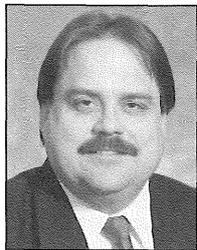


Carrying on

Wasiluk brings family tradition of public service to Legislature

By JONAS M. WALKER

Rep. Scott Wasiluk (DFL-Maplewood) brings with him a proud heritage of political activism that runs through generations of his



Rep. Scott Wasiluk

family's history.

His paternal grandparents hail from Belorussia, now Belarus, a country in central Europe, formerly part the U.S.S.R that gained its independence upon the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Wasiluk's grandfather left his ancestral homeland at the age of 21, escaping the Russian Czar's 1911 draft efforts. He abandoned his family's landholding past, accepting the fate to be wrought by his own hands in the the United States. He first arrived in Minneapolis by way of Canada.

His marriage was arranged between the Russian communities in the Twin Cities and Detroit. His bride even hailed from the same area in Belorussia. The couple moved to St. Paul and had a son, Wasiluk's father, in 1917.

Wasiluk's parents were closely involved in Twin Cities progressive politics in the middle of the 20th Century. They worked on Hubert Humphrey's campaigns, and introduced their children to the DFL party. When Wasiluk's father passed away, his mother carried on in his position on the Maplewood City Council.

Wasiluk's sister, Sandy Dicke, is now an assistant sergeant-at-arms for the House. She says family ties profoundly influenced the younger Wasiluk. "I taught him everything he knows about politics and ice skating."

Looking back, she remembers her brother as a bright, adept athlete, especially proficient at hockey and tennis. She also recalls that Wasiluk was known for his forgetfulness. "Once, he made it all the way to International Falls for a hockey tournament with only one skate," she said, smiling.

Wasiluk brings his educational and scien-

tific backgrounds to bear on his new duty representing the people of District 55B. He grew up in Maplewood, and still lives in the district's largest city.

The Wasiluk family ties to their community run deeper than just the freshman legislator. Wasiluk's wife, Julie, currently serves on the Maplewood City Council, and their two children are enrolled in the public schools Wasiluk used to help administer.

Wasiluk brings nine years of experience on the North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School Board to the Legislature. In three of those years, the North St. Paul High School alumnus chaired that body.

He says that "the policy aspects of schools

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and school districts" form the basis of his public administration experience.

A University of St. Thomas graduate, Wasiluk's political experience began at an uneasy time for Democrats nationally. In 1980, Ronald Reagan was elected president and Wasiluk took a job as a page for former State Sen. Jerome Hughes (DFL-Maplewood). "He was my senator," explains Wasiluk. "I was interested in government; good government, and policy."

Wasiluk works as a microbiologist at Boston Scientific Corporation, which manufactures medical equipment. He "coordinates studies to ensure that the process of sterilizing medical equipment is efficacious."

He describes his job as "rewarding," and plans to keep in touch with work during the legislative session.

As any first-time legislator will admit, the

job is very different from the task of campaigning. Wasiluk's sister is confident her brother is up to the challenge. The character trait she most admires is his "willingness to devote the necessary time to public service."

As to his legislative priorities, Wasiluk is deferential to the work done by his predecessors, Bruce Vento and, more recently, Betty McCollum, who was elected to the United States House of Representatives in November 2000 to replace Vento, who passed away that summer.

Wasiluk says his priorities will surround "good communities, good schools." Asked about the relationship between the two, Wasiluk added, "Safe schools exist in safe communities. In my experience, collaboration and synergy made the schools stronger."

Citing his experience leading educational initiatives during belt-tightening eras, Wasiluk says he has learned to provide "more service with less" support and fewer resources. He gives the example of building new schools in his district with the help of local business lead-

ers and community organizers.

"The environment fits in there, too," he added.

He will have the opportunity to apply his scientific expertise in the pursuit of good government as Wasiluk was appointed to both the Environment and Natural Resources Policy and Finance committees.

DISTRICT 55B

1998 population (estimate): 34,419

Largest city: Maplewood

County: Ramsey

Location: northern St. Paul suburbs

Top concern: "Good communities, good schools, these will be my highest priorities."

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