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Community bids farewell to longtime political leader

Services held Monday for Chandler-

TRINITY -- Flags over both the Trinity City Hall and the Trinity County Courthouse in Groveton flew at half-staff Monday to honor the memory of a longtime public servant.

Joe Oscar Chandler, 59, incumbent Precinct 2 Justice of the Peace and former Trinity mayor, was laid to rest Monday following services attended by hundreds of mourners at the Trinity High School gymnasium.

He died Friday, March 15, 2002, in a Houston hospital after suffering a stroke and heart attack on election day, March 12.

Chandler, who was running for a fifth four-year term as justice of the peace, was found unconscious in his home on the morning of March

12 after he failed to arrive at the local polls to greet voters.

Although he remained unconscious until his death, Chandler easily won the Democratic Party's nomination to the JP2 post, defeating challenger Randal Dixon by a vote margin of 749 (68.5%) to 344.

Because of his death, the Trinity County Democratic Party's executive committee will have to meet sometime after April 29 to name a replacement candidate for the November general election ballot.

Chandler's death means both the Republican and Democratic party nominees to the JP2 position are now deceased. Jesse Franklin of Trinity, who was unopposed for the GOP nomination, died Feb. 21 following a heart attack.

On Monday, Trinity County Judge Mark Evans said the county commissioners' court would probably appoint a temporary replacement to the JP2 office at their next meeting.

The winner of the November general election could take office as soon as the vote is canvassed.

"Joe Chandler's life was dedicated to serving people and to helping them solve their problems," Evans said. "He will be missed."

The judge noted in addition to his years as a justice of the peace, Chandler had been a public servant for most of his adult life.

"Through his service as a justice of the peace, mayor, city councilman and even school trustee, Joe always was looking for ways to better the community.

"He was very familiar with the workings of government at all lev-

els and he was never afraid to pick up the telephone and make a call on behalf of someone who needed help," Evans added.

In addition to his duties as JP, Chandler also had served as the City of Trinity's municipal court judge since May 1994.

Mayor Lyle Stubbs said Monday a replacement judge would be considered by the city council at their next meeting. Precinct 3 Justice of the Peace Bobby Nicholds of Trinity has been acting as the interim municipal court judge since Chandler was hospitalized on March 12.

Stubbs, who also was Chandler's next door neighbor, said Monday the judge would be missed by a great number of people in the Trinity area.

"He helped a lot of people and he has done a lot for our community over the years," Stubbs said of Chandler. "He was a community minded person who would go out of his way to help people and the city."

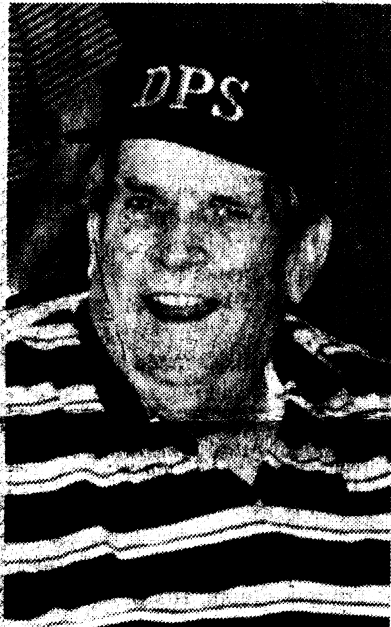
Trinity City Secretary Karen Hatter said Chandler was "a member of the city family" whose passing will be felt by a great number of people.

"He was always full of stories and he kept us smiling," Hatter said. "He really was a legend."

Services were held at 2 p.m. Monday at the high school gym with the Rev. Mike Loftin officiating. Burial followed in the Cedar Grove Cemetery in Trinity.

Delivering eulogies during the funeral service were Bruce Tuler, chief of the bureau of classification

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JOE CHANDLER
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