

## Luther W. Youngdahl, former governor, dies

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Luther W. Youngdahl, the most prominent member of one of Minnesota's most prominent families, died at his home in Washington D.C., Wednesday night. He was 82.

As a lawyer, judge, Minnesota governor and spokesman for Christianity, Youngdahl left his mark on Minnesota and the nation for six decades.

Although he served as governor of Minnesota for three terms, Youngdahl earned his national renown for his rulings as a federal judge in the McCarthy era. And although he was popular three-term Republican governor, he caused one of the greatest controversies in state GOP history by resigning.

In 1952 at the height of the anti-Communist campaign of Sen. Joseph McCarthy, Youngdahl, a judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, dismissed as unconstitutional key parts of the government's case against Owen J. Lattimore, a prime target of the McCarthy campaign.

The government had charged that Lattimore, a professor at Johns Hopkins University and an expert in Asian affairs, had lied when he told a Senate committee that he had never been a Communist agent or sympathizer.

McCarthy once testified that Lattimore was "the top Soviet espionage agent in the United States."

Youngdahl later denied a U.S. attorney's request that he withdraw from the case on the ground that he was prejudiced against the government. Then in 1955, Youngdahl threw out a new indictment brought against Lattimore, and the government dropped its case.

Youngdahl, who was appointed to the federal bench in 1951, said later that he was prouder of his rulings in the Lattimore case than anything he had ever done in the legal profession, saying the country "came as close to being a dictatorship at the time as I hope we will ever come."

In dismissing the indictment against Lattimore, Youngdahl wrote in defense of the First Amendment rights:

"When public excitement runs high as to the alien ideologies is the time when we must be particularly alert not to impair the ancient landmarks set up in the Bill of Rights."

During his years as governor (1947-51), Youngdahl was known for protecting even more ancient landmarks.

Often characterized as "the governor who's against sin," he embarked on a number of crusades—first and most famous his efforts in persuading the Legislature to enact an anti-slot machine law.

When Youngdahl was elected in 1946 there were more than 8,000 slot machines in the state. The successful

effort to get rid of them marked his first term.

During his second term Youngdahl launched a campaign that led to a new mental health law in the state, one of the model's in the nation at the time.

Campaigns against sin are part of the Youngdahl family heritage. His brother Reuben was pastor of Mt. Oivet Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, the nation's largest Lutheran church. Reuben's son Paul is the current pastor of the church.

Another Youngdahl brother Oscar, was an attorney and the Fifth District Congressman from Minnesota from 1939 to 1943. His brother Carl was head of the music department at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, S.D., a brother Benjamin was head of the school of social work at Washington University in St. Louis and another brother Peter, was a California attorney. All are deceased.

His sister, Ruth Youngdahl Nelson, an author, was a national mother of the year in 1973.

The most controversial episode of the Luther Youngdahl's long public service career was his resignation as governor in September 1951 to accept an appointment from Democratic President Harry S. Truman as a federal judge for the District of Columbia.

The accusations at the time were that he had "sold out" to Democrat Hubert Humphrey, then a U.S. senator from Minnesota, who admitted he was not anxious to face the popular governor in a possible future Senate race.

It was disclosed later, however, that Youngdahl had resigned the governorship after his Mayo Clinic physician had told him he must "start taking it easier" because an inordinately high blood pressure might prove fatal.

After his physician had advised leaving the strenuous job of governor, he consulted the late Rey Ewald, a close friend. Ewald took the problem to Humphrey and in due course Truman made the appointment.

Years later, Youngdahl was quoted as saying"

"...Hubert was exuberant and happy. He was pleased that I could get to serve on the federal bench, and undoubtedly he was somewhat relieved that I would not be around to run against him" for the U.S. Senate at the next election.

At another point, Youngdahl was quoted as saying of his shift from the governorship to the federal judiciary:

"I have no regrets. I followed my physician's advice and I haven't been off the bench five minutes in 20 years because of ill health."

He was a native of Minneapolis, born May 29, 1896. He was a student at the University of Minnesota for the period 1915-16 and then graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in 1919 from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minn. He obtained his law degree in 1921 from the Minnesota College of Law. (Now William Mitchell.)

After obtaining his law degree he served as Minneapolis assistant city attorney before entering private practice of law

with former Judge M.C. Tifft. He became a Minneapolis municipal judge in 1930 and served in the position for six years, when he moved to the Hennepin County district judgeship. In 1942 he became an associate justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court. Four years later he was the Republican candidate for governor and won the election.

He served as governor until the resignation in September 1951, when he became judge. He remained active on the federal judiciary until 1966. He then retired as senior judge but became available for hearing special cases.

Over the years he was awarded more than a dozen honorary degrees. The Swedish government conferred on him the Royal Order of the North Star.

He served in the army during World I.

He was married to the former Irene Engdahl in June 1923.

Survivors include his wife; a daughter, Margaret Peterson of Ringwood, N.J.; and two sons, the Rev. William L. Youngdahl of Palo Alto Calif., and P. David Youngdahl of Vienna, Va.

A memorial service will be held on Wednesday at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in suburban Silver Spring, Md.

## Ex-governor

### Youngdahl, 82, dies

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Judge Luther W. Youngdahl, 82, a former three-term Republican Minnesota governor who later earned national

recognition for his federal court rulings during the McCarthy era, died at his home in Washington last night.

He suffered from cancer.

Born into a Swedish emigrant family in Minneapolis, Youngdahl left his mark on Minnesota and the nation, first as a lawyer, then as a governor, judge and crusader for Christianity.

He was governor of Minnesota from 1947-1951, and created a flap by resigning to accept President Harry S. Truman's appointment as U.S. District Court judge for the District of Columbia.

**YOUNGDAHL** came to national attentions the next year by dismissing the government's case against Owen J. Lattimore, who Sen. Joseph McCarthy once described as "the top Soviet espionage agent in the United States."

Lattimore, a professor at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and an expert in Asian affairs, had been accused by the government of lying when he told a Senate committee that he had never been a communist agent or sympathizer.

During Youngdahl's years as Minnesota governor, he often was characterized as "the governor who's against sin."

Another achievement that drew wide attention was his establishment of Minnesota's mental-health program.

The most controversial episode of Youngdahl's long public-service career was his resignation as governor in September 1951.

**AT THE TIME**, he was accused of “selling out” to Democrat Hubert Humphrey, then a United States senator from Minnesota. Youngdahl denied this emphatically.

It was disclosed later that he had resigned the governorship after his Mayo Clinic physician had told him he must “start taking it easier” because he suffered from high blood pressure.

Youngdahl was a native of Minneapolis, born May 29, 1896. He was a student at the University of Minnesota from 1915 to 1916 and then graduated with a bachelor of arts degree in 1919 from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minn. He obtained a law degree in 1921 from the Minnesota College of Law, now William Mitchell College of Law in St. Paul.

He became a Minneapolis municipal judge in 1930 and served in that position for six years, then becoming a Hennepin County district judge.

In 1942, he became an associate justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court. Five years later he was the Republican candidate for governor and won the election.

He served as governor until he became a federal judge in September 1951. He remained active on the federal judiciary until 1966.

Youngdahl’s five brothers, all deceased, also enjoyed successful careers.

Reuben Youngdahl was pastor of Mount Olivet Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, the nation’s largest Lutheran church, and another brother, Oscar, was an attorney

and 5<sup>th</sup> District congressman from Minnesota from 1939 to 1943. Carl Youngdahl was head of the music department at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, S.D., and Benjamin Youngdahl was head of social work at Washington University in St. Louis. Another brother, Peter, was a lawyer in California.

Survivors include his wife, the former Irene Engdahl, who he married in June 1923, and three children, Margaret Peterson, Ridgewood, N.J.; the Rev. L. William Youngdahl, Palo Alto, Calif., and P. David Youngdahl, Fairfax, Va.