

Reprinted by permission of the **Star Tribune** (Minneapolis, MN).

Lindquist

STAR TRIBUNE SEP 16 '04

A legacy of good work

Two months before his death last week, a frail, almost 92-year-old Leonard Lindquist penned a personal note to a journalist he knew a little, modestly inviting inspection of the Lindquist & Vennum law firm's annual report of public service activities.

The document ran to an impressive 20 pages. It told of 9,000 hours of pro bono work, 3 percent of the firm's billable hours, donated by every lawyer and paralegal of the firm. It described efforts made to combat domestic abuse, guide immigrants toward citizenship, mentor at-risk youth, represent debtors in bankruptcy proceedings, provide winter clothing to needy kids and more.

That report is a catalog of the legal work that Lindquist valued most. More than that, it attests to the power of one man's vision for a law firm as a place, as he once put it, "where the lawyers would be encouraged to serve in public and community life, with the assurance that they had a home to come back to."

That was the distinguishing characteristic of the firm Lindquist and the late federal Judge Earl Larson founded after World War II. It was populated by a host of distinguished public servants, among them the late Gov. Orville Freeman, former Minneapolis Mayor Don Fraser, former Supreme Court Chief Justice Robert Sheran — and Lindquist himself.

In numerous public and professional roles, Lindquist worked for fair treatment for racial minorities, working people and the disadvantaged. He served two terms in the Minnesota House in the 1950s, sponsoring legislation to ban racial

discrimination in nursing homes.

He headed the Minneapolis Fair Employment Practices Commission during the 1960s, promoting the hiring of racial minorities. W. Harry Davis, who served with him on that commission, said Lindquist's "commitment to civil rights was 100 percent" and his leadership style was very effective. "He was always gracious, always kind, always asking us what we thought and giving us time to analyze a situation. But he knew where he wanted to go — and that's generally where we went."

Lindquist found his direction from a strong-willed Swedish-born mother, Bessie, who enlisted her teenage son as her partner in raising his siblings when her husband died. Kelley Lindquist, Leonard's son, remembers his grandmother's frequent admonition to "make sure you share" with those less fortunate.

Lindquist himself also credited his opportunity to attend the University of Minnesota, and his exposure to the thinking of the late law school Dean Everett Fraser, for forming his ideas about linking the practice of law with public service. Last year, as he accepted the University of Minnesota's Outstanding Achievement Award, he urged the institution to continue to instill in its graduates a sense of obligation for public service. Further, he pleaded for state funding sufficient so that "the doors of the university will remain open for those of limited means."

Lindquist's life will be commemorated at services at 11 a.m. today at Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church. The impact of his life will be felt for decades to come.