

E. J. Chilgren, ex-state House speaker, dies

Littlefork, Minn.

E. J. Chilgren, who served for 38 years in the Minnesota House of Representatives and was speaker for two terms, died Thursday in the Littlefork Municipal Hospital. He was 75.

He had been in declining health in recent years and had been hospitalized since Aug. 18 when he suffered a stroke.

Chilgren was born in Sweden on July 4, 1897, and grew up in Blackduck, Minn., where he was graduated from high school as class valedictorian in 1915.

In his youth, he was a printer's devil and worked during his high school days on the Blackduck American. He started his own newspaper in Overly, N.D., when he was 20, but soon returned to Blackduck as a lumber camp auditor.

Chilgren, known as "Big Ed," served with the Marines in France in World War I and, with his veterans bonus of \$360, bought the weekly Littlefork Times in 1921.

He published the newspaper for 43 years and sold it in 1964.

Chilgren was elected to the Legislature in 1926 and, caucusing with the DFL-Liberal faction, became a champion of northern Minnesota interests: conservation, highways and state aid for poor school districts. He helped initiate the state gasoline tax and later was instrumental in forging the first state income tax.

He lost a contest for the speaker's job in the 1937 session when Harold Barker of Elbow Lake won a flip of a coin, but Chilgren got the job in the 1959 session and was reelected for the 1961 session.

He decided in 1964 not to seek another term. Since then he spent a lot of his



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time at his favorite pastimes: hunting and fishing. His wife, Fronice, died in 1969. Survivors include two daughters, Mrs. Alyce Loughery of Littlefork and Mrs. Dorothy Reinartz of St. Paul, as well as several brothers and sisters and three grandchildren.

Gov. Wendell R. Anderson described Chilgren yesterday as a "dedicated and talented public servant."

Anderson, who was a freshman legislator during Chilgren's first term as speaker, added, "I came to know Ed Chilgren well... as a fair man, an honest man and a warm human being. He loved the common man and gave unselfishly of himself in attempting to better the common man's lot."