

Erdahl, Arlen



Arlen Erdahl, farmer, legislator, US Congressman, MN Sec. of State, and dedicated public servant, died peacefully, Sept. 21, 2023, at 92, surrounded by family after a long journey with Alzheimer's. Arlen and twin Lowell were born Feb. 27, 1931 and raised on a farm near Blue Earth, MN. Erdahl majored in Speech at St. Olaf College where he excelled as a three season athlete and captained the track team. Erdahl served in the US Army at Ft. Riley, KS, and at the Tachikawa Air Base, Japan. He returned from military service to work the family farm. He married Ellen Syrdal in 1958. They raised six children, traveling from farm to various posts in St. Paul, Boston, Washington DC, and Kingston, Jamaica. In 1965 Erdahl was in the first Bush Foundation Fellowship cohort, earning an M.A. in Public Administration from Harvard and Congressional Fellowships with MI Rep. Gerald Ford and OR Sen. Mark Hatfield. Erdahl served 8 years as Faribault Co. State Rep. and 4 years as MN Sec. of State, followed by an appointment to the MN Public Service Commission. He served four years as MN 1st Cong. Dist. US Rep. Erdahl's politics prioritized foreign

affairs, the environment, agriculture, helping individual constituents, and leveling playing fields, especially for the disabled. As MN legislator he authored the Equal Pay for Equal Work Act, advancing women's rights. In Congress he joined the "Gypsy Moths," an influential coalition of moderate Republicans who advanced social justice and curbed military excesses. Erdahl held presidential appointments as Jamaica Peace Corps Country Dir., Assoc. Dir. of the US Peace Corps, and Asst. Sec. in the US Dept. of Energy. Arlen and Ellen Erdahl returned to Minnesota in 1994 where Erdahl served as Exec. Dir. of MN Intl. Health Volunteers, and was active in the UN Assoc. of MN, Nobel Peace Prize Forum, Growth and Justice, and Sons of Norway. In 2004 he served as Election Observer of historic elections in Ukraine. Erdahl was recognized for his public service by a 1999 Twin Cities International Citizens Award and a 2011 Hubert H. Humphrey Public Leadership Award. Erdahl was preceded in death by parents Christian and Ingeborg Erdahl, brother Lowell, and wife Ellen. He is survived by in-laws Carol Erdahl and Fred and Jan Syrdal, children and in-laws Rolf Erdahl and Carrie Vecchione, Eric Erdahl, John Erdahl, Lars and Molly Erdahl, Laura and Scott Weinberg, Kari and Eric Hagen, 14 grandchildren, and nieces and nephews. Funeral Services will be 11:00 a.m., Oct. 14 at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 4100 Lyndale Ave So., Minneapolis, with interment at Oaklawn Cemetery in Northfield. Visitation Friday, Oct. 13th, 5-8 PM, at Gill Brothers Southwest Chapel, 5801 Lyndale Ave So. and also one hour prior to service at church. Memorials can be directed to the Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute, the Peace Corps Fund, Cure Alzheimer's Fund, or an organization supporting international understanding, nature preservation, or support for the disabled.

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