



James Gordon Caldis

March 26, 1920 - October 15, 2016

A Memorial Service honoring the life of Gordon Caldis is currently being planned. We will post all of the details soon. Come back to this site for updated information.

Longtime community servant Gordon Caldis dies

By Andrew Haffner on Oct 18, 2016 at 8:16 p.m.

Gordon Caldis, a longtime Grand Forks civil servant and perhaps the longest-serving lawyer in recent North Dakota history, died in his sleep on Oct. 15 at the age of 96.

Caldis, a native of Thief River Falls, first came to Grand Forks in 1938 to attend UND as an undergraduate. He would end up staying for awhile—taking some time away to serve with distinction as a PT Boat captain in World War II—and building a career of community involvement.

The backdrop to his service was his time in law. Caldis would practice as an attorney in Grand Forks, both in a public role and in his private practice at Caldis, Tingum and Tingum law firm for more than 63 years before retiring at the age of 93. It was about a year after that when he left for California, where he lived out his retirement near one of his children in a Veteran's Affairs assisted living community.

In 2010, Caldis was recognized by The Chamber of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks with the Henry Havig Award for Community Service, the highest

honor bestowed by that organization. The award was a capstone for a man embedded in the fabric of UND and greater Grand Forks, and the chamber compiled a list of his accomplishments for the event.

In his time as an undergraduate, Caldis played football and basketball and competed in track. He was nearing graduation when Pearl Harbor was attacked on Dec. 7, 1941.

Caldis enlisted in the U.S. Navy after the attack and served in the South Pacific shortly after his college graduation. After his discharge from the service, he returned to North Dakota to work towards a degree from UND Law School, which he completed in 1948.

Two years after finishing his law education, Caldis became the Grand Forks County state's attorney. He held that role for six years before becoming the city attorney for Grand Forks in 1956.

During his 19 years in that office, Caldis touched on issues ranging from the zoning for the Grand Forks Air Force Base to the drafting of the Grand Forks Home Rule charter.

Despite keeping himself busy with the law, Caldis didn't lose touch with his alma mater.

He served on the UND Athletic Board of Control for more than 50 years and was given the university's highest honor, the Sioux Award, in 1970. Caldis was named to the UND Athletic Hall of Fame in 1983 and was honored with the UND Leadership Award in 1987.

Earl Strinden, former CEO of the UND Alumni Association, first met Caldis around 1962 when Strinden was running for the Grand Forks City Council—to which he was elected—and Caldis was serving as city attorney.

Strinden said the two were friends from then on, and spoke last on the phone just days before Caldis died.

"He just plain made his life count for the benefit of others in so many ways," Strinden said. "We are all better because he lived in this community."

Strinden described Caldis as a "very polite, unselfish individual" who never tried to bring attention to himself and the things he did. Strinden, who spent

more than 30 years leading the alumni association, said the attention Caldis showed to others was his defining quality.

"His loyalty, his unselfish dedication, will certainly mark his life, and I only say it because it's the truth," he said.

Kirk Tingum, of the Caldis, Tingum and Tingum law firm, started working for Caldis in 1982. By the time Tingum started the job, he recalled, Caldis was already 62 years old. The men worked together for 31 years after that.

"He loved people, that's what I remember most about him," Tingum said of Caldis. "The other thing I remember about him was that he personally carried himself with a kind of class and dignity."

Beyond that, Tingum described Caldis as a "servant" who devoted himself to those around him.

Though the list of Caldis' accomplishments and accolades is long, Tingum said the man's behind-the-scenes work is probably three times longer.

"I don't think people realize just how much he was involved with," he said of Caldis. "He was really one of a kind."

Tribute Wall



“ *James Gordon Caldis*

September 15, 2022 at 09:34 PM



“ *What a kind and giving man Gordon was. My sympathies to his family.*

JoAnne Olson - October 22, 2016 at 01:55 PM



“ *I had the pleasure of meeting Mr Caldis many years ago when I worked at a local Grand Forks nursery and he was looking to replace some shrubs. I delivered them at no charge on my way home. What a gracious and wonderful person he was. All I asked when I turned down the offer of payment for delivery was he just pay it forward. And now I realize he did that over and over. I always think fondly of him every time I pass by his former home.*

Zona Knox - October 20, 2016 at 01:55 PM