

# William E. Rauschenberger Biography



Courtesy of the Elgin History Museum

**WILLIAM E. RAUSCHENBERGER - Class of 1935, b. February 18, 1918 - d. January 16, 2000** From the EHS Yearbook, the Maroon: "Rausch" - College Preparatory, Mask and Bauble 1, 2, 3; Latin Club 2, 3, 4; Jr., Sr. Class Plays 3, 4.

The first graduate of Elgin High School (1935), to become the city's mayor, Bill attended Elgin Junior College and received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Illinois in

1939. Returning home, he was employed in the family's furniture and upholstery business and subsequently enlisted in Company 1, 129th Infantry, Illinois National Guard. He was a sergeant and machine gun section leader when the unit was called into federal service in 1941.

Bill Rauschenberger went overseas in September of 1942. He was stationed in the Fiji Islands and the New Hebrides before landing on Bougainville in the Solomons in November, 1943 with the 37th Division. His unit was later in the campaign to retake the Philippines. Discharged after 37 months in the Pacific, he came home a technical sergeant and battalion sergeant major with a combat infantryman's badge and two battle stars.

The veteran became a charter member of the newly organized Exchange Club in 1946. He married Ruth Rohlfing in 1948 and were the parents of one child, a daughter. They lived at 814 Morgan Street in Elgin for forty years.

In 1946, Bill and his brother John, organized the Rauschenberger Furniture Co. and three years later opened their first store at 407 Bluff City Boulevard. They later expanded into 403 and subsequently took over the entire building. A second outlet, the House of Eaton, was opened on East Chicago Street in 1965. The firm also operated Belvidere Wayside Furniture and a store in Rockford, IL.

The Elgin stores were consolidated at the Bluff City location in 1975 and the name of the firm was changed to Rauschenberger's Wayside Furniture in 1976. After closing the Belvedere and Rockford stores, Bill and John Rauschenberger sold the business to two of John's sons in 1980. The older brothers remained part-time workers until the business was closed in 1984.

An active Republican precinct committeeman, 1962 -1963 and 1966 - 1986, Bill Rauschenberger served as a member of the City Council, 1971 - 1975 and a term in the mayor's office, 1975 -

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1979. Her returned to the City Council to fill a four-month vacancy in 1983. He was defeated in a Republican primary for a seat on the Kane County board in 1986.

Bill Rauschenberg was Elgin's 60th Eagle Scout, a commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1307 in 1988 - 1989 and 1990 - 1991 and president of the Exchange Club, 1953 and 1983 - 1984 and 1991 - 1992. He was also a district Exchange president, 1970 - 1971.

"Bill was mayor when I came onto the council in 1973," said Elgin Councilman Bob Gilliam.

"He was a fiscal conservative. He was very honest, direct, outspoken in his beliefs. He was a good mayor. He did a nice job for the community."

"He cared a lot about Elgin," said his daughter, Mary King. "He wanted to be involved, to help the community, make it better, support the businesses in Elgin. He was loyal to Elgin."