

NEWS OBITUARIES

Bernard Brinkman, longtime Stearns County legislator

● "He had an independent nature" and considered his first loyalty to the people in his district and his "farmer friends."

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Bernard Brinkman, of Richmond, Minn., who represented his Stearns County neighbors in the Minnesota Legislature for 22 years, considered himself a friend to the farmer.

The DFLer, who represented a conservative constituency, died of a heart attack in Paynesville, Minn., on April 24.

Brinkman had suffered from leukemia since early 2005. He was 79.

"He was more independent than most legislators were. He had an independent nature, representing the peo-

ple rather than following the party line," said Al Patton, a former legislator and longtime friend.



Bernard Brinkman

In 1985, Brinkman was disappointed when sales tax relief for farmers was diluted in a bill. He complained that \$500 million in relief was going to other groups.

"All of a sudden, you don't want to give \$25 million to \$30 million for my farmer friends," he said in the March 22, 1985, *Star Tribune*.

When Brinkman announced his retirement from the Legislature in 1986, the

Star Tribune wrote that voters in his district voted for him because he used a mix of long-cultivated community ties, legwork for constituents and political independence.

Brinkman, who owned a truck stop and bulk oil company, was also known as a friend of small business and independent bankers. He was chairman of the House Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee from 1973 to 1984.

He also was an occasional foe of environmentalists, some of whom he said "would have put half the farmers out of business" if they had their way with bans on farm chemicals.

Brinkman enjoyed having friends visit his Richmond

home and taking them fishing on his boat, said Patton, who added that Brinkman made friends easily.

"He was a genuine guy. Anyone could get a genuine answer from him. He was a person that people trusted," Patton said.

He is survived by his wife, Vi, of Richmond; daughter, Gail, of Minneapolis; sons, Wayne, of St. Cloud, Gary, of Richmond, Allen, of St. Cloud, and Dave, of Seattle; brothers, Harold, of Albany, Minn., and Tom, of Minneapolis; sisters, Beatrice Buckley of Nisswa, Minn., Rita Krebes of Brookfield, Ill., Edna Krebes of Foley, Ala., Jan Schmitz of Lakeville and Alice Voit of Blaine; and nine grandchildren.

Services have been held.