

Longtime Judge Walter Rogosheske dies

Former state Supreme Court justice and legislator loved teaching law

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Walter Rogosheske loved the law and politics so fervently that despite lying in the hospital for three weeks with pneumonia, he engaged one of his sons in a debate Friday morning about the legal battle between the state and the tobacco industry.

"We had a pretty rousing discussion. Dad enjoyed it," said Paul Rogosheske. Then, a few hours later, the man who had served 38 years as a judge — 20 of them on the Minnesota Supreme Court — and six years as a Republican legislator, died quietly.

"His heart just couldn't hold out," Paul said. "He'd had a major heart attack some years ago and then the pneumonia just left him so weak." He was 83.

Rogosheske was the confidant of governors, once was chairman of a committee of the American Bar Association that set standards for prosecutors and defense attorneys, was father of the state's vocational school system, and an acquaintance of Charles Lindbergh, the native of Little Falls, Minn., who has a permanent place in history for being the first to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean.

Rogosheske also grew up near Little Falls and went to school at St. Cloud State Teachers College and Valparaiso University in Indiana before going to the Uni-



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versity of Minnesota Law School.

He was in the Army in World War II and delighted in telling anyone who asked that he served with distinction by "cleaning latrines with a toothbrush in New Jersey."

Shortly after the war broke out, he was elected to the state House and served during 1943's 90-day session before resigning at age 29 to join the Army.

In 1944, he was reelected to the House without opposition and was released from the Army in time to serve in the 1945 session.

In the Legislature, Rogosheske

wrote the bill that created vocational schools in Minnesota. He did it after being convinced by a close friend, who was a teacher, that many youngsters needed an alternative to college.

In the 40s, slot machines were ubiquitous in Minnesota's bars and they weren't regulated by the state.

Rogosheske became convinced that anyone playing the machines was unwittingly being duped by the owners and operators of the machines. So he pushed a bill that outlawed them.

That ended his legislative career just when he was in line to become speaker of the House. A pro-gambling candidate beat him by 12 votes in the next election. Fliers were put on cars depicting him as a Nazi storm trooper smashing slots beneath his boots. "We still have the flier," Paul Rogosheske said.

Gov. Luther Youngdahl, who occasionally visited the Rogosheskes' summer cabin, made Rogosheske chairman of the committee that picked the site for what is now Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. And the governor made his friend a district judge.

In 1962, Rogosheske was elevated to the state Supreme Court by Gov. Elmer L. Andersen, another friend.

Rogosheske's mother, Tilly,

attended his swearing-in ceremony to the Supreme Court and, with complete candor, mentioned that she really had hoped that her son would be a dentist.

The judge conducted moot court sessions at the University of Minnesota Law School for many years because "one of his great joys was teaching trial skills to law students," his son said. When Rogosheske died, he was working with scholars from New York who are writing a book on legal ethics. They are using an opinion that Rogosheske wrote in 1962 that dealt with lawyers' responsibility to reveal information obtained while investigating a pending court case.

Survivors include his wife, Dorothy, of Little Canada; sons Jim, of New Brighton, Paul, of Mahtomedi, and Mark, of West St. Paul; a daughter, Mary Alice Stoehr, of Maplewood, and 13 grandchildren.

Services will be 7 p.m. Tuesday at Pilgrim Lutheran Church in St. Paul with visitation from 4 to 8 p.m. Monday at Willwerscheid and Peters Mortuary in St. Paul.

Memorials are suggested to Pilgrim Lutheran Church or a charity of the donor's choice.