

At age 80, Baldy Hansen hitting the books again for 'self-betterment'

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Staff Writer

Baldy Hansen was mayor of Austin for eight years and a state senator for 10, but at age 80 he found himself taking a freshman speech course. He was in the banking business for 27 years and owned two small banks, but now he is taking basic college math.

Charles R. Hansen, better known by his chosen and well-deserved nickname Baldy, is a freshman at Austin Community College after a 57-year break in his studies. He is aiming once again at the mechanical engineering degree he gave up pursuing in 1932.

He is starting at the beginning, he said, because they don't teach the way they used to and he can't get credit for the courses he took at the University of Minnesota from 1927 to 1932.

Hansen, now in his second term at school, has noticed differences

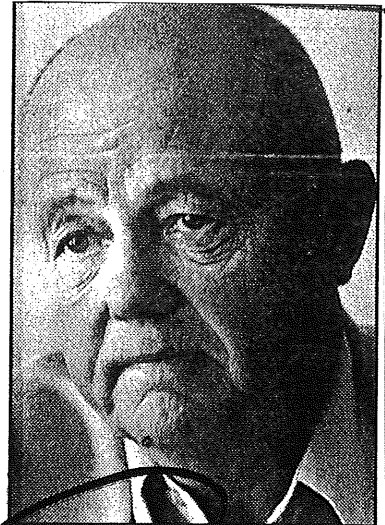
other than age between him and his fellow students.

"The rest of the people in the class are taking it for a career," he said. "I'm not. I'm taking it for self-betterment."

When Hansen gets his degree, which will take at least six years at the rate he's going, he won't throw himself into the job market. "I'd just like to sit in the living room and look at the diploma."

He enrolled last spring in English, math and speech, but took only the English class for credit. Last week he enrolled in math and typing. He took the summer off, he said, because "The fish are getting bigger and bigger, and somebody's gotta catch them."

Hansen, a DFLer who was chairman of the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee, was known for his conservative positions, particularly on labor legislation. In 1976 he was turned out of office in



Charles R. Hansen (1976 photo)

a DFL primary by Austin teacher Tom Nelson, who ran with party and labor support.

Hansen continued in the banking business until 1987, when he sold his banks in Lyle and Rose Creek. When fishing wasn't enough, he relaunched his college career. But he's not rushing it.

"Suppose I don't make it," he said. "Nothing is lost."

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