

Victor Mangini - 'Mr. Burlingame' was coach, teacher, 4-time mayor

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Victor Mangini, a four-time mayor of Burlingame and a popular history teacher and coach for whom the street in front of Burlingame High School is named, has died.

Mr. Mangini died of congestive heart failure on Feb. 4 at his home in Burlingame. He was 88.

Known as "Mr. Burlingame" for his 20 years on the City Council and his 44 years at Burlingame High -- first as a teacher and coach, and later as an administrator and volunteer -- Mr. Mangini was the city's citizen of the year in 1957 and had been looking forward to celebrating Burlingame's 100th anniversary this summer.

"He used to say, 'You won't get any medals for not being a murderer,' " said his daughter, Mariavittoria Mangini. "What he meant was there is a baseline level of service-oriented, positive citizenship that's just expected of people. And you shouldn't expect to be appreciated for it, any more than you should expect to be appreciated for getting up in the morning."

Mr. Mangini was born in New York City and received a bachelor's degree from Manhattan College and a master's degree and teaching credential from Columbia University. Shortly after graduating from Columbia, Mr. Mangini joined the Army Air Forces and was assigned to the Presidio during World War II.

He saw Burlingame for the first time when he got lost leading a caravan of military vehicles from Moffett Field to Mills Field. When he was discharged in 1946, Mr. Mangini decided to settle down there. Mr. Mangini served in the Air Force Reserve until 1978, when he retired as a colonel.

He started teaching and coaching at Burlingame High soon after moving there, and soon after, met his first wife, Rina Sari, through mutual friends. The couple married after just six weeks. Rina Mangini died in 1975, after 27 years of marriage.

In 1976, Mr. Mangini married Grace Mangini, a distant cousin. Grace Mangini died in 2003.

Mr. Mangini is well remembered in Burlingame as a mentor for generations of students passing through the high school. In 2002, the street in front of the school was named after him, and the school's address is now 1 Mangini Way.

His son, Jerry Mangini, said his father collected scrapbooks filled with letters from former students -- from state senators to professional football players -- thanking him for his guidance. Among the pallbearers at his funeral was a 70-year-old former student and athlete who kept in touch with Mr. Mangini long after high school.

"There are books and books and books of letters to him, saying things like, 'Dear Vic, if it wasn't for you straightening me out, I wouldn't have been All-State, love you forever, so-and-so state senator,' " Jerry Mangini said.

When a group of parents and students threw a surprise party for Mr. Mangini decades ago, they gave him a lamp made out of a trophy his team had won. That lamp stayed as a centerpiece in the Mangini house until the day he died, Jerry Mangini said.

"This man didn't talk the talk, he walked the walk. It's like the final report card for him was straight A's," Jerry Mangini said. "He was a remarkable guy."

Mr. Mangini joined the City Council in the late 1950s at the urging of friends. A.C. "Bud" Harrison, also a teacher at Burlingame High School at the time, said the two ended up running for the same seat on the council.

"And he beat me," said Harrison, who joined his friend on the City Council four years later. "He was dedicated to the city. He was certainly Mr. Burlingame, that's what everyone in town called him. He was always caring for the city and the kids."

In addition to his son and daughter, Mr. Mangini is survived by a brother, George Mangini of New York City.

Donations should go to the Mills Peninsula Hospital Foundation (650) 696-5990; the Lesley Foundation, 701 Arnold Way, Half Moon Bay, 94019; and Mercy High School Burlingame (650) 762-1190.

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