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Obituaries

Glen Swenson, former Wright County judge and legislator, dies at 89

By **Chuck Haga**
Star Tribune Staff Writer

As she sorted through old pictures and memories of her father, Shelley Swenson had to laugh at one: the day Glen Swenson, a soldier stationed in New Zealand during World War II, was assigned to guard the visiting Eleanor Roosevelt.

"My dad was all of 5 feet 9," she said. "Mrs. Roosevelt was a big woman, and I think she could have held her own."

There was the political thing, too.

"My father was a *very* conservative Republican," she said. "He was a frugal Swedish conservative. But he always held Mrs. Roosevelt in very high regard" despite the liberal politics that she and her husband, former President Franklin Roosevelt, represented.

"He was conservative, but he would listen to people," she said.

Glen Swenson, who served 14 years in the Minnesota Legislature before becoming a judge in his native Wright County, died at his home in Buffalo on Monday. He was 89.

He was elected Wright County treasurer in the late 1930s, but he left the post to enter the Army during World War II. After the war, he served as district attorney. He was elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives in 1952 and served five terms, followed by four years in the state Senate.

He was appointed district judge in Wright County in 1972. When he retired in 1982, he was replaced by District Judge Bruce Douglas, who had been a public defender.

"He was a remarkable man: intelligent and quick-witted," Douglas said.

"He sized things up quicker than anyone I ever knew.

"He was a very conservative Republican fellow in his years in the Legislature, but he also knew you could do a lot of good for people here in the court. He had a soft side under that gruff exterior, and he loved resolving people's disputes. He liked being a judge more than almost anything."

Swenson retired in 1982, but he stayed active by handling arbitrations and mediations.

"He did his last arbitration just last spring," Douglas said. "Then he said, 'That's it. I'm too old for this.' But he didn't want to quit. He was a trooper."

Swenson was an avid hunter and fisherman, his daughter said, and he loved tramping through his home country: rural and small-town Minnesota.

"He was not an ostentatious man," she said. "He never forgot his roots. That's probably what I respected him the most for.

"He was very proud of his public service, and he was saddened in recent

years because he felt the honor of being in public service had almost been eliminated. It hurt his heart terribly."

Swenson met his first wife, Lora, in New Zealand, where she was serving with the Red Cross during the war. She died in 1991. He later married Nella Swenson.

In addition to his wife and daughter Shelley, he is survived by daughter Sharon Leveni of Madison, Wis., and six grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday at Zion Lutheran Church, 1200 S. Hwy. 25, Buffalo, Minn., with private burial in Lakeview Cemetery, Buffalo.



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