

Legislator, publisher had much involvement in disability issues

by [Dawn Frederick](#) // August 10th, 2017

At the Minnesota State Fair's 4-H Building, a crew of volunteers publishes the *Maynard News*. When the newspaper in west central Minnesota closed years ago, its letterpress equipment was donated to become a museum. The newspaper museum is marking 30 years' service in 2017.

The *Maynard News*' most high-profile publisher was Fay George Child, a sometimes-controversial Minnesota political figure. He was raised in the newspaper business. In 1949 Child bought the *Maynard News* from his father.

Child was elected to the Maynard School Board, then mayor in the 1940s and 1950s. He soon launched a campaign for a state Senate seat, winning and taking office in 1951. He held office until his death in 1965, representing the counties of Chippewa, Lac Qui Parle and Yellow Medicine. Child served on more than a dozen legislative committees including public welfare, education, liquor control and the committee on railroads, telegraphs and telephones.

Child was a member of the conservative caucus, not affiliated with any political group. His years in elected office began during the McCarthy era, when scurrilous accusations of anti-American behavior were all too often made without evidence. One of his highest-profile crusades was to demand an investigation of Communism at the University of Minnesota.

He also had a high-profile feud with the Cowles family, owners of the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, fought against a state sales tax and opposed so-called "fast time" or Daylight Savings Time. Child demanded that the state not "meddle" with the clock.

He also had a keen interest disability issues, and served on a number of legislative committees and commissions that focused on issues of concern for Minnesotans with a wide range of disabilities. Child's work included service on the Commission on the Problems of Mentally Retarded, Handicapped and Gifted Children. The group began in 1959 and finished its work in 1961, studying existing programs and the various relationships between state and private agencies, facilities and programs, and how those tied into the children's home communities. The group studied possible services for children, ongoing and future research, and several other issues. Its work set the stage for programs and services for children, their families and the people who served them.

Child died April 2, 1965. He had a fatal heart attack while speaking against a busing bill before the Senate Education Committee. Mid-speech, Child said, "I'd better not say any more" and collapsed. He died en route to the hospital. He is buried in Maynard.

Access Press is interested in reader submissions for the monthly History Note column, to complement the articles written by Luther Granquist and other contributors. Submissions must center on events, people and places in the history of Minnesota's disability community. We are interested in history that focuses on all types of disability topics, so long as the history has a tie to Minnesota. We are especially interested in stories from Greater Minnesota. Please submit ideas prior to submitting full stories, as we may have covered the topic before. Contact us at access@accesspress.org or 651-644-2133 if you have questions. The History Note is a monthly column sponsored by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities.