

# City man, 30, pleads guilty in death of Ralph Mayhood, former senator

By Joe Kimball  
Staff Writer

A 30-year-old man pleaded guilty Tuesday to first-degree manslaughter in connection with the Jan. 18 death of former State Sen. Ralph Mayhood.

Charles Desjarlais, who had been charged with third-degree murder, pleaded guilty to the lesser charge about halfway through the jury selection for his murder trial in Hennepin County District Court.

Judge Crane Winton immediately

sentenced Desjarlais to Stillwater Prison for a term not to exceed 15 years. Based on current parole procedures, he probably will serve six or seven years.

Mayhood, 68, died of a heart attack brought on by a beating in the hallway of a rooming house he owned at 1810 Washington Av. S.

Defense attorney Doug Hall said yesterday that Desjarlais decided to plead guilty to manslaughter because he did not remember anything about the Mayhood death.

Desjarlais testified that he was ex-

tremely intoxicated at the time. Tests indicated that Desjarlais had a .29 alcohol count in his blood. Under law, a person with a count of .10 is considered intoxicated.

Because Desjarlais could not recall the circumstances surrounding the death, the grand jury testimony of several witnesses was read into the court record.

That testimony indicated that Desjarlais and another man, Wilmer Martin, 49, were fighting with a

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crippled resident of the rooming house, apparently in an attempt to rob him, and Mayhood responded to calls for help.

One witness testified that the men then turned on Mayhood, and Desjarlais hit him with a wine bottle. Another witness did not remember seeing Mayhood hit but recalled that the former senator was kicked while on the ground.

Desjarlais and Martin lived in Mayhood's rooming house. Martin also has been charged with third-degree murder and is awaiting trial.

Mayhood served in the state Senate from 1942 to 1958.