

Named Endowed Funds

The Yetka Family Fund



Lawrence "Larry" R. Yetka was born in Cloquet on October 1, 1924. From an early age, Lawrence was interested in the law. While growing up, he spent many days observing his father's law practice and decided that is what he wanted to pursue as a career despite urging from his father who suggested he become an actuary. After graduating from Cloquet High School as its salutatorian, he worked summers at the Wood Conversion plant to raise money to attend college and law school at the University of Minnesota. There he completed his college degree, finished law school and passed the bar exam in only six years. Upon graduation from law school in 1948 he returned to Cloquet to practice law. Tragically, his father passed away the week after he returned to Cloquet, and one of his first legal duties was handling the Estate. Despite that setback, he was able to grow his private law practice tremendously over the next 25 years until he was appointed to the Minnesota Supreme Court by Governor Wendell Anderson in 1973.



Ellen Marie Filler Yetka was born in Cloquet on January 23, 1928. While a student at Cloquet High School she was active in Girl Scouts, mixed chorus, glee club and was on the staff of the White Pine Yearbook. After graduation, Ellen worked at Richter's Bakery and as an operator for Northwestern Bell.

On November 11, 1950, Larry and Ellen married. "We got married on November 11 because that's the day Larry had off," Ellen said. "Larry didn't like to waste time."

Ellen was an industrious person and would tackle anything that had to be done around the house. She liked to stay active serving as an officer for the VFW, played bridge several times a week and was a loyal

church member. Her eldest son Frank remembers his mother's strong belief that the world would be a better place if more women were in positions of leadership. She was an advocate for women and she will always be remembered as having a terrific sense of humor.

Larry's other professional passion was politics. Starting while he was a student at the University, he became an active participant in DFL politics and was a founding member of a DFL Club that supported Hubert Humphrey in his first run for Mayor of Minneapolis. From that time on Lawrence became one of Humphrey's closest political friends and advisors. It was that interest in politics that led him to run for the Minnesota state legislature in 1950. He was successfully elected in his first run for office and was a member of the Minnesota House of Representatives from 1951 to 1960. During that entire time he served on the influential Judiciary Committee, the last six years as its Chairman. He remained very active in DFL politics throughout his legal career up until his appointment to the Court. During that time he served as DFL vice-chairman of the Eighth Congressional District and in that capacity served as the chair for President John F. Kennedy's visit to Duluth in September 1963. He was a delegate and an instrumental Humphrey floor supporter for the Minnesota delegation at the historic Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968.

In his book: *The Political, Professional, and Judicial Career of Lawrence R. Yetka*, Larry acknowledged the sacrifices made by Ellen and their sons during the most active period of his political life stating, "My wife always claimed to hate politics yet she went with me to dozens of county democratic conventions and state conventions as well as three national democratic conventions throughout the country and served as an alternative delegate at Atlantic City in 1964 and at Chicago in 1968. Needless to say, she made her presence and view well known."

Lawrence also served as a Cloquet City Attorney. There he also worked closely with many of his former legislative colleagues and political allies to advance the interests of Cloquet, Carlton County and the entire northern region of the state. With the assistance of Congressman John Blatnik, followed by Congressman James Oberstar, and friends Bernie Carlson, Wallace Johanson, Freeman Johansen and numerous other state and local dignitaries much was accomplished. He was instrumental in a myriad of greater community projects including the establishment of the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District, the Community Memorial Hospital and the Cloquet Waterline project which allowed the City of Cloquet to obtain a permanent supply of fresh water from Lake Superior to support its growing industrial base.

In 1973 Lawrence was appointed to the Minnesota Supreme Court where he served with distinction for 20 years until his retirement in 1993. During his tenure on the Court, he was instrumental in overseeing the design, construction and completion of the new Minnesota Judicial Law Center and the establishment of the Minnesota Court of Appeals which allowed greater access to the appellate courts for all of the citizens of Minnesota. Because of his many contributions Justice Yetka is also recognized as one of the one hundred most influential jurists in Minnesota State history.

Ellen Yetka passed away on July 7, 2015; she and Lawrence had been married 64 years. Lawrence passed away November 12, 2017. Their son, Frank, set up the fund to honor his parents.