

NEWS OBITUARIES

# Jerome Blatz, lawyer and state senator

● Blatz was an expert on tax law as an attorney and legislator, and he loved his hometown of Bloomington.

By TIM HARLOW  
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Jerome Blatz loved government. He loved law and he loved politics. Above all, he loved the city of Bloomington, where he was born, grew up, raised a family of nine children and was elected to the state Senate.

"He really was our spiritual leader in Bloomington," said former state legislator Bill Belanger. "Everybody looked up to him. I just remember the respect everybody had for him."

Blatz slipped into a coma last week and "just didn't come out of it," said his daughter, Kathleen Blatz, who served in the Legislature for 15 years before being named chief justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court. Her father died Thursday at Fairview Southdale Hospital in Edina. He was 85.

Jerome Blatz — many called him Joe or Jerry — grew up on a farm near what is now 82nd Street and Portland Avenue S. He attended Nazareth Hall Prep School in Roseville, but decided not to become a priest. Instead, he opted for a career in law, first earning a political science degree from the University of Notre Dame in 1946, and then getting his law degree at Harvard. He served as a pilot in the Navy



Jerome Blatz

at the end of the Korean War and became a weather expert, his daughter said.

After his military service, he returned to Bloomington, bought a house across the street from his childhood home and practiced law for 50 years.

"He was proud of his hometown," his daughter said. "He had no desires to go anywhere else."

Blatz's legal specialty was taxation, but he helped families with many projects, including drafting wills and setting up small businesses. He also represented clients as they sold their farms and land to make way for development of the burgeoning suburb. "He worked with the City Council to make sure people were treated fairly," Kathleen said.

He served in the state Senate from 1963 to 1976, where he was a member of the conservative caucus. He helped craft and pass legislation to set the framework for Bloomington to have a volunteer fire department, a model followed by other communities, Kathleen said. He served on the Senate Tax Committee for several years and was "known

as a big thinker who could do new things," she said. He also taught at the former Minnesota College of Law, a predecessor of William Mitchell College of Law.

Blatz was an avid poker, gin rummy and bridge player. He also liked going to local casinos and Las Vegas to play blackjack. He owned a race horse named Charley and was president of the Minnesota Thoroughbred Association. Blatz was part of a group that supported bringing horse racing to Minnesota, his daughter said.

His ties to Bloomington led him to participate in numerous fundraisers for the American Legion and Knights of Columbus. He was a longtime member of the Minnesota Valley Country Club as well as the Church of the Nativity of Mary, Kathleen said.

In addition to his daughter Kathleen, of Independence, Blatz is survived by five other daughters, Aimee, of Minnetonka, Jeannie of St. Peter, Minn., Camille Blatz of Key West, Fla., Sara Sobhani of Burnsville and Anita Baltierra of Northport, Fla.; two sons, Phil of Northport, Fla. and Joel of Shorewood; sisters Luella Wilhelm of St. Cloud, and Teresa Walker of Golden Valley; 19 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his wife, Kaye, and daughter Mary.

A funeral will be held at 10 a.m. Tuesday at the Church of the Nativity of Mary, 9900 Lyndale Av. S., Bloomington. Visitation will be held from 4 to 8 p.m. today at Gill Brothers Funeral Chapel, 9947 Lyndale Av. S., Bloomington, and one hour before services at the church.