

Obituaries

Lloyd Duxbury, legislative reformer, dies

*Longtime House speaker known
for reforming personal taxes*

BY STAR TRIBUNE MAR 25 '02
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Lloyd Duxbury Jr., for years one of the most influential leaders at the Minnesota Legislature, died Saturday after a brief illness. He was 80.

Duxbury, of St. Paul and formerly of Caledonia, was speaker of the Minnesota House of Representatives for eight years, an unusual accomplishment.

A third-generation country lawyer, Duxbury began serving in the House in 1951. He left as speaker in 1969 after helping to establish laws that still serve Minnesotans every day. Among his achievements was helping to reform personal taxes on individuals' belongings, replacing them with the sales tax.

Gordon Forbes, a former state representative, called Duxbury one of the greatest legislators the state has seen in the past 50 years.

"He was a leader and a planner who kept things working," said Forbes, of Little Canada. "One of his accomplishments was to shake up the administration of the House of Representatives and make it work. Some of his reforms are still there today."



Lloyd Duxbury

In his senior years, Duxbury was a champion for the elderly. He worked on a U.S. Senate committee on aging and later, lobbied at the U.S. Capitol for the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare.

Those who knew him said Duxbury, or "Dux" as he was better known, had tremendous empathy and concern for people.

"He knew that a lot of people lived on what they received through Social Security," said his daughter, Marna Duxbury. "He fought to preserve that fund because of the people who lived solely on it, including those who would be homeless if it were not for the Social Security fund."

Even as it got harder for him to get around, Duxbury used the Washington, D.C., subway system to get to his office. He reluctantly retired at age 78 and moved to St. Paul.

"He took life head on and ran full tilt his whole life," said his son, David Duxbury of Amery, Wis.

Born in Caledonia, Lloyd Duxbury Jr. ran a law practice there with his father above a barber shop and store on Main Street. Both had graduated from Harvard Law School. Lloyd Duxbury Sr. encouraged "Dux" to try politics, but urged that he limit it to only one year.

"Anything more than that, my grandfather considered a sickness," David Duxbury said, chuckling.

David Duxbury said his father moved easily in all circles, from the small town cafes and taverns in the rolling

countryside of southern Minnesota to the halls of the State Capitol and Congress. He found audiences with the governors and the farmers and the shopkeepers. And to him, they all mattered.

"He didn't need much of a crowd to campaign, I'll tell you that," David Duxbury said. "He was very comfortable in many walks of life, with many kinds of people. He loved children, and he was a pacifist. But what he liked most, I think, was representing people from rural Minnesota, because that is where he had his roots."

Ed Burdick, chief clerk in the Minnesota House, met Duxbury in 1951 when he was a freshman legislator. Duxbury was gregarious and fair. He matured into a respected leader with a relaxed style.

"He had a rare sense of humor," said Burdick, who has worked for 18 speakers at the State Capitol. "When things became pretty tense there in the House, that's when his sense of humor seemed to work things out. He was an accomplished negotiator and an excellent, excellent presiding officer."

Duxbury was a conservative in an era when there were liberals and conservatives but no parties. He didn't like it when the Legislature became partisan.

"He never got bitter inside," Forbes said. "He was a man of principle, but he would still work with people who felt different than he did, and get results."

In 1969, President Richard Nixon nominated Duxbury for U.S. attorney for Minnesota. Duxbury declined the partisan post. He, his wife Rosemary and their two kids moved to Washington, where he worked as vice president and attorney-lobbyist for Burlington Northern Railroad. His work for the elderly followed.

"There isn't anybody who knew him that didn't like him," said Ken Froslid, who was a 3M lobbyist when the two met more than 30 years ago.

"He wasn't confrontational," Froslid said. "He tried to bring people together. He was just a country lawyer who went to Harvard and tried to represent his constituents. That's how he got where he went."

Services for Duxbury will be at 1 p.m. Thursday at Immanuel Lutheran Church, 419 E. Grove St., Caledonia. Visitation will be from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday. Arrangements are by Haugen-Roble-Jandt Funeral Home, Caledonia.

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