

1945 January 8-14

Four Medingers

Four Medingers In Service; Three See Overseas Action



JOHN



BERNARD



JEROME



DONALD

Three of the sons of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Medinger, 2331 Green Bay street, have seen action with the army overseas and a fourth son is at a naval training station in the States.

Pfc. John, 26, was in La Crosse over the Christmas holidays on a rotation furlough following two and one-half years in Africa and Italy. He is now at Camp Ellis, Ill.

Sgt. Bernard, 24, has been over-

seas 21 months, seeing action in New Guinea, the Dutch East Indies, and is now in the Philippines.

Pvt. Jerome, 22, is in eastern France and also has fought in Africa and Italy. He has been overseas 21 months.

F2c Donald, 18, left June 23, 1944, and took boot training at the Great Lakes station. He is now located at Little Creek, Va. His wife, the former Audrey Anderson, lives on R. 1.

La Crosse Tribune, 1945 January 14, page 10

The Medinger brother who did not serve overseas during World War II went on to become a long-time figure in La Crosse politics.

Donald Medinger, a graduate of Aquinas High School, returned from the Navy in 1946 and worked at Allis-Chalmers Manufacturing Co. from 1946 to 1968. He then worked at La Crosse State University and at a Winona Company for a couple of years. In December 1970, he opened Don's Texaco Service.¹ He retired from the service station business in December 1989.²

He was on the La Crosse Common Council from 1963 to 1995. Medinger was also a member of the La Crosse County Board from 1982 to August 1996. When he was re-elected in April 1996, he was sworn in at his hospital bed. He had to retire from the county board because of health problems.³

Medinger was known for being outspoken and fighting hard for issues he believed in. Loren Wardwell, who served on the common council with Medinger for 28 years, said Don Medinger "always expressed his views plainly and was not always complimentary but he never held a grudge." Roger Plesha, another council member who served with him, said Medinger "represented the average guy on the street." He had strong opinions, but he was willing to listen to other views. Medinger was also known for his support of labor unions.⁴

Don Medinger was equally colorful during his time on the La Crosse County Board. He was known for yelling a lot. First-year board member Mike Huebsch, who went on to become a state representative and a state department head, was a frequent target of Medinger's outbursts because of Huebsch's penchant for long speeches. Medinger would yell, "Sit down, ya (moderately bad word)! Shut up!" until the county board chair insisted on Roberts Rules of Order decorum.⁵

Don Medinger died in 1997 at the age of 71.

But the Medinger family contribution to La Crosse politics and government did not end with him. Don's son, John, was a state legislator for 16 years, mayor of La Crosse for eight years, and, like his father, served on the La Crosse County Board, as well as working as an aide to United States Senators Russ Feingold, Herb Kohl, and Tammy Baldwin. John Medinger retired from public service in 2017.⁶

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Sources & Notes:

¹ Gayda Hollnagel and Joan Kent, "Don Medinger dead at age 71," *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, September 1, 1997, A1.

² Donald Lincoln Medinger obituary, *La Crosse Tribune*, La Crosse, Wisconsin, September 1, 1997, B4.

³ *La Crosse Tribune*, September 1, 1997.

⁴ *La Crosse Tribune*, September 1, 1997.

⁵ Matt James, "2004 Person of the Year: John Medinger," *La Crosse Tribune*, January 1, 2005, https://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/person-of-the-year-john-medinger/article_cdf4aa1a-b003-11e6-8b70-bb0f4c5b89a2.html.

⁶ Chris Hubbuch, "'He wants to serve': John Medinger honored for four decades of public service," *La Crosse Tribune*, March 11, 2017, https://lacrossetribune.com/news/local/he-wants-to-serve-john-medinger-honored-for-four-decades/article_d9d4769b-7b12-50fd-9f7b-f6c1e9afe426.html.