



LIFE

Mike O'Callaghan, born on 10 September 1929 in La Crosse, Wisconsin, had hard-working rural beginnings that he never forgot. His parents named him Donal Neil O'Callaghan, but he adopted the nickname "Mike" as a young boxer.

As an adventurous farm boy, he enlisted in the military and matured to be a courageous WAR HERO.

O'Callaghan joined the U.S. Marine Corps in 1945 at age 16, but saw no action during World War II. He joined the Air Force in 1950 to learn new technology. However, hoping to see combat, he transferred into the Army. For bravery in action in 1952, O'Callaghan received the Bronze Star. Six weeks later, he lost his left leg to a mortar round after he rescued a surrounded infantry squad. Awarded the Silver Star and Purple Heart, O'Callaghan went home a war hero.

As a scholar and athlete, he grew to be a caring and respected TEACHER and COACH.

O'Callaghan graduated from the University of Idaho in 1956 with a master's degree in education and moved to Henderson, Nevada to teach at Basic High School. He helped found and run the local Boys Club, coaching tough factory town boys to box.

As a tolerant person, he won the regard of minorities as a fair, broadminded CIVIL SERVANT.

As director of Clark County juvenile court services, O'Callaghan hired and helped young people from many ethnic backgrounds. Supporting the Democratic Party, he enrolled new voters by welcoming working people and minorities. The Nevada governor hired O'Callaghan in 1963 to create the new Department of Human Resources. In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson named him western regional director in the Office of Emergency Preparedness.

As a politician with integrity, he rose to be hailed by some as Nevada's most popular GOVERNOR.

In 1966, O'Callaghan unsuccessfully ran for lieutenant governor. However, in 1970 as an underdog candidate, he won the governor's post by campaigning on small town street corners. "Governor Mike" championed causes for the "little guy" by supporting programs for education, housing, energy, minorities, seniors, and the disabled.

As a persistent critic of governmental conduct, he was both feared and loved as an influential NEWSPAPER EDITOR.

Leaving the statehouse, O'Callaghan accepted an executive post at the Las Vegas Sun in 1979. He became a tenacious editor who punished bureaucrats who failed to meet his high standards of governmental conduct. O'Callaghan believed in the virtue of hard work and the importance of religion in life. While worshipping at morning mass before work, Mike O'Callaghan died of a heart attack on 5 March 2004.

THE LIFE & LEGACY OF MIKE O'CALLAGHAN

1929-2004



LEGACY

In 1991, a Las Vegas middle school was named in O'Callaghan's honor, as was the federal veterans' hospital at Nellis Air Force Base in 1994. He was inducted into the Nevada Newspaper Hall of Fame in 1998. In February of 2004 he received the David L. Simon Bridge Builder for Peace Award.