

NEWS OBITUARIES

From the state Capitol to a higher calling

• After retirement, the former legislator from St. Paul was ordained as a deacon in the Roman Catholic church.

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Robert (Bob) Christensen, a former Minnesota legislator and 3M Co. employee, died of natural causes on Nov. 24 at his home in St. Paul. He was 94.



Christensen

Christensen, who served in the Minnesota House from 1963 through 1970, representing the Macalester/Groveland area of St. Paul, made his mark on education, health and welfare legislation.

"He jumped into things with intensity," said Arlen Erdahl of Burnsville, a former U.S. congressman who served with Christensen, who ran as an independent, in the Legislature. "He was gregarious and outgoing."

Christensen and Erdahl were members of the old Conservative Caucus, both

serving on the education committee.

"He believed that spending wisely in education is probably the best investment we can make in society," said Erdahl.

Christensen, the father of 10 children, supported raising the drivers' age limit from 15 to 16, and supported more funding for urban schools, and state aid for parochial schools.

After the death of his son, Matthew, who in 1963 was hit by a car while riding a bicycle near the campus of St. John's University in Collegeville, Minn., he worked to strengthen wrongful-death laws.

While running for a fifth term in 1970, he reminded voters of his opposition to abortion.

"I was the fella in the House that stopped the abortion-on-demand bill. I'm proud of it," Christensen told the Minneapolis Star.

He lost the election by

fewer than 50 votes to Ray Faricy.

Christensen grew up in Madelia and New Ulm, graduating with a bachelor's degree in physics from St. Mary's University in Winona in 1936, and with a master's degree in education from the University of Minnesota in 1938.

He taught science and math at the College of St. Thomas and St. Thomas Academy until joining 3M in 1941. He worked on the research team that developed Scotch Tape, his family said.

On leave while serving at the Legislature, he returned to 3M in 1970 and worked as a human-resources manager.

In 1973, he was appointed executive director of the Minnesota Association of Rehabilitation Facilities, a lobbying organization for groups such as the Courage Center.

He retired in 1980, then trained and was ordained to be a Roman Catholic deacon, serving in Crosslake and in Sun City, Ariz.

His son Bert Christensen of Woodbury said that since his

father was a boy, he had wanted to do things for others.

"He learned that by being an Eagle Scout and water safety instructor," said his son. "He was a quiet counselor, encourager and coach of others."

A daughter, Ann, died in 1952, and a son, Nicholas, died in 1975.

In addition to Bert, he is survived by his wife of 69 years, Marge of St. Paul; sons, Dr. Robert Christensen of Minneapolis, Dr. Stephen Christensen of Edina; Joseph Christensen of Edina; daughters, Margaret Mary Ferber of Fridley, Katherine of Las Vegas and Mary Pat Gates of Moreno Valley, Calif.; 22 grandchildren, and 26 great-grandchildren.

Services will be held at 11 a.m. Tuesday at Nativity of Our Lord Catholic Church, 1900 Wellesley Av., St. Paul.

Visitation will be held from 4 to 7 p.m. today at the O'Halloran and Murphy Funeral Home, 575 S. Snelling Av., St. Paul, and at 10 a.m. Tuesday at the church.

« I WAS THE FELLA IN THE HOUSE THAT STOPPED THE ABORTION-ON-DEMAND BILL. I'M PROUD OF IT. » Robert Christensen, 1970