

William Costa Jr.

William Costa Jr. St. Johnsbury has lost one of its hardest working and most dedicated citizens. 1982 Citizen of the Year, bank director, Democratic activist, and businessman William T. "Billy" Costa Jr., 74, passed away of congestive heart failure in Ft. Myers, Fla., Saturday, Nov. 25, 2006. He was born in St. Johnsbury on June 9, 1932, the elder of two sons born to William Sr. and Almina (Bottazzi) Costa. He married Gay Buttura on Jan. 25, 1964. He is survived by his wife, Gay, of St. Johnsbury (1248 Hospital Dr. 05819); his brother, Orlando Costa and his wife Francine of Naples Fla.; three daughters, Kelli Costa and her husband Nick Johnson of Maynard, Mass., Kara Nichols and her husband Mark of Waltham, Mass., and Kiersten Ely and her husband Stefan of Spartensburg S.C.; two grandchildren, Quinton and Sheridan Ely; and Kara's stepchildren, Darren, Cassandra and Rebecca Nichols. A graduate of St. Johnsbury Academy, Class of 1951, Billy graduated cum laude from Notre Dame University in 1956 with a bachelor of science degree in business administration. At Notre Dame he became a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) fraternity. Commissioned as a second lieutenant, he served in the U.S. Army Reserves from 1956-58, stationed in Metz, France, as commanding officer of the Property Disposal Unit. In Mr. Costa's business career, he was president of Costa Realty, Inc. d/b/a Gold Crown Lanes (1962-present); and of Recreation, Inc., the commercial building housing The Star Theater (1973-present). Billy entered the family business, the former Green Mountain Fruit IGA store on Railroad Street; the store closed Oct. 1, 1995. He was a partner with Harvey Caplan 1968-1978, and Harvey's father before him, Joseph Caplan 1959-1968. Mr. Costa also was a trustee and partner of Green Mountain Realty Trust d/b/a/ Green Mountain Mall. He was an extremely active director of Citizens Savings Bank and Trust Company and, since 1999, had served on the Union Bank's board of directors. Civically, Mr. Costa was instrumental in the formation and operation of the St. Johnsbury Development Fund Inc. of which he was president from 1988-99. He served on various boards with the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, Fairbanks

Museum, Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital and the Vermont Retail Grocer's Association. Billy served as tri-chairman of the Fairbanks Morse Drive, a community drive in the 1960s that raised over half a million dollars to keep Fairbanks in St. Johnsbury. He was a member of the administrative board of St. Johnsbury/Lyndon Industrial Park, director of Lyndon State College 1985-91, St. Johnsbury school director 1986-87, and a trustee of the village of St. Johnsbury 1964-66; he helped consolidate the town and village into one political unit. Politically a strong Democrat, Billy served as Democratic Committeeman from Caledonia County from 1965-71 and Chairman of the Democratic Town Committee from 1965-69. He served as Northeast Kingdom campaign manager for Gov. Philip Hoff (1962 and 1964) and for Gov. Thomas Salmon (1972 and 1974). Gov. Salmon appointed him to the Vermont State Highway board, then reappointed him as a member of the Vermont Transportation Board. He fought hard for the completion of I-91 and I-93 and for a better route to Montpelier. Gov. Snelling appointed him to the Vermont Community Development Board, agency of development and community affairs. A funeral Mass will be celebrated in St. Johnsbury on Saturday at 1 p.m. at St. John the Evangelist Church, located on Main Street. Burial will be at Mt. Calvary Cemetery at a later date. Visiting hours will be held at the Sayles Funeral Home on Friday from 2-4 and 6-8 p.m. Memorial contributions may be directed to St. Johnsbury Academy, P.O. Box 906, St. Johnsbury VT 05819. Online condolences may be shared at www.saylesfh.com. Sayles Funeral Home is located at 525 Summer St. in St. Johnsbury.