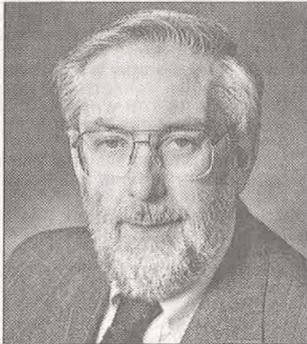


'He was always for the underdog'

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By JOY POWELL
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« HE ALWAYS CARRIED IN HIS POCKET THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA — A POCKET VERSION. »

Paul McCarron dove into politics at age 8 when he campaigned for a classmate's father who was running for Minneapolis City Council.

McCarron went on to serve more than 40 years as a city, county and state public official, advocating hard for health, human services, veterans and the environment.

He also volunteered on many projects as a worker — rather than a leader — for local Lions, Rotary and disabled veterans organizations.

McCarron, of Spring Lake Park, died on Aug. 11 of congestive heart failure. He was 79, and known as a man who liked to go back to basics.

"He always carried in his pocket the Constitution of the United States of America — a pocket version," said his wife of 25 years, Lois McCarron.

"He always was for the underdog. ... He was very much a behind-the-scenes person and very humble."

Serving in the state House of Representatives from 1972 through 1982, McCarron was the architect of landmark legislation that developed the role of county government in human services.

While working for the collective good, he never lost sight of individuals.

"If he knew someone didn't have a job, he'd find them a

job, and he would rarely talk about it," Lois McCarron said.

Many people confided in him. "He was a man of his word, and he was very loyal."

Reared in south Minneapolis, he attended Washburn High School. Son of an Irish immigrant, he loved all things Irish. Deeply patriotic, too, he joined the U.S. Navy at age 16, serving as a printer, journalist and photographer on the admiral's staff of the USS Pocono in the Atlantic Fleet.

After four years as a sailor, McCarron returned home and attended St. Thomas College (now University).

In 1969, he was elected to the Spring Lake Park City Council. Throughout the decades, he served on numerous commissions, committees, boards and service organizations, fostering cooperation between groups.

He helped form the Anoka County Joint Law Enforcement Council in which cities and the county coordinated public safety. He did the same with veterans' organizations in Anoka County and for development of light rail and the North Star commuter rail.

After his decade in the Legislature, McCarron was elected to the Anoka County Board of Commissioners.

He had a long career in the private sector as well, serving as president and general manager of McGregor Agri-Corp Inc., a fabric canopy maker.

He continued making sales trips until last year.

A voracious reader, he collected about 8,000 books. He loved traveling and music, especially traditional Irish, bluegrass and jazz.

In December, Paul would have finished out 30 years as the only chairman ever of Anoka County's Housing and Redevelopment Authority/Economic Development Commission. His accomplishments including leading cities and Anoka County in the development of Schwann's Super Rink, a national sports center, in Blaine.

On June 25, at his final HRA meeting, others worried over how ill he looked.

"He believed in his commitments to doing things, and so he went to the meeting," Lois explained. Two days later, he was in the hospital.

"When I went to find a jacket for him to wear for the casket," she said, "in his pocket, folded lengthwise, were the agenda and minutes for the meeting."

Other survivors include son Shane, daughter Janet Jorgenson-Rathke, six grandchildren and 14 "honorary grandchildren" in Ireland, England and Peru.

Services, with bagpipes and a Dixie band, have been held.

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