

Obituaries

Richard Parish dies at age 78; was a legislator for 17 years

Richard J. Parish, 78, a former state senator and representative who served in the Legislature for 17 years, died of heart failure Friday at the Lakeside Nursing Home in Pine City, Minn.

He had been chairman of what is now the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC), which regulates rates for telephone, gas and electric service.

Parish caucused with the Liberals when he was first elected to the Minnesota House in 1958. At that time the Legislature was nonpartisan by law. Republicans called themselves the Conservatives while the DFLers were the Liberal caucus.

He was reelected to the House in 1960 and moved to the Senate in 1962. He served two terms in the Senate and then was elected to the House in 1972 and 1974. He represented District 43B, which included Robbinsdale and the northeast part of Golden Valley.

Rep. Phyllis Kahn, DFL-Minneapolis, called him "one of my favorite people. When I was first elected in 1972, he was kind of one of the grand old men of the Legislature. He was just a wonderful populist, a strong

liberal."

Education was one of his main priorities in the Legislature, said his daughter, Mary Parish, of Minneapolis. She said he was instrumental in starting the Community College System. He also was the chief author of a 1974 law requiring state regulation of utility rates.

Parish resigned his House seat in 1976 when he was appointed to fill an unexpired term on the five-member Minnesota Public Service Commission. (It became the Public Utilities Commission in 1980.) He became chairman in 1977 and served in that position for 14 months.

He retired when his term expired in 1980 and moved to Pine City a short time later.

Parish was born in Little Swan, Minn. His father, the Rev. John L. Parish, was a Methodist minister. He finished high school in Olivia, Minn., and graduated in 1935 from Hamline University in St. Paul.

He attended night classes and graduated from the Minneapolis College of Law (now part of William Mitchell College of Law) in 1943. After working for the Railroad Retirement

Board he opened a law office in Robbinsdale in 1946. He practiced law for 30 years.

Parish ran for Congress in 1964 but was defeated by the Republican incumbent, Clark MacGregor.

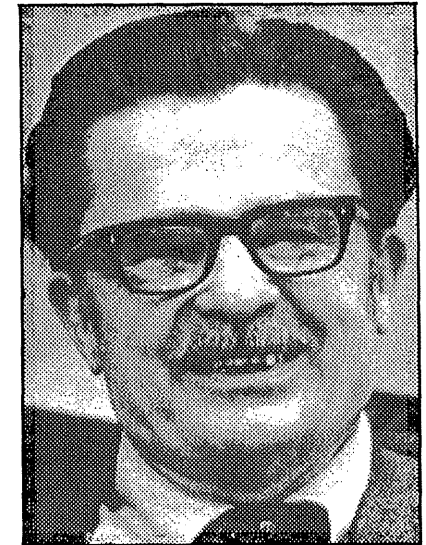
Parish was an influential DFLer and had been present at the convention that founded the party in 1944, his daughter said.

He was a member of the Robbinsdale school board from 1949 to 1958 and served as its chairman. He was past president of the Robbinsdale Chamber of Commerce and the Robbinsdale High School PTA. He was a charter member of the Metropolitan Planning Commission and a member of the NAACP.

Parish had an avid interest in Minnesota history. Three of his great-grandfathers served in the Union Army during the Civil War.

In 1962 he was secretary of an interim commission on the observance of the Civil War centennial and the Sioux Uprising.

Parish was a naval officer during World War II and was a member of the American Legion and Veterans of



Richard J. Parish represented northeastern Golden Valley and Robbinsdale in the Legislature.

Foreign Wars. He was past commander of VFW Post 494 and a member of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Besides his daughter Mary, he is survived by his wife, Ethel; his three other children, Carol Parish Compton, of Madison, Wis.; Jane Parish Johnson, of Champlin, and Richard Parish, of St. Paul; a sister, Berta Sorenson, of Dallas, and eight grandchildren.

Services will be held at 2 p.m. Monday at the Pine City United Methodist Church. Arrangements are by the Swanson Funeral Home, Pine City.