

# Charles (Baldy) Hansen dies; was senator, Austin mayor

*He was outspoken,  
conservative DFLer*

STAR TRIBUNE MAY 24 '00  
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Colorful, gregarious and outspoken.

That describes Charles R. (Baldy) Hansen, former long-time state senator, Austin mayor and banker. He died Monday from respiratory failure at Austin Medical Center. He was 90.

Hansen was mayor from 1954 to 1962. As a DFL senator from 1966 to 1976 he often was seen driving a brightly painted red, white and blue van with "BALDY" emblazoned on both sides.

He was outspoken on several issues, no matter who listened. Hansen told the Minneapolis Tribune in 1972 that he wasn't a "down-the-line party man," often referred to as the "most conservative member of the DFL."



Hansen said he used "Baldy" to his advantage.

He refused to answer Senate roll calls unless the clerk called him "Baldy."

"Dad was a maverick, a man who had the courage of his convictions," said his third-eldest daughter, Michael Bednar of Austin. "He always stood up for the underdog and the little guy."

Hansen's straight-shooting quips kept his fellow politicians and journalists on their toes.

Comments such as "I was lied to" and "I don't trust that committee" were often read in newspapers next to his name. Former Sen. Edward Gearty once told the Minneapolis Star in 1973 that he had such "strong feelings" against Hansen that they couldn't be published.

Hansen, as chairman of the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee from 1973 to 1976, "singlehandedly killed so many bills backed by organized labor that the committee got the nickname 'Forest Lawn,' after the California cemetery," the Minneapolis Star and Tribune reported.

"Once in a great while, a senator breaks his word," Hansen said in a 1973 Minneapolis Star story. "It's heartbreaking. Your faith has been destroyed."

Gerry Nelson, once an Associated Press correspondent at the State Capitol, said Hansen was "one of the old bulls of the Senate."

In 1973, Sen. Allan Spear, DFL-Minneapolis, once known as Hansen's political opposite, said, "Obviously Baldy and I disagree on a lot of issues. But I respect his intelligence, his grit to sticking to his guns. He gives us a breadth the Republican caucus doesn't have."

Hansen grew up in St. Paul, where his father had a lumber business. In the 1940s he moved to Austin, where he later owned three banks in the area and went into politics.

His nickname dates to the 1950s.

"If I didn't use 'Baldy' to my advantage, somebody else would use it to ridicule me," he told the Minneapolis Star in 1973. "I'm not ashamed of it. Some people have false teeth or fallen arches or something else. I'm happy. . . . People use it as a term of endearment."

In addition to his daughter, Hansen's survivors include four other daughters, Beth Wollerman of St. Paul, Charlotte Theissen of Fairfield, Conn., Iris Hansen of Austin and Leone Hansen of St. Paul. Services are scheduled for 1:30 p.m. Thursday at Queen of Angels Catholic Church in Austin.