

# Inn Between's Allen Overton '61 remembered for intelligence, giving

MS patient once planned cross-country bicycle trip

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Allen Overton ( JILL P. MOTT )

**Donations:** Donna Lovato, executive director of The Inn Between, plans to start a scholarship fund through the Longmont Community Foundation.

LONGMONT -- Allen Overton, the resident manager of The Inn Between, didn't let a 1989 diagnosis of multiple sclerosis or being limited to a wheelchair keep him from getting around Longmont.

"He worked out at the (YMCA) every single day for 19 years," Donna Lovato, executive director of The Inn Between, said Thursday. Even with MS, she said, "he was very strong."

Overton, 73, died Monday at Applewood Living Center, where he was being treated for an infection, Lovato said.



He had lived at The Inn Between since it opened in the fall of 1994, she said.

As resident manager, "Allen was kind of the keeper of the keys," Lovato said. If a resident locked himself out, Overton could let him in. If someone had an emergency at night or on the weekend, he would notify her, she said.

"He was my eyes and ears when I wasn't here," Lovato said.

Before his diagnosis, Overton was a bike messenger in Seattle, and he rode across the country twice: from Seattle to Maryland in 1978, and from Seattle to Detroit to 1983.

He moved to Colorado in 1986, setting down in the St. Vrain Valley area.

Dave Swenson, former owner of Bike-n-Hike, met Overton when he visited the store for help repairing his wheelchair, Swenson said.

In October 2004, the Longmont community donated almost \$5,000 to The Inn Between to provide Overton with a new, titanium wheelchair that weighed 12 pounds less than his previous chair.

After Overton obtained a recumbent three-wheeled hand cycle in 2006, he made plans to ride to his hometown of Spring Valley, Ill.

To train, he rode to Platteville and Mead, as well as around McIntosh Lake.

On the first day, he rode 80 miles to Fort Morgan. He returned, though, because his bicycle seat was too uncomfortable.



Allen Overton, pictured here in 2007, often visited the Longmont Public Library and several stores using a titanium wheelchair purchased in 2004 with community donations. ( BRADLEY WAKOFF )

"The first day, he overextended himself and he was brought back because he just overdid," Swenson said.

With Swenson's help, Overton planned another trip for the spring of 2009, but that never got off the ground.

"It was bigger than he thought," Lovato said.

Both Swenson and Lovato recalled Overton's high intellect and love of books.

"He was very intelligent; he was very well read," Swenson said.

Lovato estimated that Overton had, until recently, 1,000 books in his apartment, many on the history of World War II.

Overton told the Times-Call in 2007 that he'd had several life-changing enlightenments, including giving up drugs, marrying and divorcing three times, moving to India and finding a guru, and changing religions four times.

Religion was often a topic of conversation for Swenson and Overton, said Swenson, a Christian.

"I think he was confused about what the truth was," Swenson said. Overton couldn't allow himself to have a simple faith and was looking for the best way to understand God, he explained.

"He wasn't sure what was the right way to approach God," Swenson said.

Yet, Overton seemingly accepted his disease instead of letting it frustrate him. He always had a positive attitude, Swenson said.

"He was willing to live in whatever situation he was in," Swenson said.

Lovato described Overton as a gentle soul who touched a lot of lives.

"Things were better because of Allen Overton, at The Inn Between, anyway."

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Allen Overton, left, was an avid bicyclist before being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1989 and planned in 2008 to ride his hand-pedaled recumbent bicycle to Illinois. Overton, who died Monday, is pictured here with Mark Drake, in this 2008 photo. ( Magdalena Wegrzyn )