

NEWS OBITUARIES

Ex-legislator was dedicated to conservation

● Art Engelbrecht, a longtime Alexandria-area official, gave back to the land and gave his land to the DNR.

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Arthur Engelbrecht, of Hudson Township in Douglas County, was a state legislator, farmer, hunter and conservationist, who gave back to the land and wildlife.

Engelbrecht, who opened his farm to visitors, made sure his land would be turned wild after his death.

He served in the Legislature from 1965 to '68 and died of lymphoma Thursday at the family farmhouse where he was born 89 years ago.

Col. Michael Hamm, the DNR's chief conservation officer, said Engelbrecht touched the lives of many conservation officers.

"He had his hands in the earth and knew all about wildlife and wildlife management," Hamm said.

Only days before Engelbrecht died, he checked on



Art Engelbrecht

turkey and deer tracks in the freshly fallen snow.

He needed a little help from his son, Jerry, of Brainerd, Minn., who grew up on the farm.

"He said, 'Looking at wildlife tracks in the fresh snow was like reading a book,'" said his son, a retired DNR pilot.

Years ago, Engelbrecht's farm was open to visitors, and he had a little zoo, including some wild Minnesota critters.

He would teach young visitors about the land and its wildlife.

His son said Engelbrecht sold his 350-acre farm to the DNR, "far below market value," to become a state wildlife management unit.

"He wanted his bedroom to be the future bedroom of the critters," said his son,

who recalled his father admiring turkeys roosting in a tree near the house the day before he died.

When he was a member of the state House of Representatives, he served on the Agriculture, Drainage and Soil Conservation and Game and Fish committees.

For a dozen years after he was a legislator, he served with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and former Gov. Rudy Perpich appointed him to a board to develop a funding mechanism for environmental needs.

In and around Douglas County, he served as a county commissioner for more than a dozen years, and was a Hudson Township supervisor on and off for decades, to name a few of his dozen civic leadership posts.

In 1964, Minnesota named him Farmer-Sportsman of the year, and in the late 1990s, the DNR named him one of the top 50 Minnesotans who helped create wildlife habitat.

Sen. Bill Ingebrigtsen, who

represents several counties around Alexandria, said he sought Engelbrecht's counsel, because he "respected his thoughts."

"He loved educating kids about wildlife and how to conserve, and how important it was for our area," said Ingebrigtsen.

The farmer and government official never entirely retired, serving on the county's planning and zoning commission from 2000-07.

Over the years, he enjoyed hunting in Alaska, Nebraska and on his own land.

A woodcarver, he would craft birds that were sold to raise money for Ducks Unlimited and other groups.

His wife, Agnes, died 17 years ago.

In addition to his son, he is survived by his daughter, Jeanne Rosenfield, of Alexandria; sister, Veneta Goodridge, of Alexandria, and three grandchildren.

Services will be held at 11 a.m. today at the First Lutheran Church, Alexandria.