

OBITUARIES

LONG ISLAND

Hundreds gather in tribute to Paul Townsend

BY JAMES BERNSTEIN
STAFF WRITER

They came from different worlds — business, politics, education, journalism — but they were all there to pay tribute to Paul Townsend, one of the region's most vocal advocates for economic development and the former editor of Long Island Business News, who died April 30 at age 86.

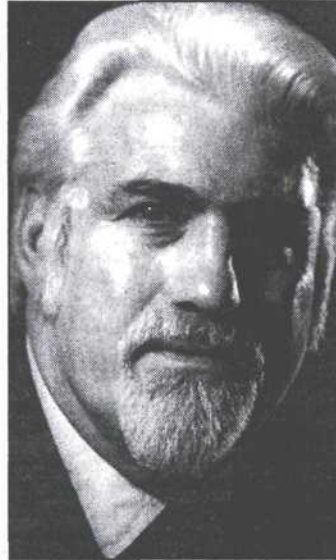
They gathered Friday under gray skies and a slight drizzle for a memorial service at the old All Saints Episcopal Church in Great Neck to tell and hear stories about the man whose force was felt in word and deed beginning just after World War II — the dawn of modern Long Island — and ending in the late 1990s, a time of

increasing cultural diversity and change.

"When we one day write the book of Long Island, Paul Townsend will have a chapter by himself," said Thomas Suozzi, the Nassau County executive, who was one of half a dozen speakers at the service, attended by about 200 people.

Suozzi and other speakers recalled that Townsend, a 10th-generation Long Islander, played key roles in developing Levittown, North Shore Hospital and the Fire Island National Seashore. He was the editor of Long Island Business News, a Ronkonkoma-based weekly he owned with his wife, Terry, for 45 years.

His column, "The Townsend Letter," criticized unions — teachers' unions in particular



Paul Townsend in 1999

— and others Townsend believed stood in the way of progress, and praised those he felt advanced the region's development. The Townsends, of Bellport, sold the paper to Dolan Media in 1998.

Albert Donor, president of Dowling College in Oakdale — where the business school is named after Paul and Terry Townsend — called Townsend "a visionary" and praised him for "insisting that we have the best education for our children in our own backyard."

Another speaker, Robert W. Greene, a retired Newsday assistant managing editor, said he had been Townsend's friend for 50 years, and recalled long-ago battles Townsend fought and won, including one that

stopped legendary builder Robert Moses' plan to build a road through the Fire Island sand dunes.

Instead, Townsend worked successfully to establish the federally protected national seashore.

"Long Island was his lifetime love affair," Greene said. "It was what he was all about."

One of Townsend's sons, Tobin Townsend, recalled that when he first got a driver's license he and his father drove around New York City and Long Island.

Townsend was a force even then, his son said. "He told me that if the car ahead of you makes the red light, there's no reason for you not to make the red light too," Tobin Townsend said.