

Obituaries

Former state senator Ralph W. Johnson dies

Ralph W. Johnson, 80, a former state senator who represented Anoka and Isanti counties for eight years starting in 1955, died of pneumonia Sunday at the Grandview Christian Home in Cambridge, Minn. He had Alzheimer's disease for about 16 years.

Johnson was born and lived almost his entire life in Athens Township near Isanti. As a young man, he was the township's assessor and a farmer.

"He grew up when the farmers were having a difficult time and felt he could make a difference" in the Legislature, said Johnson's wife, Ruby.

Johnson caucused with the DFL-oriented liberals and represented old District 44. "In one of his elections," his wife said, "he got 90 percent of

the vote in Athens Township, which gives you some idea of how the people felt about him."

He had been chairman of Isanti County's agriculture-stabilization and conservation committees and of its production and marketing administration, a director of the East Central Rural Electric Cooperative Association, and district manager of the Farmers Union Insurance Co. in Isanti and neighboring counties. He retired from the insurance business in about 1973.

Johnson also had been chairman of Isanti Community Services Inc., which builds apartments for the elderly; a member of the township school board and a member of the county DFL central committee.

"He was a self-educated, intelligent, well-read person," Ruby Johnson said of her husband, who never attended high school.

In 1974, Johnson was named the outstanding senior citizen in Isanti County.

Besides his wife, Johnson is survived by a daughter, Linda Strike of Rolling Hills, Calif., and sisters, Viola Krumrey and Olga Gagner of Minneapolis.

Visitation will be from 5 to 8 p.m. today at the Strike Funeral Chapel in Isanti. Services will be held at 2 p.m. Wednesday at the chapel. Visitation will start at 1 p.m.