

Former Anoka store owner dies

Wednesday, 17 March 2010

A longtime Anoka businessman and past member of the Anoka City Council has died.

by Mandy Moran Froemming

Union Editor

A longtime Anoka businessman and past member of the Anoka City Council has died.

Joe Chutich passed away on Friday, March 15 at the age of 87. Photo submitted

Joseph D. Chutich passed away March 12 at the age of 87.

Chutich was well known in Anoka for the 32 years he operated Joe's Hardware Hank store, which first started as a Western Auto Associate Store on Anoka's Main Street in 1952.

Chutich was born in 1922 to Croatian immigrants and grew up in Hibbing as a part of a mining family.

He was quick to leave the Iron Range, as a young man he served five years in the U.S. Army – including a tour of duty in the Pacific during World War II and 20 years in the Army Reserves.

“Joe was a joker,” said his wife of nearly 60 years, Marlys. The two were both pursuing education degrees at University of Minnesota when they met.

They did spend a brief stint living in Seattle, Wash., where they worked for Boeing before deciding to settle in Anoka.

Marlys' family had been from Anoka, but when she was young her parents had moved to St. Louis Park where she was raised.

After working for several years at Twin Cities Arsenal in the ballistics department, Chutich was ready to go into business on his own in the early 1950s, according to a story in the Anoka County Union from 1973.

“He loved people and he loved to help people,” said Marlys.

He was known for extending credit to many young people in community, to help them get their start in life.

“He loved being in business,” said Marlys, who did the company books at home while raising the couple's four children.

Chutich had few hobbies, said Marlys, as he really enjoyed spending his time at the store or with his family.

Chutich also served one term on the Anoka City Council from 1973 to 1977. Marlys described his political style as “a bit of a rebel that way” and he had ran for office because he thought he could bring change to the city council.

Chutich had a history of volunteering in the community – serving on several committees for the Anoka Area Chamber of Commerce as well as the Mercy Hospital Board for many years.

Her husband's death came as a shock – he likely had a heart attack, Marlys said Tuesday. He had spent time in Mercy Hospital after low blood pressure had caused a couple of bad falls. But he was recovering, she said.

The couple, who liked to winter in Florida after selling the store and retiring, moved from their Anoka home of more than 30 years on Van Buren to a townhome in Coon Rapids about 17 years ago.

But during his retirement Chutich really did enjoy the warm weather while in Florida.

“We always enjoyed spending time with friends and living a great life,” said Marlys.

Along with wife Marlys, Joe Chutich is survived by his four children: Cathy, Mike, Margaret and Wendy and their partners Charlie, Susan, Penny and Ryan. He also very much enjoyed spending time with his grandchildren – Brett, Annelise, Toby and Olivia.

He is remembered by his family as a kind and generous man whose good sportsmanship only waivered when he boasted about his card playing skills.

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, March 20 at 2 p.m. at the First Congregational Church of Anoka (located at Main Street and Third Avenue South).

Memorials are preferred to the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs student scholarship fund at the University of Minnesota or to the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Mandy Moran Froemming is at editor.anokaunion@ecm-inc.com