

Longtime Okanogan clerk killed in wreck

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World file photo/K.C. Mehaffey

Former Okanogan County Clerk Jackie Bradley shortly before her retirement in 2010.

TWISP — Jackie Bradley, the former Okanogan County Clerk known for her fashion and passion to the Democratic party, died in a car crash Monday afternoon.

Bradley, 73, was chairwoman of the Okanogan County's Democratic Party for decades. Vice Chairman Peter James said she was a member of the party since birth. "She always said she was a lifelong member," he said this morning.

Bradley was also one of the longest serving county officials in Washington's history. She was elected Okanogan County clerk nine times, serving 38 years before she retired at the end of 2010. She was appointed to the post in 1972 and first elected in 1974.

The Washington State Patrol reports that Bradley was driving east on Highway 20 at about 12:48 p.m. when her 1997 Lincoln Continental went off the road to the right, rolled and came to rest on its top.

The crash on the Loup Loup Highway was about 11 miles east of Twisp. The cause is under investigation. She was not wearing a seatbelt, the State Patrol report said.

Shortly before her retirement, Bradley was recognized by Washington State Democrats with the Warren G. Magnuson Award for lifetime achievement.

Democrats across the state are mourning her death.

“She served with such grace and dignity, mentoring younger democrats and welcoming new volunteers with sage advice and direction,” wrote Valerie Rongey, vice chair of the state Democrats, commenting on a Wenatchee World online article about her death. “It will take several people to fill her always fashionable shoes.”

Not only Democrats were upset by the news.

“It’s pretty sad. I’ve known her forever,” said Okanogan County Sheriff Frank Rogers, who had to notify her family of her death. A Republican, Rogers, too, described Bradley as a passionate Democrat who remained very active in the party. So passionate, he said, he was shocked when she called him up and asked him for one of his signs to put in her yard.

James said Bradley was on her way back to Okanogan after picking up Sunday’s results of the Democratic caucus in Winthrop. He said she was also chairwoman of the state Democratic Agricultural and Rural Caucus, state committee chairwoman of the 7th Legislative District, and vice chairwoman of the newly reapportioned 4th Congressional District.

“It’s important to tell the world what a wonderful lady she was,” he said.

Bradley was also active in many other organizations. She helped found the Okanogan Regional Home Health and Hospice, and was active with the North Cascades Chapter of the American Red Cross, the Okanogan Chamber of Commerce, the Kiwanis Club, Okanogan County Pioneer Association, and Okanogan County Soroptimists.

Longtime friend Chris Zaferes said she hardly slowed down after she retired. “She cared a great deal about this county, and her job as clerk,” he said. “I’m still devastated by this event.”

Ada Ward, deputy clerk at Okanogan County Superior Court who worked with Bradley for 22 years, said she and others at the clerk’s office were saddened by the news. “We always felt part of her family,” she said. “She gave many of us chances when jobs were scarce. And she was always there when anyone needed anything. All you had to do was say something, and she was right on it.”

Ward said Bradley was not perfect, but didn’t expect others to be, either. “She never judged people. She accepted people for who they were.”

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