



Leonard Lindquist Biography

Leonard Lindquist was a founding partner of what grew into one of the finest law firms in the state, Lindquist and Vennum, PLLP. From the beginning, Leonard set out to make the firm a strong and supportive environment for attorneys dedicated to community service and public life. He took great pride in the fact that each year, 100 percent of the lawyers and paralegals in his firm provided pro bono services to those in need.

In addition to assisting Life's Missing Link with services, Lindquist and Vennum's staff routinely handle the legal affairs of clients at Mary's Place; advise vocational school and high school students; work with kids at an area youth center and high school; and help new immigrants at St. Paul's Neighborhood House. All employees are encouraged to donate to the firm's Winter Closet Foundation which has provided hundreds of new coats and boots to children in both Denver and the Twin Cities.

Among the firm's alumni: Fritz Mondale, former vice president and U.S. Senator; Orville Freeman, the former Minnesota Governor who served as President John F. Kennedy's agriculture secretary; Minneapolis Mayor Don Fraser, who also was a U.S. Representative, and Minnesota Supreme Court Justice Alan Page, another famous, former Minnesota Vikings player.

As Leonard's son, Kelley, said at Leonard's memorial service, his father, "Set an awesome standard for what it is to be a man." In spite of his gruff exterior, Leonard was an old-fashioned "softie" who led by example. He devoted his life to the betterment of family, the business, his state and country. His partner, Robert Sheran, said that not long after Sheran started work as an attorney at the firm, a cleaning woman approached him one evening with some advice. "If you need help with anything, you should talk with Leonard Lindquist," she counseled. How Leonard helped the woman is anyone's guess. But his humanity set a tone at the firm worth emulating by every business and employer in the country.

As a state legislator in the 1950s, Leonard was a leader in the fair-housing battle and sponsored the state's first law banning racial discrimination in nursing homes. In the 1960s, he was tapped by Minneapolis Mayor Art Naftalin as chairman of the Mayor's Committee on Fair Employment Practices. As a man who devoted his career to representing working people – from nurses to pilots to Mayo Clinic residents – Leonard was hired as outside counsel in 1969 to help form the National Football League Players Association and assist in negotiating its first contract with NFL owners. As a prominent national labor mediator and arbitrator, Leonard was asked to intervene in 1982 in the violent, three-month printers' strike at the Bureau of Engraving Inc. The result: Leonard wooed the two sides to the bargaining table and had the strike settled within days.

Leonard continued working until a short time before he was hospitalized. He once remarked, "I've always felt that, if the willingness to give dries up, so does the spirit." Despite several serious ailments in his last few years, he continued to go to work almost every day. He said, "I want to remain in service as long as I feel I'm doing some good." Just weeks before Leonard passed away, he once again took the time to help Life's Missing Link by writing letters to colleagues and business associates asking them for a donation in support of Lindquist Apartments. Leonard worked constantly on the organization's behalf – from the very first days up until his last. We miss him terribly, but we are so thankful for his presence in our lives and the legacy he has left for future generations.

The following is the speech that Leonard asked Jim Marshall to read on his behalf at the ground-breaking of Lindquist Apartments on August 18, 2004.

Dear Friends,

I am writing from a hospital bed where I am alive, but not well. Every ounce of my strength was being called on to attend this meaningful celebration, but my physical being said, "No." I had wanted to express my humility in having these housing units named after me and express my thanks to all those great volunteers, the financial community, charitable foundations, the members of the Board of Directors, officers and staff, and to private individuals interested in the project and wanting to be part of the giving.

When professional football players, Jim Marshall and Oscar Reed, retired from the tough plays, they organized a group called, "Professional Sports Linkage" [now Life's Missing Link] with headquarters at Floyd B. Olson Memorial Park in the HUD area. I and Deb Renshaw [without whom there would be no celebration] joined them in the beginnings and devoted our time to attending the training sessions at the Red Wing Corrections Facility where we would meet with the kids on edge who may have been in gang warfare or pushing drugs. It was our job to convince these kids that inside of them, there was something that wanted to do better. Inspiring them to help others rather than destroy. As I was talking to one of the kids who was being released about his interest in pre-law, I stated that he must be happy knowing that soon he would be back in his home. Tears welled up in his eyes when he said he had no home to go to; and after that conversation, I have given whatever I can to help the homeless. For when we carry out our work to change hearts and lives from doing harm to doing good, we need someplace where they can have housing, a place to eat and sleep as they go about their new jobs. I like to think that we are planting seeds today – seeds that will find root and produce beautiful blossoms; that will tell us to seek understanding and good will in our communities and so may this groundbreaking and development bring comfort, peace and good will to this neighborhood.

Thanks to everyone.

Leonard E. Lindquist