

Nebraska bids farewell to Curtis

State's longest-serving Republican senator dies at age 94 after illness

By Derek Lippincott and Lindsay Young

Senior staff

Carl Curtis, Nebraska's longest-serving Republican U.S. senator, died Monday at age 94.

He died at about 8:30 p.m. in Lincoln following a long illness.

Curtis retired from the U.S. Senate in 1979 after 40 years in Congress.

Gov. Mike Johanns ordered state and federal flags to fly at half-staff through Monday to honor Curtis.

"Senator Curtis was a well-respected state leader," Johanns said in a press release.

"He cared about Nebraskans and never forgot his roots. ... His wit, leadership and friendship will be missed."

J.L. Spray, Lancaster County Republican Party chairman, said Curtis' presence in Congress was invaluable.

"I'm 40 years old, and I can't remember a time in my life when Carl Curtis wasn't a fixture in Congress," Spray said.

"Carl was a real helpful person. If you had a problem or a political issue, Carl was really interested in getting an answer to you."

An ardent conservative, Curtis' opposition to President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal was central to his first campaign for the House in 1938 at 33.

He served 16 years in the House and 24 in the Senate.

Former Gov. Frank Morrison said though he and Curtis didn't always agree - Morrison was a proponent of Roosevelt's program - he still respected Curtis' views.

"We've been friends for 62 years," Morrison said. "He represented what politics should be."

Curtis was born March 15, 1905, growing up in a family of Democrats. In 1930, he ran as a Democrat and was elected Kearney County attorney.

He served one term but lost his re-election bid in 1934.

In 1936, Curtis switched to the GOP, saying he felt more comfortable as a Republican.

Curtis' personal life was marred by tragedy. His adopted daughter,

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Claramae Hopkins, went blind from diabetes and died in 1967 at the age of 31. Three years later, his first wife, Claramae Curtis Hopkins, died.

Curtis remarried in 1972 and is survived by his second wife, Mildred, and an adopted son, Carl T. Curtis Jr.

In Congress, Curtis concentrated on taxes, individual retirement savings, flood control, irrigation, Social Security and investigations involving wrongdoing in the federal government.

As a member of the Joint Committee on Revenue, Curtis was involved with the investigation of the late President Richard Nixon's taxes.

His support for Nixon never wavered, even as other Republicans turned away from the president or accepted his fate.

Curtis stood firm as one of Nixon's last defenders.

"I feel that I spoke up for a man falsely accused," he said in 1997.

Chuck Sigerson, state GOP chairman, called Curtis a political icon. He said with the loss of former Gov. Robert Crosby and former U.S. Sen. Roman Hruska, a political era has ended in the state.

"Because of the honesty and integrity they were known for, they were often able to accomplish their work with only a handshake and their word," Sigerson said.

Funeral services were scheduled for 11 a.m. Thursday at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Minden.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Funds to establish history post

By Kimberly Sweet

Staff writer

UNL's history department will soon be home to a professor with a first-class knowledge of world history and its effects on current events.

Elwood "Jack" Thompson and Katherine Clarke Thompson - the couple who started the E.N. Thompson lectures on world issues at UNL - have donated \$300,000 to endow a professor in the history department who will specialize in world history and international relations.

The endowment will be matched with funds from the Mildred Topp Othmer endowment. It will allow the department to work toward a specialized area, said Dane Kennedy, history department chairman.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for the history department," Kennedy said. "It's an endowed chair within a field we have worked to see developed for some time."

The couple also increased the endowment for the E.N. Thompson Forum on World Issues by giving a \$250,000 gift.

The increase of support to the lec-

ture series, which brings nationally and internationally recognized speakers to UNL, will allow higher profile speakers to come to campus, said Herb Howe, associate to the chancellor.

Jack Thompson said the purpose of providing support for the professorship and the lectures is to give students a foundation that will help them understand current events.

"History provides a factual basis for understanding what has gone on in the past," Jack Thompson said. "Facts help people to be oriented more thoroughly than someone's opinion."

Jack Thompson said he wanted the professor to be a "top-notch" teacher.

Kennedy said he was hopeful about recruiting a reputable professor to the department.

"I think we have a strong, congenial department," Kennedy said. "It has positioned itself to focus on world history as an area of strength."

Kennedy said he could not say when the search to fill the position would begin.

The professorship is one among more than two dozen that are eligible for matching funds from the Mildred Topp Othmer fund, Howe said.

The Thompsons' gifts are two out of many that have been given to enrich the study of international affairs at UNL.

The E.N. Thompson lectures, started in 1988, have given students, as well as Nebraskans, a chance to hear from world-renowned speakers, Howe said.

Crowds for some of the speakers have filled the Lied Center for Performing Arts and spilled over to Kimball Hall, Howe said.

"They've been very well-received," he said.

The Thompsons have provided support for numerous related activities through the Cooper Foundation. The foundation, of which Jack Thompson is chairman, supports initiatives in education, the arts, humanities and human services.

Jack Thompson has had a presence in improving higher education in Nebraska for the last 20 years, Howe said.

Thompson said his dedication to higher education exists because he sees the state's dependence on it.

"It is one of the leading enterprises in the state," Thompson said.

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Desmond Tutu speech postponed

From staff reports

Nobel Peace Prize winner Desmond Tutu had to postpone his speaking engagement at the Lied Center for Performing Arts on Tuesday after a snowstorm hit the East Coast.

Tutu planned on flying in from Washington, D.C., on a private plane, said Tom Simons, a member of the Office of Public Relations. His plane could not leave after the snowstorm hit Washington, D.C., on Tuesday.

The Baltimore-Washington airport reported more than 7 inches of snow on Tuesday. Washington Reagan National Airport reported many delays and cancellations in its flight schedule.

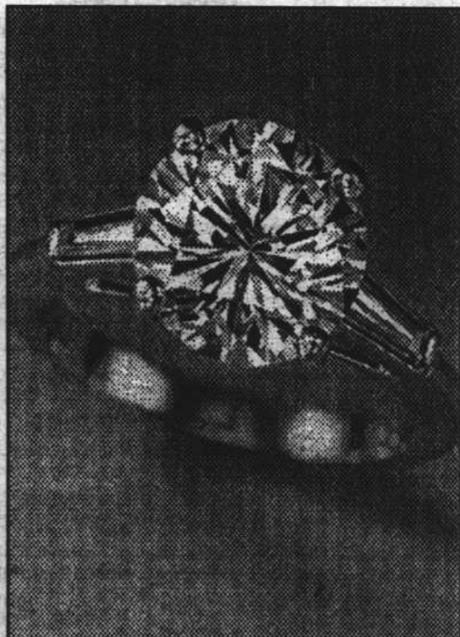
Tutu's lecture is planned to be rescheduled. No time has been set, said Wayne Babchuk, program specialist for Academic Conferences and Professional Programs.

Correction

Lincoln City Councilman Jon Camp's named was misspelled in Tuesday's Daily Nebraskan.

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