

# Theodor Slen dies; key

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Theodor S. Slen, 100, of Madison, Minn., a politician who played a key role in the merger of the Democratic and Farmer-Labor parties in 1944, died of pneumonia Friday at the Madison Lutheran Home. Services were held Monday at Faith Lutheran Church in his hometown.

Slen, a member of the state House from 1935 to 1941, was endorsed by the Democratic Party for governor in 1940. He finished second by 6,500 votes to Edward Murphy in a four-man primary fight, however.

His unanimous endorsement by state Democratic leaders was seen at the time as a signal that they favored a

merger because Slen, in his House races, was supported by both parties. In the Legislature he was an independent who worked closely with the Farmer-Labor Party on most issues.

After his primary defeat, Slen became chairman of the state Democratic advisory committee and began urging a merger with the Farmer-Labor Party.

"The proper procedure now," he said in 1942, "is tell the Farmer-Laborites, 'We can see no way of success for our movement, the liberal movement, except for you to come and join us.'"

In addition to politics, Slen was interested in the law. He started a law practice after World War I in Madison and served as a city and county attorney, a municipal judge and a county judge in probate and juvenile courts.

Slen was grand marshal of Madison's centennial parade in 1985, and the city's largest park is named after him.

"He was a great guy, an institution in Madison," said Robert Hansen, a retired Madison teacher and past state commander of the American Legion. "In his almost 70 years of public service, he touched almost everyone

in the community. ... Everybody knew him as 'The Judge.'

"And I don't think he missed a Memorial Day service since World War I. He was that type of person. ... He was a representative at the first meeting of the American Legion in Paris in 1918 or 1919."

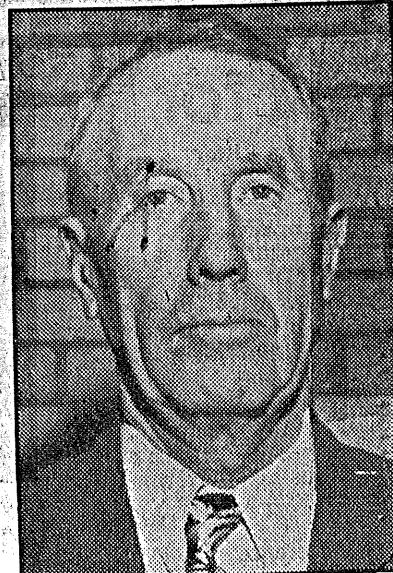
Slen, a captain in the Army, received a Purple Heart, a Silver Star and a medal from France during World War I.

Slen was born in Delavan, Minn., in 1885. When he was 12, his family moved to Boyd, Minn. He attended a school in Boyd and, later, the Luther-

an Normal School in Madison before becoming a teacher in rural schools in Lac qui Parle County for two years.

He graduated from St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minn., and then went to law school at the University of Minnesota.

He is survived by his wife, Lyla; sons Rolf of Albert Lea, Minn., and Mark of Fort Wayne, Ind., and daughters Solveig Arnold of Seattle, Alvhlld Sherve of Jamestown, N.D., and Elisabeth Erickson of Renton, Wash.



Theodor S. Slen

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