

Cloran Waitman Taylor, Jr. (1927-2019)

By Jerry Long
c.2025



C. Waitman Taylor in front of the C. Waitman Taylor Municipal Building (City Hall), at Fourth and Allen Streets in Owensboro, KY. The building was named in his honor on 17 September 2002.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 26 January 2019, pp.1A & 2A:

Taylor, 'Mr. Owensboro,' dies at 91

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

Cloran Waitman Taylor Jr., former Owensboro mayor and community leader, died Friday.

He was 91.

There were few segments in the local community that weren't touched by Taylor in the years after he arrived in Owensboro in 1952 to become a wage-rate setter at General Electric.

As mayor in the early 1970s, he championed the arts, recreation, sewage treatment and fire protection.

His administration built the current City Hall and the Owensboro Riverport.

As a fundraiser, Taylor raised millions of dollars for charities and nonprofits.

"When I think of Waitman, I think of 'It's A Wonderful Life,' " Kirk Kirkpatrick, who emceed the Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce's Rooster Booster Breakfasts for 37 years. "It's difficult to imagine what this community would be like if he hadn't been here. He was in a league of his own."

In 2013, the chamber named Taylor "Chamber Member of the Century."

Taylor had served as chairman of the chamber board in 1968 and was executive director of Owensboro-Daviess County Industry Inc. from 1994 to 2002.

He retired in 2013 as executive director of Owensboro Health's OH Foundation, shortly before his 86th birthday.

At the time, Taylor said, "Looking back, if I had retired at 65, I wouldn't have met and worked with all these wonderful people in the last 21 years."

"I can't imagine a greater loss to this community," Mary Bryan Hood, director of the Owensboro Museum of Fine Art, said Friday. "He brought things to the community that had never been done before. He was responsible for the first arts commission and paved the way for a home for Theatre Workshop of Owensboro, the Owensboro Symphony and the Museum of Fine Art. His administration was the turning point for this community."

Former Mayor David Adkisson, now president of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, said the first public event he attended when he came home after college was a "Thanks Waitman" dinner at the Sportscenter at the end of Taylor's term of office.

"That," he said, "inspired me to go into politics."

'Mr. Owensboro'

"We've lost a good one," he said of Taylor. "When I was mayor, I had the honor of naming City Hall for him. He was 'Mr. Owensboro' for half a century."

Taylor, Adkisson said, "was a civic leader more than a politician. He was liked across the spectrum. He was always cheerful. He could be blunt, but you couldn't stay mad at him."

In 1951, Taylor, an Air Force veteran and University of Kentucky graduate, returned to his native Hancock County as an assistant to L.R. Chapman, a coal company operator.

The following April, he moved to Owensboro to work for General Electric, then the area's largest employer.

Five years later, GE tapped Taylor to lead a fund drive to raise \$250,000 for the new Owensboro-Daviess County Industrial Foundation.

In 1958, he was named Owensboro's Outstanding Young Man.

Eleven years later, GE, then a big mover behind the scenes, asked Taylor to run for city commissioner.

He was elected mayor pro tem in his first term.

Two years later, he was elected mayor, a job that paid \$4,800 a year.

His administration built three fire stations, Cravens and Combest pools, Shifley Park, restored the Old Trinity Centre and brought city buses back into service.

Taylor was a progressive Republican, but he never ran for office after his term as mayor.

Many people expected him to eventually be governor or a U.S. senator.

But Taylor said he needed to make money for his family and moved to Texas Gas Transmission Corp. as manager of public affairs, when GE started downsizing.

Texas Gas didn't want him directly involved in politics.

Taylor's life was touched by tragedy -- the loss of his first wife, Margaret Brannon Taylor, and his son, Dr. Waitman Brannon Taylor -- but it never broke his spirit.

He said once, "Each time I struggled and picked myself up."

His list of civic involvement included serving as secretary-treasurer of the old Owensboro-Daviess County Hospital board of directors, president of the Owensboro Country Club, president of Junior Achievement and service on the boards of the University of Louisville, Brescia University, the Owensboro-Daviess County Airport, Murray State University and the Owensboro Museum of Fine Art.

Taylor is survived by his wife, Patricia W. Taylor; his children, Frank C. Taylor and his wife Charlene of Lexington, Bill Taylor and his wife Sandi and Margaret T. Kramer and her husband Dan, all of New York City; his sister Sarah T. Hughes; his sister-in-law, Dr. Yvonne Taylor, 12 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

Services will be 11 a.m. Monday at First Presbyterian Church.



Former Owensboro Mayor and Chamber President C. Waitman Taylor Jr. is applauded as he comes forward to accept the Farm City Humanitarian award on Saturday, Feb. 28, 2015, during the 36th annual Farm City Breakfast at Daviess County High School. Taylor died Friday afternoon at age 91.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 26 January 2019, p2B:

C. Waitman Taylor, 91, of Owensboro died Friday, Jan. 25, 2019, at 2 p.m. He was born on the family farm in Hancock County on Sept. 18, 1927, to C. Waitman Taylor Sr. and Adelaide Longest Taylor. Following his graduation from the University of Kentucky, he served in the United States Air Force and retired from the United States Air Force Reserve with the rank of captain. He retired from Owensboro Health Regional Hospital in 2013 at the age of 86. His

career spanned 24 years with General Electric, 16 years with Texas Gas, eight years with Industry Inc. and 11 years with Owensboro Health.



Among his activities and recognition were mayor pro tem and mayor of Owensboro, executive secretary of the Owensboro-Daviess County Industrial Foundation and being named Owensboro's Outstanding Young Man in 1957. He served as secretary-treasurer of the Owensboro-Daviess County Hospital board of directors, the

Community Chest Campaign general chairman, president of the Owensboro Country Club and president of the Owensboro-Daviess County Chamber of Commerce. He was on the board and served as president of Junior Achievement. He sat on the board of trustees for the University of Louisville. He was a member of the board of directors of Brescia University, serving as president from 1983-1985. A member of Leadership Kentucky, he also served on the Owensboro-Daviess County Airport Board of Directors and the Murray State University Board of Regents. He was vice chairman of the Owensboro Museum of Fine Arts, the chairman of the United Way campaign and was co-founder and chairman of the Community Foundation of Owensboro-Daviess County.

With the help of four wonderful city commissioners, Mayor Pro-Tem George Greer, Jack Fisher, Russel Shifley and Alton Puckett, much was accomplished from 1972 through 1975. The establishment of the Owensboro Riverport Authority in 1973 has been a great benefit to Owensboro and the surrounding area. A member of First Presbyterian Church, he served as both deacon and elder and taught the fourth-, fifth- and sixth-grade Sunday school classes for more than 25 years.

He was preceded in death by his first wife, Margaret Brannon Taylor; a son, Dr. Waitman Taylor; and a brother, William Longest Taylor.

Mr. Taylor is survived by his loving wife, Patricia W. Taylor; his children, Frank C. Taylor and his wife, Charlene, of Lexington, and Bill Taylor and his wife, Sandi, and Margaret T. Kramer and her husband, Dan, all of New York City; his sister, Sarah T. Hughes; his sister-in-law, Dr. Yvonne Taylor; 12 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

The service for Mr. Taylor will be 11 a.m. Monday at First Presbyterian Church. Private burial will be in the family cemetery on his farm in Hancock County. Visitation will be from noon to 7 p.m. Sunday at Glenn Funeral Home and Crematory.

Expressions of sympathy may take the form of contributions to Brescia University, First Presbyterian Church or the Owensboro Health Foundation.



TEXAS GAS TRANSMISSION CORPORATION

P. O. Box 1160 - 3800 Frederica Street
Owensboro Kentucky 42302
Phone 502/926-8686



C. Waitman Taylor, Jr. Vice-President
of State Governmental Affairs

May 4, 1989

Mr. Jerry Long
Kentucky Room Assistant
Owensboro Public Library
450 Griffith Avenue
Owensboro, KY 42301

Dear Jerry:

Thank you for collecting data on the Owensboro Mayors.

Enclosed is my biographical sketch and also a copy of the editorial that appeared in the Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer on Monday, January 5, 1976, at the completion of my term as Mayor. This editorial gives most of my accomplishments in office. I am sorry for the poor quality of the copy but we copied it from material in a frame.

I believe you have the January 5, 1976, edition of the Messenger-Inquirer on microfilm at the library and that you can make a much better copy than this. If you would do that I would be very appreciative.

Sincerely,

C. Waitman Taylor, Jr.

CWT,Jr:slr

Enclosures



C. Waitman Taylor, Jr. – Biographical Sketch

(Received from Waitman Taylor in 1989)

Date of Birth: September 18, 1927 Lewisport, KY

Education:

- Lewisport, KY, High School-Graduated 1945
- BS in Business Administration - 1951 University of Kentucky

Military:

- Air Force - 1946 and 1947
- Holds rank of Captain in Air Force Reserve (Retired)

Marital Status:

- Married to Patricia Weihe Taylor

Children:

- Waitman Brannon Taylor
- Frank Calhoun Taylor
- William Longest Taylor
- Margaret Lischy Taylor

Home Address:

- 409 Griffith Avenue, Owensboro, KY 42301

Employment:

- General Electric Company, Owensboro, KY April 1952 to July 1976. Various Assignments Include: Time and Motion Analyst; Foreman responsible for production of 160 employees; Sales and Marketing Specialist; Supervisor of Personnel; Manager of Communications, Community Relations and Employee Benefits
- Mayor city of Owensboro (1972-1975)
- Texas Gas Transmission Corporation July 15, 1976 to present
- Manager, Public Affairs 1976 to 1980
- Director of State Governmental Affairs-May 1981 to 1987
- Vice President of State Governmental Affairs-July 1987 to present

Current Activities:

- Board of Regents, Murray State University (1987-89)
- Board of Directors of Junior Achievement of Owensboro (1959-
- Owensboro-Daviess County Airport Board (1984-
- Board of Directors, Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Association, Louisiana Division (1987-
- Board of Directors of Associated Industries of Kentucky (1986-
- Board of Directors of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce (1985-
- Board of Trustees of Brescia College (1964 to present) (Board Chairman 1983-85) (1965-headed Brescia's \$600,000 fund-raising campaign to build new science building)
- Chairman of the Mayor's Crime Prevention Committee (1984-)
- Member of Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence (formerly known as Committee on Higher Education in Kentucky's Future) (1983-
- Board of Directors of Leadership Owensboro and enrolled in first Leadership Kentucky Class which began April, 1985
- Board of Directors of Blue Cross/Blue Shield Delta Dental Plan of Kentucky (1985-
- Board of Directors, Governor's Scholars Program (1985-

Past Activities:

- Executive Secretary of Owensboro-Daviess County Industrial Foundation (1957-1967)
- General Chairman of Community Chest Campaign (1961 and 1962)

- Secretary-Treasurer of Owensboro-Daviess County Hospital (1958-Jan. 1, 1970)
- President of Owensboro Country Club (1962)
- president of the Owensboro-Daviess County Chamber of Commerce (1968)
- Elected City Commissioner of Owensboro (November 1969)
- Elected Mayor Pro Tem by City Commissioners (January 5, 1970)
- Elected Mayor of Owensboro, Kentucky, for four year term (Jan. 3, 1972-Jan. 5, 1976)
- President of Junior Achievement of Owensboro (1975)
- Trustee of University of Louisville (1978-82)

Recognitions:

- Owensboro's Outstanding Young Man of the Year (1958)
- Liberty Bell Citizenship Award (1968) (Daviess County Bar Association)
- Civitan Club Citizen of the Year (1975)
- United Way Humanitarianism Award (1985)
- Heritage Award (1985)



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 3 November 1971, p.1A:

Taylor Wins Mayor's Race

Waitman Taylor Jr. will be the next mayor of Owensboro on the basis of his heavy endorsement by the voters in the election Tuesday he defeated Howard B.Carrico, 8,322 to 4,438.

.... Taylor carried 34 of the city's 38 precincts, losing only Nos. 2, 6, 19 and 37.

.... Taylor's 8,322 votes were better than the 7,478 he received in 1969 when he elected to his first time as commissioner.

.... Commenting on his victory, Taylor said, "I am very grateful to the citizens of Owensboro for their support and confidence and look forward to serving with the newly elected commissioners.

"I had help from many people from all walks of life. And to everyone, I say thank you."

"I am extremely pleased with the turnout and margin (of victory). I had worked hard and many worked hard for me. It is very gratifying. I know all the new commissioners personally and we can work to make a fine city."



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 5 January 1976, p.4A editorial:

Mayor Taylor leaves a legend

Waitman Taylor leaves office today with comfort in the knowledge he is a well-liked former mayor.

Owensboro can look back at his administration with grateful amazement. He was a builder and we believe he made the citizens of Owensboro more conscious of their town than any of his many predecessors.

Reviewing his four years, it becomes hard to believe that a man in a \$4,800-a-year job reacted on a 24-hour basis to the needs of the city and the grievances of its people.

They may kid him about the 8,000 letters, directives, advisories, reprimands and laudations he wrote during his term. Counting copies, he may have signed 64,000 messages. A large amount of this intra-administration mail relayed citizen complaints and ideas to the appropriate department heads. Mayor Taylor must have set a record in responsiveness to the irritations of the citizenry.

The new parks and improved old ones, swimming pools, widened and resurfaced thoroughfares, the new city hall, the secondary sewage treatment plant, the developing riverport, the arts center, a well-deployed and equipped fire department are evidence of his determination to move his city forward.

In fairness to previous administrations, it must be noted that Taylor, with new millions of federal revenue-sharing funds, had more money than any other Owensboro mayor. He managed it superbly. By the May 31 end of this fiscal year, bills and payrolls will have been met with \$500,000 untouched in the treasury.

In his farewell remarks, he emphasized his solutions to what he sees as future city revenue problems: He recommended a strong annexation policy to assure that new residential and industrial areas needing city services will broaden the city tax base. made clear to the incoming board of commissioners his feeling about the importance of allowing OMU the rates needed to maintain OMU's annual, substantial contributions to the city budget.

Taylor's administration was enlivened by a refreshing openness in the conduct of city affairs. It is hoped the incoming board continues to acknowledge the popularity and the benefit to the public of the state's 1974 "sunshine" law.

Taylor has shown an awareness of the underemployment of blacks by the city government, a situation, however, that improved during his tenure. Overall, he enjoyed the respect of some 475 city employes who have responded with better work for better compensation. There is more camaraderie among city workers than ever before, some of this due to Taylor's timely recognition of their performance.

Party politics were invisible, as they should be, during Taylor's years at city hall. It is not our normal proclivity to make recommendations to the Republican party of Kentucky. However, Republicans of late have been murmuring about their shortage of attractive candidates for state and district offices. Republican leaders ought to visit Owensboro and evaluate the outstanding record compiled by Mayor Waitman Taylor. They are sure to discover someone they have been looking for.



Owensboro: The City on the Yellow Banks, Lee A. Dew & Aloma W. Dew,
(Bowling Green, KY: Rivendell Publications, 1988), pp.193-194:

The election of C. Waitman Taylor as mayor in 1972 is a major benchmark in Owensboro's history. In that year the city had a budget surplus for the first time since 1967, thanks in part to the beginning of the federal revenue-sharing programs. When Taylor left office four years later, he left the city with a treasury surplus of \$500,000; yet few mayors have accomplished so much and been so respected and well-liked by the electorate.

Taylor chose not to utilize "windfall" funds provided by revenue sharing for operating expenses, but for things which the city could not otherwise afford. A new city hall was completed in 1975 at a cost of \$1,597,000. Two recreational centers were built in city parks, and a new swimming pool was constructed at Chautauqua Park. Much road work—resurfacing, widening, curbing and guttering, and sewer work—was done. The Taylor administration acquired the government-owned land at the old lock and dam site and began work on what was to become English Park. Kendall Perkins Park was renovated, a new sewage treatment plant constructed, an arts center established at the site of an old fire station at Eighteenth and Daviess streets, and other smaller projects completed.

At the same time that much-needed projects were being tackled, the city was threatened with the loss of its fire insurance rating because of inadequate fire stations. The Taylor administration spearheaded a bond issue to be paid off by a tax on insurance policies, the proceeds of which provided funds for new fire stations and a city garage. New firehouses were built on Fifth, Twenty-fifth and Ninth streets, and the old station on Eighteenth Street was abandoned, to be used as an art center, and later as a home for the Owensboro Symphony Orchestra.

When the old city hall and fire station number 1 were demolished to make way for a parking lot, preservationists and the Daviess County Historical Society raised concern that another bit of Owensboro's history was being razed. A suggestion was made that at least some of the old bricks could be used for a fence around the lot, so when the brick and wrought-iron fence was built, some of the bricks from the old city hall, some dating back to 1860, were used in the columns.

The Taylor years were years of building and years of pride in Owensboro. Taylor's vision and wise use of government monies available at the time through revenue sharing enabled the completion of many projects vital to the city. His openness and enthusiasm created a climate of optimism and a new pride in the city as evidenced by the testimonial banquet attended by about 1,300 people in his honor at the Sports-center at the end of his term. U. S. Senator Wendell Ford praised Taylor's enthusiasm and imagination and said that Taylor had been willing to tackle issues and concepts that had been left alone too long.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 5 November 1991, pp.1 & 5C:

**Former mayor honored
for work to aid Owensboro**
City Hall renamed 'C. Waitman Taylor Jr. Municipal Building'

By Dan Heckel, Messenger-Inquirer



C. Waitman Taylor Jr. was honored Monday with a ceremony renaming Owensboro's City Hall for him. Taylor was mayor from 1972-75, and his administration secured money to build City Hall.

Waitman Taylor said he hadn't seen a crowd as large in the Owensboro City Commission chambers since his administration levied a garbage tax.

"There was not a standing ovation that night," he said Monday.

But Taylor received an ovation Monday from a standing-room-only crowd at a ceremony renaming City Hall the "C. Waitman Taylor Jr. Municipal Building." Taylor was mayor from 1972-75 and it was his administration that secured the \$1.46 million of federal revenue sharing money to build City Hall. It opened in May 1975.

Frigid temperatures sent the well-wishers inside, where after introductions by Mayor David Adkisson, attorney Morton Holbrook gave an overview of what Taylor meant to the city. "Beginning in 1973, he outlined 23 extra projects," Holbrook said. With the help of his city commissioners and staff, he accomplished 22 of them that year, he said.

Projects completed during Taylor's term included paving 47 miles of streets including Veach Road, Leitchfield Road and Crabtree Avenue; building two new fire stations and a fire training tower; building two recreation centers at Chautauqua and Dugan Best parks; and beginning the bus system, Holbrook said.

Taylor's energy to complete his goals in one term led Holbrook to compare him to "a meteor across the summer sky."

There was some good-natured ribbing among the accolades. Holbrook said Taylor's administration raised taxes. "Oh, excuse me Waitman, I mean received an enhancement of revenue," he said. Taylor learned early he got more votes by kissing the mothers rather than their babies, Holbrook said.

Adkisson introduced former mayors Cap Gardner, J.R. Miller and Jack Fisher, then said, "They showed up because they thought it would be a roast."

Taylor and his wife, Pat, left with more than just a building bearing his name. His wife was presented a bouquet of roses, and the Taylors were given a portrait of City Hall done by local artist Rex Robinson. Adkisson showed a plaque with Taylor's likeness on it that will hang in the lobby.

Taylor immediately thanked the commissioners who served with him, George Greer, Alton Puckett, Russell Shifley and Fisher. "They wanted this building as bad as I did," Taylor said.

He reminisced about how three architects submitted unsigned plans for City Hall, and after one was chosen, they all three worked on its design. He thanked his secretaries with General Electric, City Hall and Texas Gas Transmission Corp. for their years of service, and also Mary Bryan Hood for helping fill the building with paintings.

Taylor was near tears when he spoke of his 94-year-old mother who attended the ceremony, saying he hoped he could do as much with his life as she had with hers.

The throng of people moved outside after a short reception for the unveiling of a three-sided sign with Taylor's name facing both Fourth and Allen streets, and "City Hall" in the middle.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 27 November 1994, p.1C:



Helping bring industries to Owensboro is not a new job for Waitman Taylor, but he does have a new title, Industry Inc. president, which is the county's primary economic development authority. During his years as mayor of Owensboro, Taylor helped create the Owensboro Riverport Authority, part of which can be seen in the background, and was involved in bringing Ragu and Pinkerton Tobacco to Owensboro. Taylor is replacing Hugh Haydon, who resigned in September.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 18 September 2002, pp.1B & 3B:

C. Waitman Taylor, Jr. has spent life strengthening community

TAYLOR-MADE

By Steve Vied, Messenger-Inquirer

C. Waitman Taylor Jr. didn't lack for role models when he was growing up in Lewisport. When he was born 75 years ago today, his father, C. Waitman Taylor Sr., was already an up-and-coming businessman and entrepreneur, a man who would someday lead a charge that dramatically changed the economic landscape of Hancock County.

The elder Taylor, who operated a funeral home in Lewisport in addition to his other business and community interests, died Sept. 4, 1972.

Even before that, Taylor's grandfather, J.B. Taylor, was a state representative.

"Being from a small town, especially in the funeral business, you get to know a lot about the human race and the needs of people," Taylor said. "Certainly, I was expected to make a mark in the community by community service. That was a given, and the smaller the town the greater the obligation you feel."

Taylor was involved in his father's campaign for the state House in 1943, and accompanied him on business trips. Two decades later he helped him bring the Harvey Aluminum rolling mill to Hancock County.

"I saw how he worked and how people respected him," Taylor said. "He told me I was expected to do the same."

By any measure, Taylor has lived up to his father's expectations. For 50 years, since he took a job with General Electric in 1952, Taylor has dedicated himself not only to his jobs, but also to his community.

In recognition of his service, the public is invited to a 75th birthday party for Taylor from 5 to 7 tonight at the RiverPark Center, hosted by his friends.

Fifty-one years ago Taylor was a fresh-faced graduate of the University of Kentucky, armed with a bachelor's degree in business administration. His college career had been interrupted by an 18-month stint (1946-47) in the Air Force, where he worked in the weather service. Upon graduation he returned to Hancock County and went to work in management for a local coal company, the same company he worked for previously as a coal loader.

But Taylor's career in coal mining was cut short when he learned of a job at General Electric in Owensboro. He arrived at the Ninth Street tube plant in 1952.

"They had an opening for a wage rate setter," Taylor said. "You go around and time people and set wages for piece work."

Soon, however, Taylor worked his way up to foreman in the parts shop, then went into marketing and sales.

Meanwhile, Taylor involved himself in his adopted community.

"My dad said, 'As soon as you get over there, get involved in civic and charity affairs,' " he said.

Evidently, someone noticed. In March of 1957 GE loaned him out to raise money to launch an industrial foundation.

"Berkley Davis (president of the GE plant) said I'm sending you to Texas Gas to raise \$250,000 in three months," Taylor said. "I was stunned."

Starting an industrial foundation was a joint effort of GE and Texas Gas. Taylor hit local banks and utilities and soon had the money. The foundation purchased land for its first industrial park, about 350 acres on the Ohio River east of Green River Steel, where W.R. Grace built a plant. It was the first of several industrial parks that lured industry and jobs to Daviess County.

In 1963 Taylor left GE to be vice president for community affairs at Central Bank and Trust. For Taylor, it was a rare setback.

"They sold the bank and I limped back to GE," he said.

Taylor left GE for good in 1976, long past the company's peak here, for Texas Gas, where he worked until 1992, retiring as vice president for state governmental affairs. Meanwhile, he was elected to the Owensboro City Commission in 1970 and was elected mayor in 1972.

"In 1969, Cris Kastner, the general manager at GE, came to me and said, 'Taylor, you're not much, but you're all we've got. You're running for City Commission.' I could see I had no choice," Taylor said.

City government was sputtering when Taylor arrived at City Hall.

"The city was broke," he said. "It couldn't pay the payroll. We put the garbage tax on at \$3 a month. That enabled us to use revenue sharing money for projects. We were able to do a lot of things. We had a \$500,000 surplus at the end of my term."

As mayor from 1972 to 1975, Taylor was involved in bringing Pinkerton Tobacco and Ragu to Owensboro and in creating the Owensboro Riverport Authority. It was his administration that secured the \$1.46 million of federal revenue sharing money to build City Hall, which opened in May 1975. Projects completed during Taylor's term included paving 47 miles of streets, including Veach Road, Leitchfield Road and Crabtree Avenue; building two new fire stations and a fire training tower; building recreation centers at Chautauqua and Dugan Best parks and beginning the bus system.

City Hall was later renamed the "C. Waitman Taylor Jr. Municipal Building."

"If I can emphasize one thing, it is how much I appreciate the work of the other commissioners who served with me and the help I received," Taylor said.

From 1994 until a month ago Taylor was executive director of the Owensboro-Daviess County Industry Inc. He resigned that post to become executive director of the Foundation for Health at Owensboro Mercy Health System. Once again, his primary function is raising money.

Through the years, Taylor has chaired or been co-chairman of nine major fund-raising efforts, including the United Way campaign, three drives for Brescia University and one for the Owensboro Museum of Fine Art. He has been a member of the boards of regents or trustees at Brescia University, the University of Louisville and Murray State University. He is a past elder, deacon and Sunday School teacher at First Presbyterian Church.

"I've been very fortunate," Taylor said.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 15 April 2011,
Supplement – “Recognition of a Local Visionary –
C. Waitman Taylor: 59 Years of Service to Our Community”, pp.2-6:**

Owensboro's Best Friend



Waitman Taylor poses for a photo in front of the C. Waitman Taylor, Jr. Municipal Building

By Messenger-Inquirer

He was born in Hancock County, but, in a career that has spanned 59 years and counting, Cloran Waitman Taylor Jr. could easily be called "Mr. Owensboro."

There are few segments of the Owensboro community that haven't been touched by Taylor since he arrived in town in April 1952 to become a wage rate setter at the General Electric plant on Ninth Street.

As mayor in the early 1970s, he championed the arts, recreation, sewage treatment and fire protection. And his administration built the Owensboro Riverport and City Hall.

As a fundraiser, Taylor has raised millions of dollars for charities and nonprofits, including the establishment of the Owensboro-Daviess County Industrial Foundation.

"He's the varsity cheerleader for our community," Kirk Kirkpatrick of Wax Works, who also fits that description, said recently.

"In all seriousness, his ability to envision a better Owensboro, garner consensus and get the right people involved set the foundation for much of our community's success," Kirkpatrick said.

"Waitman Taylor set the standard for Owensboro's progressive quality of life during his tenure as mayor in the early 1970s, providing the catalyst that has resulted in its recognition as a regional center for the arts," said Mary Bryan Hood, director of the Owensboro Museum of Fine Art.

Taylor, she said, was "an innovator. He introduced the concept of municipal funding for the arts; established the first municipal arts council; raised money to acquire the Municipal Art Collection, a group of 44 paintings that provides a historical record of Owensboro as it looked in the late 20th century; introduced the idea of municipal housing for the arts by allowing a fire station to be adapted for offices for arts groups; and was the first elected official to publicly acknowledge the economic value of the arts when he coined the phrase, "The arts mean progress and a progressive community is most attractive to new industry."

After leaving office, Hood said, Taylor became a member of the board of directors of the Owensboro Museum of Fine Art and chaired its 1990 Capital Campaign, raising more than \$1 million toward the 1994 expansion, which tripled the size of the museum.

"No one person has done more to enhance the quality of life in Owensboro than Waitman Taylor," she said. "His legacy will be that he has helped create Owensboro's unique sense of place - a place in which future generations may find pride and pleasure."

MOST WORK WAS BACKSTAGE

"He really did most of his best work backstage, but could always win over the audience when in the spotlight," Kirkpatrick said.

He said: "When I was a kid, Waitman encouraged me to become more involved and always made me feel really special. It was always Waitman who would place that extra call or write a note congratulating us for our 'service.'"

Born Sept. 18, 1927, in Lewisport, Taylor enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1946, a year after graduating from Lewisport High School. After leaving active duty in 1947, he remained in the Air Force Reserve, retiring as a captain in 1966.

In 1951, with a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Kentucky, Taylor returned home to Hancock County as an assistant to L.R. Chapman, a coal company operator, for whom he had earlier worked as a coal loader.

In April 1952, he moved to Owensboro for a job as a wage rate setter in the tube department at the General Electric plant, which- was fast becoming the largest employer the region has ever seen.

Five years later, GE tapped Taylor to lead his first fund drive. His mission was to raise \$250,000 to fund the new Owensboro-Daviess County Industrial Foundation, which was formed to buy industrial sites for development.

Taylor raised \$253,000 in three months and quickly acquired a reputation as a rainmaker, a fundraiser who could get the job done.

He was named executive secretary of the industrial foundation, a non-paid post he held for the next decade.

OUTSTANDING YOUNG MAN OF 1958

In 1958, Taylor was named Owensboro's Outstanding Young Man. That year, he was named secretary-treasurer of the Owensboro-Daviess County Hospital board.

He chaired the Community Chest campaign in both 1961 and 1962 and was elected president of Owensboro Country Club in 1962.

Six years later, Taylor was elected to what's now chairman of the Owensboro-Daviess County Chamber of Commerce.

General Electric, along with Texas Gas Transmission Corp., played a big role behind the scenes in Owensboro then.

In 1969, GE officials "pretty much asked me to run" for city commissioner, Taylor said in an interview once.

"Their position was 'we would like to see the people of Owensboro have a chance to elect a man with business experience. If you run and the people don't want you, we understand. On the other hand, if you run and you win, in no way will we ever interfere," he said. "And I couldn't ask for any better situation."

Not only did Taylor win a seat on the city commission, he was elected mayor pro tem.

Two years later, he was elected mayor, a post that paid \$4,800 a year.

Taylor was still manager of community relations and employee benefits at GE, but the company allowed him to devote almost fulltime to City Hall.

He refused to accept an expense account as mayor, paying his expenses out of his salary.

As mayor, Taylor championed a new sanitation tax and raised fire insurance premiums to strengthen the city's financial position.

'THE CITY WAS BROKE'

"The city was broke," he recalled years later. "It couldn't pay the payroll. We put the garbage tax on at \$3 a month. That enabled us to use revenue-sharing money for projects. We were able to do a lot of things."

Taylor's administration built the Owensboro Riverport, City Hall, a secondary sewage-treatment plant and the city's first arts center.

His administration also built the fire training facilities at 14th and Daviess streets, three fire stations, Cravens and Combest pools and Shifley Park; did the preliminary work on English Park, restored the Trinity Centre, secured the land for Thompson-Berry Park, paved 47 miles of streets and brought back city bus service.

Taylor also helped recruit Pinkerton Tobacco and Ragu to build plants Owensboro.

As he left office, Taylor suggested that the next administration extend the city's borders "as far as you can."

A poll near the end of his administration found that 51 percent of those surveyed said he was doing "a pretty good job" and 33 percent rated his performance as "excellent."

Those numbers were unheard of, the polling company said.

Taylor left office with a surplus of \$533,546— worth about \$2.1 million today.

He was a progressive Republican, although he had served as a nonpartisan commissioner and mayor.

Many people in Owensboro expected Taylor to become governor, maybe even a U.S. senator some day.

But transistors were replacing radio tubes around the world and the GE tube plant here was in free fall. The plant had shed more than 5,000 jobs between the time Taylor was running for city commissioner and the time he left office as mayor.

In 1976, he left GE to become manager of public affairs at Texas Gas as well as the company's liaison with state legislators.

Texas Gas officials didn't want Taylor involved directly with politics and his elected career ended.

But his behind-the-scenes work continued to grow.

His Texas Gas years saw Taylor serving on the boards of the University of Louisville, Brescia College (now University) and Murray State University.

He also served on the boards of the Owensboro-Daviess County Regional Airport and the Owensboro Museum of Fine Art, chaired the 1992 United Way campaign and became co-founder and chairman of the Community Foundation of Owensboro-Daviess County.

In 1991, the city renamed City Hall the C. Waitman Taylor Jr. Municipal Building,

After retiring from Texas Gas, Taylor served as president/executive director of Industry Inc., a forerunner of the Greater Owensboro Economic Development Corp., from Nov. 1, 1994—Aug. 15, 2002.

He left that post to become executive director of the Foundation for Health at Owensboro Medical Health System, a job he still holds.

Five years ago, Taylor wrote that his years in Owensboro "have offered me many interesting opportunities. I have observed two generations of leadership, how they have worked to solve our problems and lay groundwork for the future of Owensboro-Daviess County."

Looking to the future, Taylor said, "Our potential is great. We just need to remember that the kind of jobs Owensboro has today and will have in the future differs from the past. We can continue to progress if we educate and retool our work force, apply innovative thinking and strategic planning, and take a few risks.'

Taylor's life has been touched by tragedy twice – the deaths of his first wife, Margaret Brannon Taylor, and his son, Dr. Waitman Brannon Taylor.

But, he said, once, "Each time I struggled and picked myself up."

Today, he and his wife, Patricia W. Taylor, have been married 24 years.

Taylor's surviving children are Frank Calhoun Taylor, William Longest Taylor and Margaret Lischey Taylor Kramer.

He also has three stepchildren, Katy Weihe, Kendall Weihe and Kristi McAnulty; 19 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren, who call him "Da."

Important dates in the life of C. Waitman Taylor Jr.

- Born Sept. 18, 1927, Lewisport
- Graduated Lewisport High School, 1945
- U.S. Air Force, Jan. 3, 1946-July 5, 1947. U.S. Air Force Reserve, June 1, 1946-June 1, 1966, retired as a captain
- Bachelor of science degree in business administration from the University of Kentucky, 1951
- Assistant to L.R. Chapman, L.R. Chapman Inc., a coal company in Hancock County, for which he had earlier worked as a coal loader, 1951-52
- General Electric Co., Owensboro, rising through the years from wage rate setter to manager of communications, community relations and employee benefits, April 1952-July 1976
- Executive secretary of Owensboro-Daviess County Industrial Foundation, 1957-67
- Owensboro's Outstanding Young Man, 1958
- Secretary-treasurer of Owensboro-Daviess County Hospital board, 1958-1970
- Community Chest campaign general chairman, 1961 and 1962
- President of Owensboro Country Club, 1962
- Vice president for community affairs at Central Bank and Trust, Feb. 1 – Dec. 31, 1963. Returned to General Electric
- President (title is now chairman) of Owensboro-Daviess County Commerce, 1968
- Owensboro City Commissioner (mayor pro tem), 1970-72
- Owensboro Mayor, 1972-76
- President of Junior Achievement, 1975. Member of the board of 1959-92
- Texas Gas Transmission Corp., July 1976-June 30, 1992, retiring president for state governmental affairs. Consultant for the company, July 1, 1992 - Oct. 31, 1994
- University of Louisville board of trustees, 1978-82
- Chairman of Brescia University board of trustees, 1983-85. Member board of trustees, 1964-94
- Owensboro-Daviess County Regional Airport board of directors, 1984-90
- Member of first Leadership Kentucky class, 1985
- Murray State University board of regents, 1987-89
- Vice chairman of Owensboro Museum of Fine Art board of directors, 1989-92

- City Hall renamed C. Waitman Taylor Jr. Municipal Building, 1991
- United Way campaign chairman, 1992
- Co-founder and chairman of Community Foundation of Owensboro-Daviess County, 1993-95
- President/executive director of Industry Inc. (forerunner of Great Owensboro Economic Development Corp.) Nov. 1, 1994-Aug. 15, 2002
- Received the Philanthropic Lifetime Achievement Award from the Western Kentucky Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals in 2001
- Executive director of the Foundation for Health at Owensboro Medical Health System, 2002- present



Cloran Waitman Taylor, Jr. (1927-2019) was buried in the Beauchamp Cemetery near Lewisport in Hancock County, KY.

