

# Chuck Goodman dies at 65

■ Longtime GF businessman, politician left his mark on town

By Tony Lone Fight  
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A stormy politician, a compassionate boss and a compulsive workaholic, Charles "Chuck" Goodman died Wednesday, in Sun Lakes, Ariz., where he stayed during the winter months. He was 65.

Goodman was a state senator from Grand Forks, former owner of Goodman's Furniture store and civic leader.

Earl Strinden, who served with Goodman in the Legislature, called him a "wonderful community leader. He gave unselfishly of his time, talent and money to many worthy enterprises. The community of Grand Forks is a far better place because Chuck Goodman was there."

Services are tentatively set for 1:30 p.m. Wednesday in United Lutheran Church.

Goodman was born in Minneapolis, the son of Lydia and Dewey Goodman, and lived in Dawson, N.D., for eight years before moving to Grand Forks in 1935. He graduated from Central High School and then joined the Army in 1946 with friend and fellow graduate, Bob Gilmour.

Gilmour recalled they were rejected from the Army by mistake.

"He came over to me and said 'they don't want us' and ripped up our papers," Gilmour said. But it turned out to be a mistake, and the Army recalled the pair to Minneapolis.

Much later in their lives, Goodman, after having bypass heart surgery himself, "coached" Gilmour through his similar surgery.

"It really lifted my spirits" to have him there, Gilmour said.

After returning from Korea in 1947 as a corporal, he married Avonne Skarsbo June 12, 1948, in Grand Forks. He graduated from UND with a bachelor of business science degree in 1949.

They built a "dream home" on 2501 Olson Drive in Grand Forks in 1964. According to a June 1964 Herald article, "the Goodmans bought the land in 1959, and spent five years daydreaming over house plans in magazines. There was an ornate wall-to-wall buffet 16½ feet long custom-made from plans and designs drawn to match the fami-



Herald file photo

Charles "Chuck" Goodman spoke with the Herald about winding down his political life in 1984.

built the original Goodman's Appliance store on South Washington Street. "People said I was crazy because there were lots of other stores in town," Goodman said in a 1987 article.

But the business succeeded and grew into a home furnishing store. Goodman added a store in Grafton, N.D. Along the way, Goodman was awarded two boss-of-the-year awards; one from the Grand Forks Jaycees and the other from the Twin Forks Chapter of the National Secretaries Association.

Susan Szepek, who was Goodman's credit sales manager for 15 years, said, "he was always doing for other people."

Through her personal family tragedy and a fire that destroyed the Goodman's business, Szepek said Chuck Goodman was always there. "How will people know about all the good he has done in this world?" she said.

Szepek was devastated when the original store burned down Dec. 20, 1971.

"He stood beside me looking at the mess and said, 'were going to put it all back together.'" And he did, Szepek said. The building was built on top of the foundation of the old building.

He sold the business in 1987 to sons Dan and Doug and longtime employee Dean Fossum.

## Politics

"Chuck was an intense competitor and an able advocate. He and I had some very strong ongoing debates, especially over oil and coal taxes," Conrad said.

But, Conrad said, Goodman was intelligent, did his homework and cared deeply about doing a good job.

"I respected Chuck," Conrad said.

Strinden, who was House majority leader during Goodman's legislative days, said Goodman was a fine legislator and was dedicated to what was right for the citizens of North Dakota. He brought business experience to the Legislature and he was highly effective and respected, and had a wonderful personality, Strinden said.

## Doing his civic duty

Goodman found time for other civic activities.

He was chairman of the medical park board, served on the United Hospital board, was director of Community National Bank and was president of the Chamber of Commerce. He was the director of the North Dakota affiliate of the American Diabetes Association, the Retail Association and the National Appliance Dealers Association.

He was awarded the Henry Havig Award for community leadership in 1981.

long custom-made from plans and designs drawn to match the family's Spanish-style dinette set."

They had three children, Vicki in 1951, Dan in 1953, and Douglas in 1954.

Later in life, Goodman was a diabetic and also suffered a heart attack.

"He absolutely lived life to a full degree, staying upbeat and active. He wasn't going to let these health problems slow him down," Strinden said.

## **Business**

Goodman's father operated Goodman Farm Electric, selling farm generators, milking machines, silos and other equipment. When his father died in 1950, Goodman and his brother, Gene, took over.

## **Politics**

Goodman said he was proudest of his accomplishments in business, but he is best known for his political career. He was a Republican senator from District 18 from 1972 to 1984, when he declined to run for re-election. He was at the center of state politics during his eight years as the chairman of the Finance and Taxation Committee.

His style was often confrontational. In 1982, he became embroiled in a fight against NSP and refused to pay his fuel bill. He eventually paid his bill, but not before NSP shut off his power for a month. He said NSP discriminated against Red River Valley customers by charging higher rates.

He also had a stormy relationship with Sen. Kent Conrad, who was the Democratic tax commissioner when Goodman chaired Fi-

vig Award for community leadership in 1981.

## **Winding down**

When he decided not to seek another term in 1984, he thanked legislative colleagues, who "put up with my stubbornness when I wouldn't vote the way they wanted." He said he decided not to seek another re-election because it was time for a new direction in his life. He said he wasn't certain what direction that would be but, "when I get done with this job, there ain't gonna be a tie around my neck."

Burial will be at Memorial Park Cemetery. Arrangements are with the Amundson Funeral Home, Grand Forks.

The family prefers memorials to these organizations: United Lutheran Church, UND Foundation, American Diabetes and St. Peter