

Mantos appreciated customers

By Carol Graham
Herald Staff Writer

James Mantos was a tinkerer, stamp and coin collector, ham radio operator, hunter, photographer and restaurateur.

Mantos, who operated the Grand Cafe until 1975, lived at 1814 Second Ave. S. where he died Monday. He was 78.

Mantos was a gentle man with a gruff voice that scared people when he talked, but he had a heart of gold. He saved bread crusts and gave away countless meals to needy people who came to the Grand Cafe.

"He knew who his customers were and he never forgot them," his wife, Teddy Mantos, said. "Through the years, he attended the funeral of every one of his regulars. 'They made my home,' he used to say."

Mantos' career in the restaurant business spanned several decades after he began work as a high school student, at the Belmont Cafe, owned by his stepfather, Nick Tsoumpas. He owned the Dixie Queen Doughnut Shop and later the Grand Cafe.

A conservative man, his philosophy was: don't spend it if you don't have it; don't show off; and don't be anyone you are not.

"He was a talented man," said Teddy Mantos, "the most curious man you ever saw." Tinkering and building things was his idea of a good time. Mantos built the first stereo in Grand Forks by setting up several speakers that he had built all over the living room. As a boy, he built crystal radio sets

Teddy Mantos recalled a story of their visit several years ago to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. Mantos found a plane flown during World War II. "He couldn't wait to get his fingers in



James Mantos

there and see what the radio was like," Teddy Mantos said. "Well, he got into the cockpit, where he shouldn't have been. Then he couldn't get out. There were big fences at the door so he had to pay someone \$50 to cut the lock."

Tinkering wasn't his only interest. Mantos was interested in city government and how it worked. A regular contributor to the Herald Mailbag, he wasn't shy about expressing his ideas. Basically, that you might as well pay the taxes for the things we need. Don't ask for things you don't want to pay for. If you are not willing to pay taxes, you shouldn't be willing to complain about not having things. Through the years, he was a regular visitor to City Hall where he chatted about city politics with several mayors.

James N. Mantos was born Oct. 24, 1916, in Sioux Falls, S.D., the son of Nick and Llena (Wonser) Mantos. The family lived at Johnstown, N.D., until 1923 when they moved to Grand Forks where he was raised by his mother and stepfather Nick Tsoumpas.

After graduating from Central High School, he attended UND and served two tours in the military, as a radio operator and as a radar repairman.

He was past commander of American Legion Post 6 and a member and Past Chef de Gare of the 40 and 8.

He married Marian Duquette in December 1948. She died in 1976. He married Thelanore "Teddy" Berg Jorgenson in 1980.

Survivors are his wife; sons, James Jr., Arlington, Texas, Robert, Vancouver, Wash., and Floyd, Fort Myers, Fla.; daughter, Judy (Mrs. Thomas) Fair, St. Charles, Ill.; two grandchildren; brother, Dean Tsoumpas, Spokane, Wash.; sisters, Rheta (Mrs. Vern) Mason, Grand Forks and Elaine (Mrs. Thomas) Taylor, Federal Way, Wash.; stepsons, James Jorgenson, Grand Rapids, Minn., Ronald Jorgenson, Fargo, and Timothy Jorgenson, living in Texas; stepdaughters, Schela Gander, Portland, N.D., and Sue Ellen Prowse, North Chelmsford, Mass.; and eight step-grandchildren.

■ Services: 11 a.m. Friday in St. Paul's Episcopal Church.

■ Visitation: 4 to 7 p.m. today, with a 6:45 p.m. prayer service, in Amundson Funeral Home. Members of Grand Forks American Legion Post 6 will conduct military honors. Memorials are suggested to St. Paul's Episcopal Church or United Hospice.

■ Burial: Memorial Park Cemetery.