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Robert Dunlap, attorney and former state senator, dies at 76

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Robert R. Dunlap, 76, an attorney and former state senator, died in his sleep at his home in Rochester, Minn., Saturday, apparently of a heart attack.

Dunlap had practiced law in Rochester since he left the Legislature in 1966. He was appointed to the Minnesota State College Board in 1967 and was elected president in 1969.

"He's the greatest lawyer I've ever known," said Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice A.M. (Sandy) Keith, who was Dunlap's former law

partner.

"Law was almost an art form for him. He understood that law was one method of settling disputes, but it was also a method of trying to find truth — and justice, if you want to use that term. It didn't matter rich or poor, whoever came in the office, he would represent them."

Dunlap was born in St. Paul, where his father, Roy J. Dunlap, was managing editor of the St. Paul Pioneer Press and Dispatch for 35 years. His brother, Roy, was a columnist and

also was a managing editor at the newspapers.

He graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1941 and practiced in St. Paul for a brief time before joining the Army during World War II. He was an infantry captain with the Ninth, Seventh and First armies in Europe from 1942 to 1946.

He established a law practice in Plainview, Minn., after the war. He was appointed Wabasha County attorney in 1950 and left that office

after half a term to run for the Legislature. He was elected to represent the old Third District, Wabasha County, and served in the Senate from January 1953 to December 1966. He was a Republican and caucused with the Conservatives.

He was a great supporter of the University of Minnesota and public education. He headed the subcommittee on education in the Appropriations Committee and was the main author of a bill that established state funding for community colleges.

"He got issues resolved, he solved problems," Keith said.

Dunlap moved to Rochester in 1964 and was in the firm of Eustis, Price & Dunlap. He and Keith merged their law firms in 1973. It is now Dunlap, Finseth, Berndt & Sandberg and is one of the largest firms outside the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

"He has a marvelous family man," Keith said. "That was his first love, and the law was his second and golf was the third."

Dunlap is survived by his wife, Jai; daughters Jean Hansen, of Rawlins, Wyo.; Elizabeth Todd Brown, Louisville, Ky., and Mary Dunlap, Rochester; sons Robert and Jof both of Minneapolis, and seven grandchildren.

Services are pending. Arrangements are by the Ranfranz Funeral Home, Rochester.