

Krantz says he runs town like it's his own business

At precisely 12:01 a.m. December 1, 2005, Mayor Gord A. Krantz will have become Milton mayor for quarter of a century.

Mr. Krantz is the longest serving mayor in the history of Milton — and by a hefty margin at that. His closest rival, Sid Childs, served 10 consecutive years.

Some love him, some aren't so warm and fuzzy, but he's been a fixture in Milton for decades. During his lengthy term as mayor, he has changed the face of Milton and moved toward a vision of expansion — for better or for worse a matter of opinion.

When it comes to making decisions about growth or anything else, Mr. Krantz said he brings "hard business sense" to the office of the mayor.

"You need to live within your means," he said. "Don't spend what you don't have."

However, he also said he's an advocator of debt, because a Town needs to dip into the red from time to time if it's to grow.

"There's nothing wrong with going into debt, but you have to be very careful," he said.

With his run as mayor winding down in the coming years, he offered advice to his successors. He cautioned them to be careful, and separate the wants from the needs.

"Too often government attempts to give everybody everything they want," he said. "Run the municipality the way you would run your own business and you'll never go wrong."

And as a former business owner, he knows a bit about running a corporation like the Town of Milton.

He worked in the oil industry as an inde-

pendent wholesale fuel provider for roughly 20 years. In the 1960s, he said he was never interested in public life, but like many he enjoyed talking politics when he visited his barbershop.

One day he was complaining about an issue he can't recall, and another customer challenged him to take action.

"Someone said well if you think you can do any better, why don't you run?" he said.

So in 1965 he ran for a town councillor position and won, and has been a major player in Milton's public life ever since. Now he can scarcely think of his life without the challenges of running a municipal government.

Not saying if he'll run again

As for running in the next election in November 2006, as always, he's not committing to anything yet.

"So many things play into (the decision to run)," he said. "Your health, your personal life, your desire and drive."

"As I always say, good lord willing and I able. If I feel I can still contribute and I'm in reasonably good health, I will run again."

He has always decided from election to election whether he will run again, and he said it certainly was never his initial intention to be mayor this long — it just sort of happened.

"I start things, and then I like to see them through," he said.

"You start something a year or two before, you'd really like to see it through, and it will never end."

He has yet to say no to any mayoral election since he first won. But there was one election he opted out of — the race for

MPP.

"There's one good reason I didn't run," he said. "I've always swung on my own gate."

He explained that he dislikes party politics because it would decrease his sphere of influence by forcing him to vote a certain way, and that's just not how he operates.

"When you're a backbencher, you're told when and how to vote," he said. "Can anyone imagine me being told how to vote?"

That kind of thinking has kept him in public office for more than 40 years, and governing a second generation of young Miltonians. And just as he has tried to win over the older voters with his dedication, he said he wins over the younger ones with his trademark jellybeans, which he's happy to offer anyone who comes to his office.

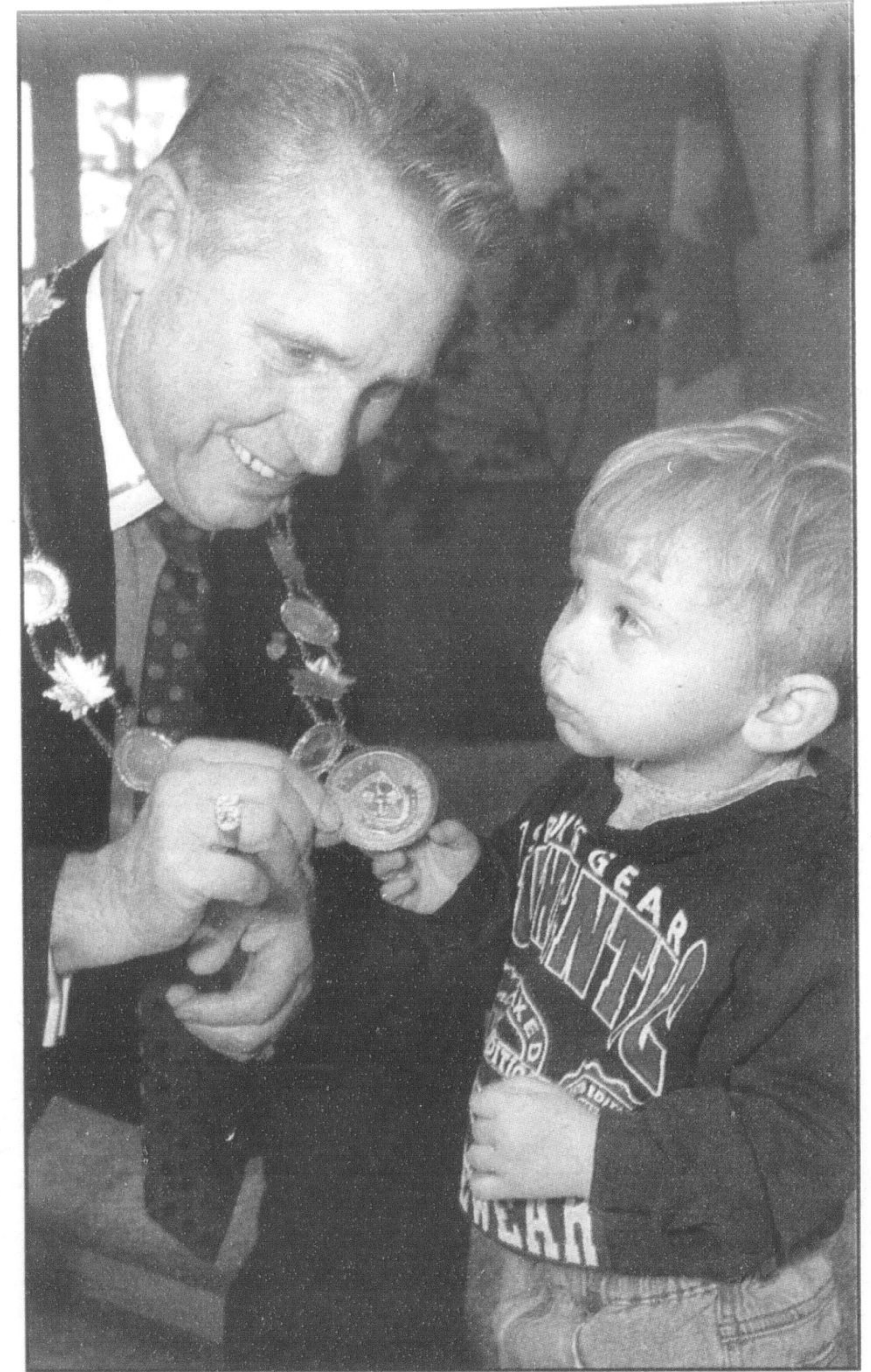
"I want them to know that an elected person can be accessible," he said. "Even at eight or nine years old."

For years he has encouraged school groups to come through his office and take what he calls his '25 cent tour' of Town Hall ("though I've never charged the quarter for it," he said). The kids who now visit often tell him their parents came through his office as children and ate his jellybeans.

"That makes me feel a little long in the tooth," he said.

As Milton's longest serving mayor, the question of legacy often comes up, and while he said he'd like to be remembered as a dedicated public servant, other memories about him may endure longer.

"If I'm remembered for nothing else, I'll be remembered as the mayor with the jellybean jar," he laughed.



File photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Gord Krantz enjoys it when children visit his office. He takes school children on what he calls his '25 cent tour'.

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