-guessing with Bill. He was a straight shooter. Most people don't like that kind of brutal honesty. I welcomed it even when it stung. I did so because at the end of the day I knew what he said came from his heart even when it was delivered with ice cold harshness.

I admired him for his conviction. He was so against the ice rink being built that he finally convinced city officials to remove his name from the plaque noting he was on the City Council at the time.

There was a time when he was a prolific letter writer to *Lake Tahoe News*. His were the only letters I accepted that were handwritten. I did so because in some ways Bill reminded me of my dad. Neither really could type. They were the same age – only my dad died six years ago. They could both be gruff and kind; they both thought they knew it all; and they both had a hard time ever listening to me. Both also had their mental wits about them until the end, but ultimately their bodies failed them.

I was one of the people Bill would write poetry to. I felt privileged to be in that select group. (At least I want to believe it was a select group.) His poetry was about modern events, sometimes about the environment; many had a literary or historical theme. I so hope I kept a few.

South Lake Tahoe is a better city because of Bill Crawford and I am a better person for having had him in my life.