

short takes

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A PIONEER AND MORE

Brataas helped build GOP base

Nancy Brataas, who died Thursday at 86, secured her place in state history when a 1975 special election in Rochester sent her to the state Senate. Only one other woman had served there, a widow who succeeded her husband in 1927 and left 40 years before Brataas arrived.

But already then, Brataas had shaped state Republican Party history. So said former GOP Gov. Arne Carlson as we compared Brataas notes Friday. He ranked her among a handful of party strategists who built a political machine strong enough to win gubernatorial elections in 1960, 1966 and 1978 despite the state's Democratic drift during those years.

Brataas was a genius at grass-roots organizing, Carlson recalled. She insti-

gated the party's annual Neighbor-to-Neighbor drive, knowing that if someone can be persuaded to give a few dollars to a political party, he or she will care about that party's well-being. She systematized direct mail and get-out-the-vote efforts, eventually establishing a national campaign consulting firm whose clients included President Richard Nixon.

Brataas' brilliance as party tactician likely opened as many doors for women as did her service at the Legislature. Her example allowed other women to break out of envelope-stuffing roles and become campaign managers and candidates. It's regrettable that when she sought GOP blessing for a congressional run in 1984, she was spurned as too liberal. Important as her contributions were, she was capable of larger service.

LORI STURDEVANT