

**John Yngve** Business and community leader

# Always looking to the future, he found his path in public life

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When Arne Carlson pulled out a surprise victory in the 1990 race for Minnesota governor, his friend John Yngve knew what to do.

As the public awoke to the news that the Republican had unseated incumbent DFLer Rudy Perpich, Yngve went to an empty conference room at the State Capitol set aside for the transition, with two chairs and a

single telephone that wouldn't stop ringing.

"What should we do now?" asked Craig Shaver, a Carlson aide also there that day.

"Start giving orders," Yngve instructed him.

"That, in essence, summarizes John Yngve perfectly," recalled Shaver in an interview this week.

Yngve, a businessman and lawyer who dedicated his life to public service, died May 21 at age 94.

His friends and family remember him as a capable leader, pragmatic, entrepreneurial and direct, with a diplomatic spirit even toward his adversaries, a trait rarely seen in politics today.

"He was always looking toward the future," said his son, Rolf. "He was a proponent of new ideas, invention, taking risks and trying out new things to see if they could make the future better."

Yngve grew up in St. Louis Park, where his mother and father both worked as lawyers. While his parents ran the law firm, Yngve raised chickens on their farmland.

He graduated from high school in the shadow of the Pearl Harbor bombing and enlisted in the Army Air Force in 1943. After the war, he enrolled in law school at the University of Minnesota. In 1949, he started his first business — a drive-in restaurant called the Pylon on the family farm. Using a friend's homemade two-way radio, Yngve helped run Pylon for six years, even as he began

practicing law.

At the same time, Yngve began a long career of civic activity. He joined the planning commission and later the City Council of Plymouth, where he helped name the streets of what was then a small village.

He served in the Minnesota Legislature as a state representative, where he and a group of like-minded Republican reformers called themselves the "Young Turks." Yngve pushed to establish the Metropolitan Council and to decriminalize mental illness.

"They were genuine reformers," said Shaver. "They were dissatisfied with the status quo."

In the late 1960s, Yngve became president of Nortronics, a Golden Valley-based company that invented a new kind of tape head for cassettes, with NASA among its clients.

He was also appointed to the University of Minnesota Board of Regents, where he and others fought to keep Minneapolis police and National Guard units away from campus during anti-Vietnam War riots.

"They didn't want the kids stained with that on their record," Rolf Yngve said.

Yngve went on to pursue a number of political and business ventures, becoming chairman of the first Metropolitan Transit Commission, chairman of Minnesota Technology Inc. and a member of Carlson's cabinet.

Sons Rolf and Aron remember their father for his iconic idioms, such as: "You can disagree agreeably," and "Achievement can't be measured by activity, but rather by results."

Yngve died peacefully after a period of declining health related to age.

"He was optimistic on the way out," said Rolf. "He just couldn't not be optimistic. It wasn't in his nature."

His family and friends held a ceremony and memorial for Yngve at Fort Snelling. He is survived by his wife, Carrie Yngve; his brother, Albert; sons Rolf, Aron, Hans and Hal; grandchildren Kaia, Reed, Elliot and Anton; stepdaughters Linda, Nancy, Kathleen, Joni and Janet; and several grandchildren.

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