

OBITUARIES

Joseph Karth, St. Paul's longtime representative in Congress, dies

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Joseph Karth, a Democrat who represented St. Paul in Congress for 18 years after replacing Eugene McCarthy in 1959, died Sunday in Arizona, where he had lived since leaving Washington, D.C., in the 1980s.

In Congress, he was a high-ranking Democrat on the Science and Astronautics Committee and active in the space program as chairman of the subcommittee on Space Sciences and Applications.

His youngest son, Brian, recalled Tuesday how the Viking spacecraft, the first vehicle to land on Mars, got its name.

"It was named the Viking because of his home district — the Minnesota Vikings," Brian Karth said in an interview.

Karth, a native of New Brighton who lived in Scottsdale, Ariz., was 83.

"He was a very decent person — I found him easy to like," said former Republican Gov. Al Quie, who came to Congress a year before Karth arrived and who served with him during his nine terms. Quie told the story of how Karth showed no animosity after Washington County was moved from his district to Quie's as part of the redistricting that took place after the 1970 census: "I don't remember us ever having a disagreement. I respected everything about him."

Karth attended the University of Nebraska School of Engineering and served in the Army during World War II. His family said that he enjoyed spending time outdoors, particularly fishing in Alaska, and that he had a fond appreciation for the environment. Karth wrote the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, which helped preserve tributaries such as the St. Croix River.

"He loved two things: He loved the game of golf and he loved to fish," his son said.

Karth, who had a heart attack while



Star Tribune file photo

U.S. Rep. Joseph Karth, left, congratulated Bruce Vento after Vento won the DFL primary for Karth's Fourth District seat on September 14, 1976.

he served in Congress, had been making frequent visits to his cardiologist in the past year, according to his son.

"We believe his heart just kind of gave out — he laid down, and basically went very peacefully," Brian Karth said.

Before going to Congress, Karth was an international representative of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union, an employee of 3M and an eight-year member of the Minnesota House of Representatives.

Karth established a consulting firm

in Washington, D.C., and became a lobbyist specializing in trade issues after retiring from Congress in 1977. He was replaced by Rep. Bruce Vento.

Karth was preceded in death by his wife, Charlotte, son Bradley and brother William. Survivors include his sons Brian and Kevin, sister Mayme Gruening and four grandchildren.

Memorial services will be held Friday in Scottsdale.

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CORRECTION PUBLISHED 06/04/05: This obituary about former Minnesota Rep. Joseph Karth should have reported that he is also survived by a son, Joseph, three grandchildren and six great-grandchildren from his first marriage..