

## Hank Etchemendy, noted Nevada public official, dies at 78

By Ray Hagar

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Former Carson City mayor Harold Jacobsen Friday remembered Henry "Hank" Etchemendy as a self-made man and a dedicated public official.

Etchemendy, the former city manager in Elko, Carson City and Reno, died Tuesday in Reno from complications from a broken leg suffered on Dec. 8. He was 78.

His memorial service is today at 12:30 p.m. at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Reno.

"His dad and my dad were partners in the sheep business up in Diamond Valley," said Jacobsen, who was Carson City's mayor from 1974 to 1982.

"When he started school in Eureka, he didn't know English. Just a few words," Jacobsen said. "But just look what he did. He was a dedicated public servant. He was a self-made man. He knew what he wanted to do and did it."

Etchemendy's wife of 53 years, Peggy Etchemendy, said her husband was proud

of his humble beginnings.

"He liked to tell that story, that he couldn't speak English when he started school," she said. "But you'd be surprised how fast he learned."

The son of French Basque parents, Etchemendy moved from Eureka to Elko where he attended high school and starred in sports. After graduating from Elko High, Etchemendy attended Colorado College for two years, majoring in civil engineering.

He also caught the attention of professional baseball scouts after high school and was given a tryout with the New York Yankees.

"He was a little too old for them (Yankees)," Peggy Etchemendy said. "He was about 22 when he tried out and they were looking for boys who were 18 and 19."

Etchemendy joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1941 and spent six months in 1943 fighting in the battle for Guadalcanal. The fight for the small Pacific island was considered one of the bloodiest of World War II.

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"He spent the last few years collecting rare World War II books and that sort of thing," Peggy Etchemendy said.

"He liked going to the reunions with his battalion. In the last few years, like most of the veterans, he was thinking more about World War II."

Etchemendy was recalled into the Marines during the Korean War in the early 1950s but never saw duty in Korea, Peggy Etchemendy said.

In 1955, he was named Elko's city manager, a post he held until 1966.

He was then named city manager for Carson City and county manager for Ormsby County.

He is credited with consolidating those governments into one.

"He was instrumental in that," Jacobsen said of the consolidation.

"He taught me all about how to run a city when I became mayor."

He became Reno's city manager in 1978 and retired in 1980.

"He was a sharp man and he had a sharp mind," Peggy

Etchemendy said. "He could repeat a conversation verbatim five years down the road."

When he was in Carson City, Elko would call him to ask what had happened in a particular instance years back if they didn't have a record.

When he was in Reno, Carson City would call and do the same thing."

Earlier this month, Etchemendy was climbing on a ladder when he fell and broke his leg. He died of complications from surgery, Peggy Etchemendy said.

"He was a young 78," she said. "He was a healthy man, but things happen."

Etchemendy is also survived by sons, Larry and Arnold, both of Reno and Bill of Taos, N.M.; grandchildren, Brandon, Erin and Cory; brother Martin of Elko and sister, Mary Guccini of Fruita, Colo.

Instead of flowers, donations may be made to the Washoe County School District Education Foundation, c/o Mindy Elliott at Wells Fargo Bank, 5340 Kietzke Lane Reno, NV 89511 or St. John's Presbyterian Church.