

NEWS OBITUARIES

# Edward Gearty: Admired on both sides of aisle

● As a state legislator, president of the Senate and as an attorney, he was always "a man of his word."

By TIM HARLOW  
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Edward Gearty often proclaimed that he was a politician who just happened to be an attorney, but mostly he was devoted to his beloved north Minneapolis.

He looked out for neighborhood residents as a DFL member of the Minnesota House of Representatives from 1963 to 1970. Voters elected him to the Senate in 1970, and over the course of the next decade his fairness, open-mindedness and Irish wit earned respect from colleagues on both sides of the political aisle. He served as Senate president from 1977 to 1980.



**Edward Gearty**

9-30-09 "He was the most universally loved guy in either body," said former Republican legislator Doug Ewald. "As president, his job was to manage the day-to-day operations of the Senate and see to it that deliberations were done fairly. He made it a very smooth operation."

Gearty died of heart failure Friday while on his way to a hospital, said his daughter Annie, of Minneapolis.

Gearty was born on St. Patrick's Day in 1923 in Minneapolis and graduated from De La Salle High School in 1941. He worked as an airplane engine mechanic for the Navy during World War II, then earned a bachelor's degree in political science from the College of St. Thomas in 1952. He later earned a law degree from George Washington University in Washington.

He was an assistant attorney general in Minnesota from 1956 to 1958, and then opened a law practice on the corner of W. Broadway and Emerson Avenue N. From there he would walk daily to Probate Court in downtown Minneapolis, said Gary Flakne, a former Hennepin County attorney who now has his own law practice.

"He represented the absolute commitment to the people he represented; he put everything else aside," Flakne said. "He was a doer, not a sit-back kind of guy. You could depend on him because he was a man of his word."

Gearty served on the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board from 1959 to 1962 before he took his passion for public service to the State Capitol, his daughter said.

"He was the best friend of labor the state ever had," said his nephew William Gearty. After he retired from the

Legislature, he was selected as one of the original members of the Minnesota Legislative Society, and never missed a meeting or a function, said Ewald, who founded the nonprofit group of former legislators.

Gearty also enjoyed reading, especially history and theology, and he loved working in his yard, which he referred to as "his ranch," his daughter said.

Gearty was a member of the Downtown Exchange Club and the North Side Knights of Columbus Council No. 4451.

In addition to his daughter, Gearty is survived by his wife of 44 years, Lorraine, of Minneapolis, and a sister, Margaret Pierson, of St. Paul.

Services will be held at 10 a.m. today at the Church of St. Austin, 41st and Thomas Avenues N., Minneapolis. Visitation will be held one hour before services at the church.