

Prominent Calgary businessman, philanthropist Ross Glen dies

'If there's one lesson that we should all take from his legacy, it's that ... we survive and thrive through the relationships that we develop and maintain,' said Calgary Chamber of Commerce president and CEO Deborah Yedlin

By Noah Brennan Published Mar 09, 2025



Ross Glen, president of RGO Office Products, poses in the showroom in 2015. Wil Andruschak/Postmedia file

Standing at six foot three, Ross Glen's grand physical stature was matched by an exuberant presence and passion for helping others, his family says.

The prominent Calgary businessman and philanthropist died Saturday morning at the age of 87.

Glen founded RGO Office Products in 1966 with just three employees. Over the decades, he built it into a multimillion-dollar operation with around 200 staff across Calgary, Edmonton and Canmore, providing a wide range of office products and services.

Beyond his business success, Glen leaves behind a legacy defined by his entrepreneurial spirit and a deep commitment to giving back to his community.

In an interview, Glen's daughters, Cathy Orr and Debbie Will, described their father's passing as a "massive loss" and shared how they will remember him.

"He had a presence about him that filled the room," Orr said. "He was always fun to be with."



Calgary businessman and philanthropist Ross Glen died Saturday morning at the age of 87. Supplied by Cathy Orr

Glen was also known for his curiosity, sometimes being called "Curious George" by loved ones.

He was also an avid sports fan, rarely missing a Stampeders game since childhood. His daughters fondly recalled that they always knew when it was game day for the [Calgary Flames](#) because their father would be wearing his Flames tie.

Glen espoused values of following one's passions, building relationships and working hard, his daughters said.

His entrepreneurial journey started young — his first job was delivering newspapers at age 10.

“He had the biggest route in the city,” Orr said, adding, “and he got them all on a payment plan.”



RGO Products founder Ross Glen with his daughter, Cathy Orr, in 2016. Postmedia file

Glen later worked servicing typewriters at Underwood Ltd./Olivetti before transitioning into sales. That experience gave him the knowledge and confidence to start his own company.

While he made an indelible mark on Calgary’s business community, Glen was equally devoted to philanthropy, quietly supporting numerous causes.

Glen’s charitable contributions focused on health, education and community initiatives, with major donations to organizations such as the Calgary Stampede, Heritage Park and Bow Valley College.

When the Calgary Zoo flooded in 2013, Glen was among the first to step forward with support, Orr said.



Ross Glen of RGO receives a thank-you plaque from Bow Valley College in 2011 for the \$1 million he donated. Christina Ryan/Postmedia

Glen was ‘the quintessential community builder’: Calgary Chamber of Commerce

Calgary Chamber of Commerce president and CEO Deborah Yedlin said word of his passing was “very sad news,” calling him “the quintessential community builder” in Calgary.

“If there’s one lesson that we should all take from his legacy, it’s that ... we survive and thrive through the relationships that we develop and maintain,” Yedlin said. “It’s always been important, and Ross always knew that.”

Yedlin went on to praise Glen’s business acumen, observing how his business has “evolved with the city” over the past 65 years, navigating economic challenges and adapting business models, she said.

She said RGO has been an important supporter of the Calgary Chamber, calling the partnership with Glen’s company a “historic relationship.”

“RGO was a very important supporter of the Calgary Chamber,” Yedlin said. “I don’t remember a Chamber event where (Ross) wasn’t supporting it in some way.

“He always had a smile on his face. He was always curious about what was going on (and) wanted to know how to help,” she added. “He always stepped up.

“That’s a mindset we need to see continue,” Yedlin said of how Glen’s legacy can inspire others.

Despite his generosity, Glen never sought out recognition. Orr recalled missing the opening of Mount Royal University's Ross Glen Hall because she didn't even know her father was being honored.

"He never told anybody. That's just who he was," she said, noting his humble nature.



Ross Glen, president of RGO Office Products, at their northeast store in 2006. Jenelle Schneider/Postmedia file

Glen was inducted into the Alberta Business Hall of Fame in 2016. In a 2016 Calgary Herald column, Glen called the achievement "a good honour."

He was also appointed to the Order of Canada for his contributions to business and philanthropy — an achievement his family says he was proud of, but never boasted about.

"He loved Calgary," Orr said. "Anything about the community that made (the city) better, he was in."

Will said her father "lived life big" and did so until the very end.

"I'm just so grateful that he was able to do that," she said.

Glen was diagnosed with melanoma on Feb. 24 and died in hospice Saturday morning, less than a month later.

On Sunday, Will said the loss of her father felt "surreal" as he was still going into work just weeks ago, attending RGO's AGM on Feb. 18.

“He just really marched to his own drum (and) did what he was really passionate about,” she said. “I’m glad he lived life on his terms.

“He wouldn’t have wanted to go out in any other way.”



Ross Glen, as seen in 2011. Bud Moore