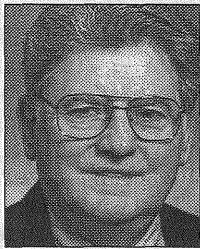


Mark Paul Mahon Legislator, labor leader, City Council member

As a public servant, Mahon 'looked out for the workers'

By JEFFREY MEITRODT • jeff.meitrodt@startribune.com



When the phone rang at 2 a.m. at the Mahon house in east Bloomington, the four boys always knew it was a call for Dad, probably from an irate neighbor who wanted to complain about late-night airplane noise.

Mark Paul Mahon, residents in Bloomington knew, was the go-to guy if they wanted something done about airport noise and many other

local issues, whether he was serving on the City Council or representing them in the state House. Mahon died peacefully on Sept. 7 at the age of 87.

"Dad was always looking out for what was best for Bloomington," said Mark Patrick Mahon, Mahon's youngest son and namesake.

Mahon had a tough childhood, family members recall, noting his mother died when he was 12 and his father was often away from their farm near Winsted. "You basically had five minor children raising themselves," said Stephen Mahon, the second oldest of Mahon's sons.

In 1953, Mahon joined the U.S. Air Force, working as an air traffic controller in Saudi Arabia during the Korean War.

After his tour, he began a 36-year career with International Harvester, first as a warehouseman and later as president of United Auto Workers Local 763. Family members remember how their parents had to pinch pennies when the national union went on strike in 1979; members didn't return to work for nearly six months.

"We cut back a lot on groceries that year," Mark said. "Dad was a tough negotiator. He looked out for the workers."

Mahon's political career began in 1976, when he first was elected to the Bloomington City Council. He also served on the Bloomington Port Authority and the Metropolitan Waste Commission before being elected to the state

House in 1992.

Family members said Mahon's late wife, Florence, played a big role in those elections.

"Mom would send us out to Oakland Avenue and tell us to count how many signs the other guy had up between 84th Street and 88th," Mark said. "It was a real partnership. Dad was an outgoing guy who liked to chat — he really loved pressing the flesh. And Mom made sure there were fundraisers and the lawn signs went up."

Mahon was an aggressive advocate for his constituents, battling with officials at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport over airplane noise and pushing the developers of the Mall of America to live up to their promises and stick to construction deadlines. He would sometimes cast a dissenting vote if he felt Bloomington was getting short shrift.

"Mark had a strong sense of what was right — and he let people know what it was," said Dan Larson, who represented the same district in the state House. "He was very vocal in his advocacy."

Mahon served three terms in the state House, winning his first election by just 55 votes. Colleagues said Mahon was a reliable vote on issues that mattered most to the DFL caucus.

"He was very well-liked," said Rep. Lyndon Carlson, a fellow DFLer who has served in the House since 1972. "He was a strong supporter of working men and women."

Family members said Mahon often disagreed strongly with his Republican counterparts but enjoyed socializing with them after the votes were cast.

"Just because you didn't agree with him didn't mean he wouldn't invite you over to have a brat and a beer with him," Stephen Mahon said.

Mahon is survived by sons Kevin, Stephen, Paul and Mark; his companion of 15 years, Karen Pedersen of Bloomington; his brother, Maurice; and his sister, Mary. Services have been held.

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