

OBITUARIES

Ex-judge, legislator D.D. Wozniak dies at 82

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By Trudi Hahn
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D.D. Wozniak, a 16-year legislator who became chief judge of the Minnesota Court of Appeals, died Wednesday after a brain-stem stroke. He was 82.



D.D. Wozniak was a World War II veteran and served as a diplomat.

Born in 1922 in Silver Lake, Minn., he graduated from Central High School in Minneapolis and received a bachelor's degree in economics in 1943 from what is now the University of St. Thomas. He

joined the Navy during World War II and flew F6F Hellcat fighters off aircraft carriers in the Pacific.

When he returned, he married his wife, Angela, and taught economics at the University of Minnesota while studying for a law degree, which he received in 1948. He was elected a state representative in 1950 on his second try.

"He stepped right out of Tom Brokaw's 'Greatest Generation,'" said Judge R.A. (Jim) Randall, who served on the Appeals Court with Wozniak. "He believed in America, the law, believed in family."

As chairman of the House Tax Committee, the DFLer pushed for withholding of state income tax from paychecks. When the measure finally passed in 1961, he predicted that it would bring in at least \$10 million more per year through catching tax evaders and collection from nonresidents who worked in the state.

But he resisted a sales tax, said Joe O'Neill, a St. Paul attorney and Republican who succeeded Wozniak in his legislative district. "He thought the income tax was more equitable."

Wozniak also was instrumental in extending civil rights to cloistered nuns with a bill that allowed them to use absentee ballots for voting, said his daughter Angela Wozniak of Mendota Heights.

He left the Legislature in 1965 for the Foreign Service. He went to Ecuador as an ambassador select, a position below the rank of ambassador, but was back in St. Paul within two years, bringing with him a cause: helping the poverty-stricken shoeshine boys of Quito.

On the Court of Appeals

Wozniak was in private law practice until 1983, when he was appointed to the new Appeals Court, formed to lift a crushing appellate case load off the Supreme Court.

In 1987 he became the second chief judge of the new court and made a special effort to promote collegiality among the judges.

"He had an open-door lunch every Friday in his office," said Judge Tom Kalitowski "Any judge who was around could come in."

Marianne Short, a former Appeals Court judge and now a lawyer with Dorsey & Whitney in Minneapolis, said Wozniak fought long and hard for additional judgeships to keep up with the caseload. He also kept a toy cupboard in his office for the children of his younger judges and law clerks.

"We called him the grandpa judge," Short said.

When he retired in 1992 at the mandatory age of 70, Minnesota's Appeals Court was one of only two state appellate courts in the nation that didn't have a backlog of cases.

"We have become a leading light in the United States," Wozniak said. "I don't take credit for that. We have committed, talented judges and staff."

Wozniak and his wife, Angela, were heavily immersed in organizations that opposed abortion. Before her death in 1999, the couple donated \$100,000, about half the cost, for a Children's Memorial within Resurrection Cemetery in Mendota Heights to honor infants and children who have died, as well as pregnancy losses.

"We wanted a place for all, for everyone who lost a child, no matter how, to come to," Wozniak said.

In addition to his daughter Angela, survivors include another daughter, Victoria Morris of Deephaven; sons Daniel D. Wozniak Jr. of White Bear Lake and George of St. Paul; 11 grandchildren, and a sister, Delores Skweres of St. Paul.

Services will be held at 10 a.m. Saturday at Nativity of Our Lord Catholic Church, 324 S. Prior Av. at Stanford, St. Paul. Visitation will be held from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. today at the O'Halloran & Murphy Funeral Home, 575 S. Snelling Av., St. Paul.

Staff writer Margaret Zack contributed to this article.

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