
Weikko Jarvi – quiet working class hero

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Over 100 people gathered in Superior, Wisc. June 1 to pay respects and celebrate the life of Weikko Jarvi, who was described at the service as “a quiet, working class hero.” He died May 29 after a lengthy illness.

Weikko was born on Minnesota’s Iron Range during the Depression to Finnish immigrant parents. After a stint in the Army during the Korean War, he worked in the iron ore mines and as a carpenter.

In 1959 he began work as a linotype operator with the Finnish working class newspaper, Tyomies-Eteenpain, or in English, “Working Man Forward.” He continued to work on the Finnish language paper until it ceased publishing in 1998. He was featured in a recent film about Tyomies by Tom Selinski of Duluth, called “For the Common Good.”

Jarvi served on the board of directors of Mesaba Co-op Park for many years until he death. Mesaba Co-op Park played a major role in his life. He served many functions there, from board member to carpenter, handyman, cook and cooperater. There is hardly an item at the Park that he did not help to build or repair. Weikko’s principles formed the basis for the way he lived his life. He saw the inequality of our economic system as being morally wrong, and that conviction gave energy to many hours of political discussion with friends and political action in the form of contributions of time and money. He absolutely believed in the value of work and gave every task his best effort, whether he was on the job or volunteering or working on projects at home.

He believed that people are fundamentally good and honest and accepted everyone he met on those terms. Warner Wiirta, an old friend, described Weikko as a “welder of people.” He welded people together. That was evident from the wide and diverse group of people who got together and celebrated his life.

He will be sorely missed.