

Mike Gallagher, prominent Hesperia developer, passes away

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Gallagher passed Friday after suffering a massive heart attack while at lunch with long-time close friend Hesperia Mayor Paul Russ. He was 68.

Russ, who considers Gallagher his best friend and had known him for 25-plus years, said his death was “totally unexpected.”

“He died doing what he loved doing, talking deals, talking about construction, building,” Russ said Saturday. “It was quick and he didn’t suffer.”

Well-known in circles in Hesperia, Gallagher, as a single developer, was likely one of the largest in the city going back to its incorporation in 1988, according to Russ.

Mostly a high-quality residential home developer, he had moved into the commercial sector as well, and if there was a swath of territory best reflective of his work on both fronts, Russ said, it would be in developments near Rancho Road and Interstate 15.

Russ credited Gallagher with developing the first million-dollar homes in the desert during the market peak in the mid-2000s and increasing the equity in the Victor Valley as a result.

Outside of his business acumen, Gallagher's generosity was recalled as the other side to the "tough negotiator."

Gallagher, a devout Catholic survived by a wife and two children, had donated millions of dollars to his kids' Claremont high school, according to Russ, who also remembered Gallagher's immediate response when Russ became seriously ill.

"The first thing he said was, 'whatever you need. Money's not an object, whatever you need. If you need me to pay for it, I'll do it,'" Russ said.

Although Russ declined the offer, the sentiment, he said, was a fair representation of Gallagher's character.

Joseph W. Brady, president of The Bradco Companies, said he first met Gallagher in late 1986, not long after Brady first visited the Victor Valley.

Speaking of Gallagher and his business partner, Brady said: "They were both true land people, visionaries and they loved land development, syndications and helping their investors make money."

Brady, who cited Gallagher's large stature as always memorable, referenced the developer's 30-year wait to see the Rancho Road Interchange built.

"It is sad that he did not get a chance," Brady said, "to see the grand opening he waited so long to see."

Meanwhile, Russ and Gallagher spoke everyday in some capacity, either by call or text, and Russ on Saturday was understandably dealing with the loss.

"It's been a rough 24 hours," he said. "I'll get through it, but it won't be the same."

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