

Sam S Grais, 85

PHARMACIST SAM GRAIS DIES AT AGE 85

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Sam S. Grais, a pharmacist and former chairman of the Ramsey County Welfare Board who was known for his contributions to charity and public service, died of cancer Wednesday at his home in St. Paul. He was 85.

"He was always for the underdog," said his wife, Loretta. "He just thought it was fair that if a person deserves something, he should help him."

Grais also was known for doodling with felt-tip pens while he served on local boards and committees, including the Mount Sinai Hospital Board, the Metropolitan Airports Commission, the St. Paul Planning Commission and the Minnesota State Board of Medical Examiners.

His colorful and intricate geometric creations were displayed at the Minnesota Museum of Art, but he never sold them for profit. He donated them to public television and charitable organizations, which sold them to raise money.

"Those doodles probably raised about \$60,000 over a period of more than 10 years," Loretta Grais said. "People used to ask him, 'Why don't you sell them for yourself?' He said he would lose the knack for doing them if he did. He said he felt much better doing them for charity."

Sam Grais was president of Gray's Drug Stores, which operated six pharmacies in the Twin Cities, until he retired and sold the stores in the late 1970s.

His wife said the stores were called Gray's because her husband wanted to make it easier for customers.

"He thought Grais might be too hard to pronounce and spell," she said.

Grais, who was born in Minneapolis, graduated from North High School and the University of Minnesota.

After he retired from the pharmacy business, he continued his public service and charity work.

Earlier this year, he was unanimously elected chairman of the board of International Airport Commissioners.

"When they called and told him about it, he asked them, 'Do you know how sick I am?'" his wife said. "They knew, but it was an honor they wanted to give him."

In 1989, he received the Distinguished Service Award from the National Governor's Association, one of only five private citizens to have received the honor.

In addition to his wife, Loretta, survivors include daughters, Mary Jo of Los Angeles, and Maggie of Amherst, Mass.; brother, Dr. Melvin Grais of Los Gatos, Calif.; and a granddaughter.

Services will be at 1:30 p.m. Sunday at Mount Zion Temple, 1300 Summit Ave., St. Paul, with burial at Adath Jeshurun Cemetery in Minneapolis.

Shiva will be after burial Sunday afternoon and evening and Monday evening at the community room, 740 River Drive, St. Paul.

Sam Grais, MAC vice chairman, dies

Sam S. Grais, 84, vice chairman of the Metropolitan Airports Commission, retired owner of Gray's Drug Stores and former chairman of the Ramsey County Welfare Board, died Wednesday at his St. Paul home.

He was a member of the Welfare Board for 20 years and served as its chairman from 1963 to 1971. He advocated better employment training programs and fought for policies that allowed social service agencies more freedom to give out information on birth control and Planned Parenthood programs.

He pushed for large program budgets, saying that "if we don't spend money on welfare, we'll spend it for bigger jails, more courts and bigger probation offices." He and four other members of the welfare board, were fired by St. Paul Mayor Charles P. McCarty in 1970 when the board rescinded a \$2.3 million cut in his 1971 budget request.

He was recognized as an outstanding nonprofessional welfare worker and received distinguished service awards from the University of Minnesota and Mount Zion Temple in St. Paul. In 1989 he also received a distinguished service award from the National Governor's Association.

Grais, a native of St. Paul, also served as the vice chairman of the Metropolitan Airport Commission since 1988, and was recently elected chairman of the International Airport Commission. He also was a member of the St. Paul Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals.

Former Govs. Al Quie and Rudy Perpich appointed him chairman of their appointment advisory committees, and former Gov. Elmer Anderson appointed Grais to the Conference on Aging at the White House in 1961. Grais also was chairman of the state's Advisory Council on Drug Abuse in 1971.

He was born in Minneapolis and graduated from North High School and the University of Minnesota College of Pharmacy. He was a pharmacist at Walgreen's in downtown Minneapolis and Barnette's Drugs in Robbinsdale until he opened his own pharmacy in Winsted, Minn., in 1927. Four years later he and his brother Arnold, also a pharmacist, opened the first of their six Twin Cities drug stores at 34th St. and Lyndale Av. S. in Minneapolis. They later opened three in St. Paul and two more in Minneapolis.

Grais retired and sold the stores in 1980.

He was a member of Hillcrest Country Club in St. Paul and the Shriners and was a board member of Blue Cross/Blue Shield and the National Conference on Social Welfare. He was president of the Minnesota and National Welfare Associations, Jewish Family Service, St. Paul-Ramsey Medical Center, and was chairman of the National Council of Public Welfare Board Members and the Israel Bond Campaign in 1961. He also was president of the Minnesota Pharmaceutical Association and chaired its convention.

Grais drew elaborate doodle art and his works have been displayed at the Minnesota Museum of Art.

He is survived by his wife, Loretta; two daughters, Mary Jo, of Los Angeles and Maggie, of Amherst, Mass., and a brother, Melvin, Los Gatos, Calif.

Services will be held at 1:30 p.m. Sunday at Mount Zion Temple, 1300 Summit Av., St. Paul. Shiva will be held Sunday and Monday in the Community Room at 740 River Dr., St. Paul. Memorials to the synagogue or the American Cancer Society are suggested. Arrangements are by Hodroff and Sons Funeral Chapels, St. Paul.