

Rep. Bob Waltman . . .

## 'The gentleman from Elgin' (and wife, Jeri) takes leave



Rep. Bob Waltman (IR-Elgin) and his wife, Jeri, ran three grocery stores in and around Elgin before Waltman's election to the Legislature in 1982. At the Capitol, the couple has continued their partnership, with Jeri working as her husband's full-time office volunteer.

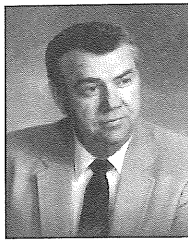
"A lot of people ask me what she gets paid, and I tell them that she gets my paycheck," the legislator said with a laugh, and noted that he has campaigned on the slogan: "You get two for the price of one."

But that offer is only good for a limited time. The two will soon move on because Waltman will not seek re-election this fall.

With grown children and an obvious enjoyment of each other's company, the Waltman's tag team approach has worked out well. But 12 years in the Legislature is enough — both Waltman's agree.

"I've really enjoyed it," Bob Waltman said. "It's been a great experience and we leave on a real good note — we feel good about our decision. . . . We've had different career changes in our life, and there are still a lot of things we want to do."

Waltman, 60, chairs the board of Discover



Rep. Bob Waltman

**Greatest accomplishment:** Passing a bill to help a constituent.

In 1987, Waltman learned about a constituent in Zumbrota suffering from polio and confined to a respirator. She was going to be placed in a Twin Cities nursing home and "was kind of lost in the process," he explained.

Waltman succeeded in passing a bill to allow her to stay in the hospital so she could be near her friends and family. A copy of the bill was presented to her along with a proclamation in her honor signed by then-Gov. Rudy Perpich.

Leadership, a ministry started by his son, Chris, who used to play for the Dallas Cowboys football team. Waltman would like to become more involved in the ministry, which helps children and adults grow in personal leadership.

And Waltman would like to get his motor home on the road again. No special destination. "We just enjoy getting out and meeting people," he said.

Waltman never held elective office prior to winning his House seat 12 years ago. Reflecting on his tenure in the Legislature, he noted that being a member of the minority party for 10 years has been tough. "You don't get to set state policy," he said. So, unable to pass state

issue bills such as overhauling Minnesota's workers' compensation system, Waltman focused on legislation to benefit people in his district.

"I've made a difference in my district, and that's what counts to me," Waltman said. He would advise whoever succeeds him to "pay attention to the people at home. Don't get all wrapped up in politics in St. Paul."

Despite a dozen years working as a state legislator, Waltman acknowledged an abiding humility about his accomplishments and position. "I'm still in awe of the Capitol," he said. "I walk around and read all the plaques."

— Mordecai Specktor

### Do you know?

It was just over 70 years ago that the first women elected to the Minnesota Legislature completed their first legislative session.

The fanfare that accompanied the election of Myrtle Cain, Hannah Johnson Kempfer, Sue Metzger Dickey Hough, and Mabeth Hurd Paige was widespread.

But did they form a cohesive unit and vote similarly as some contemporaries had predicted? Not at all, explained Theodore Christianson, then legislator and governor-to-be.

Writing in his hometown newspaper, the *Dawson Sentinel*, Christianson wrote:

"Some have said that a legislature composed of women would be an extravagant legislature. . . . Not so, if they all were Mrs. Kempfers. Others have declared such a legislature would be too sentimental and emotional. Not so, if they were all Mrs. Houghs. She was the most outstanding advocate of capital punishment in the house. Mrs. Paige was the social worker, an exponent of idealism. . . . Miss Cain was perhaps no less idealistic in her outlook, but she sought the amelioration of conditions through economic advancement of the working class. It would be difficult to

pick four women more unlike (or) to pick members — men or women — of finer type and better ability.

" . . . It cannot be said they accomplished anything in the way of legislation different from what men would have accomplished . . . On the so-called Women's Rights bill, they split. They did not agree on questions affecting education and the home. In fact, the 1923 session demonstrated that there is no reason for electing women to the legislature as such. It also demonstrated that there is no reason for excluding women from the legislature as such . . . "