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Obituaries

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Former bank president, state senator Clifford Sommer dies

By David Chanen
Staff Writer

Clifford C. Sommer, 85, a former state senator and president of the American Bankers Association, died Sunday at the health care center at Friendship Village in Bloomington.

Sommer, formerly of Minneapolis and Owatonna, Minn., grew up in Rush City, Minn., where he gained his first business experience working for his father, Carl, a banker for 76 years. At 18 he became a messenger at Minneapolis Midland National Bank and eventually worked his way up to assistant vice president. While at Mid-

land, he met his wife, Eleanore, who worked there. They were married in 1935.

In 1955 he became president and a board member of Security Bank and Trust Co. in Owatonna. He was chairman of the bank's remodeling committee and headed the fight to preserve and restore the building, nationally famous as the "jewel box bank." It was designed by Louis Sullivan and is considered a national landmark. The Minnesota chapter of the American Institute of Architects cited Sommer for his "enlightened leadership in preserving an architectural masterpiece."

He led several campaigns for Republican

candidates at every level. He became a successful candidate for the Minnesota Senate in 1966. He declined to run for a second term after he was named president of the American Bankers Association, the first president elected from the Ninth Federal Reserve District. Following his term, he became a vice president of Northwest Bancorp. (Banco) in Minneapolis, the predecessor of Norwest Corp., and retired in 1973.

Sommer was chairman of the Minnesota Mental Health Campaign in 1960, 1965 and 1978, and was finance chairman of Sen. Dave Durenberger's campaign in 1978. He also was treasurer, member of the board of trustees and vice president of the founda-

tion at Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis. He also was chairman of the Governor's Business Advisory Committee, a member of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and a board member of Lutheran Mutual Life Insurance Co. (now Century Corp. of America) in Waverly, Iowa.

He earned a bachelor's degree in business from the University of Minnesota and graduated from the American Bankers Association's Stonier Graduate School of Banking at Rutgers University. He also attended what is now the William Mitchell College of Law for two years and the American Institute of Banking. He played basketball at the University of Minnesota for three years. He

was one of the first six people to receive the university's Distinguished Alumni Award.

He is survived by his wife, Eleanore; two daughters, Margaret Anderson, of Bloomington, and Gayle Gaffin, of Duluth; a sister, Geraldine Schunicht, of Pine City, Minn., and a brother, Willard, of Grand Rapids, Minn. A memorial service will be held at 1 p.m. Wednesday at Central Lutheran Church, 333 S. 12th St. Memorials to the Central Lutheran Church Foundation, the Owatonna Foundation or the University of Minnesota Foundation are suggested. Arrangements are by Gill Brothers Funeral Chapel, Bloomington.