

NEWS OBITUARIES STAR TRIBUNE SEP 23 '06

Adolph Kvam, 'gentleman' of Legislature

● The 88-year-old represented Litchfield, Minn., for 20 years. He died after celebrating his 60th anniversary.

By DONNA HALVORSEN
dhalvorsen@startribune.com

To Dave Jennings, Adolph Kvam was "a gentleman of the old school."

"The Legislature is a much more partisan and combative place these days but, in his day, it was still more of a sport for gentlemen, and he was one of them," said Jennings, a former House speaker.

Kvam, who served 20 years in the House of Representatives as a Republican from Litchfield, Minn., died Sunday morning in his apartment at Presbyterian Homes in Bloomington. The night before, he had celebrated his 60th wedding anniversary with his wife, Doris, their four children and other family members. He was 88.

Kvam graduated from Willmar High School and earned a degree in agricultural economics from the University of Minnesota. After serving in the U.S. Army Signal Corps in World War II, he and his father established an implement dealership in Litchfield, to which they later added automobiles.

Active in his community, Kvam was a scoutmaster and

a member of the Litchfield school board. He got a taste of state issues by serving on the Governor's Committee on School Aid in 1961. He lost his first legislative bid in 1964 but won in 1966.

Bill Schreiber, a former House minority leader, said Kvam was "a great reflection of the true citizen legislator." The Legislature met every other year then, and by working at his business, Kvam was "really in touch with his district," said Schreiber.

Jennings said Kvam became a tax expert. "My focus was more on education and education-related programs and how the money got spent," he said. "His focus was more on where the money came from and what was a fair way to collect it."

Kvam had been in the Legislature a dozen years when Dean Johnson was elected in an adjoining Senate district in 1978, a "young pup from Willmar" who knew many of the same people Kvam did.

"He kind of put his arm around me and got me going in the right direction," said Johnson, now DFL Senate majority leader. "He taught me a respect for the process, he re-



Star Tribune file 1978

Adolph Kvam was first elected to the House in 1966 and left in 1986.

ally did, and an understanding of the rules.

"He was one of the best-dressed legislators I ever knew," Johnson added. "That shirt was always starched, those suits were pressed. He wore wingtip shoes. He was very astute-looking, very statesman-like. I think he was truly honored to be in the Legislature."

The two men also had their Norwegian ancestry in common. "We used to talk about

who had gone to the best meatball and lutefisk supper," Johnson said.

When Kvam left the Legislature in 1986, he and his wife built a retirement home on Green Lake in Spicer, Minn.

He is survived by his wife; children David, Greg, Kris and Karen, and a brother, Ivan. Services have been held.

Donna Halvorsen • 612-673-1709