

OH-111

VALENTE, Frank (Interview conducted 1/27/83 in Ishpeming, MI)

Indexed by: Faye A. Oja

Indexed June 23, 1983

Summary: Frank Valente discusses how he came to America and how his life was lead afterward.

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*- pretty good tape!*

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# County board official

## Frank Valente dies; 70

By BRUCE HEISEL  
Journal Ishpeming Bureau  
3-8-88

ISHPEMING — Friends, family members and fellow politicians expressed a sense of great loss this morning at the death of Marquette County Commissioner Frank Valente.

Valente, 70, died early Saturday at Bell Memorial Hospital after suffering a third heart attack in less than six months.



VALENTE

He was admitted to the hospital Wednesday after having a hard time breathing, said his daughter, Evelyn Valente-Heikkila, supervisor of Forsyth Township.

"Once they did get him in there his heart did stop," she said. "They had to use the defibrillator at least 10 times to bring him around on Thursday. Then he did suffer another heart attack early Saturday, and they weren't able to bring him around."

According to County Clerk Dave Roberts, Valente's position on the board must be filled by board appointment within 30 days. If the board is unable to select a successor, a special election must be held.

The new commissioner will serve out the remainder of his term, which is due to expire later this year, Valente, who emigrated to the

United States in 1934 from Simbario, Italy, was a gregarious politician who enjoyed an easy rapport with his constituents.

"I can remember as a young girl, even before he got into politics, that people were always coming to him for help," Valente-Heikkila said.

"Then he decided after awhile that he might as well run for office so that he would be in a better position to help those people.

"When he did anything, he never had the attitude of 'what's in it for me.' He always asked 'what can I do for others?' And by having that attitude, a lot came back to him."

County Commissioner Gerald Corkin remembers Valente as a friend first and a colleague second.

"On a personal level, I'm saddened by the loss of a good friend," he said.

"I think his family and the community lost a very loyal and caring representative. He always put his community at the top of the list as long as I've known him. He'll be greatly missed."

Those sentiments were shared by Timothy Lowe, county board chairman, and County Administrator Dennis Aloia.

"He was someone a lot of people respected in his district," Lowe said. "People respected the fact that he stuck to his guns."

"Frank was a person who, obviously, liked being in politics. I think he was always willing to listen to what

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people had to say, (but) once he made his mind up on something, it was tough to change."

Ishpeming City Manager Helen St. Aubin, a long-time friend of the Valente family, said Valente's death was "not only a loss for the city, but a loss for the county as well."

After coming to the United States, Valente embarked on a varied career in business.

He began work in the local iron ore mines, and then opened his own grocery store. He later opened a restaurant, The Napoli, on Main Street in Ishpeming.

He closed the restaurant in the 1950s, and established a large furniture store here, which burned down around 1960, his daughter said.

"From there," she said, "he went to Negaunee where Tino's Bar is, and he had a bar and pizza place there called Frank's."

Another stint as a bar owner in Negaunee followed before his retirement, Valente-Heikkila said.

He was first elected to the Ishpeming City Council in 1955, and except for a five-year absence from 1958 to 1963, he served until 1982. He was mayor of the city in 1970, 71 and 81. He became a county commissioner in 1982, but also served on that board as a city representative for a number of years, prior to re-districting, in the 1950s, 60s and 70s.

Valente-Heikkila said her father's community activism played a large role in her decision to enter the political arena.

"He always used to tell us that

you'd never get anywhere unless you worked hard," she said. "Every time we'd get discouraged, he'd say, 'You can only do your best.'"

Valente was a member of the Six County Consortium Board, the Ishpeming Cemetery Board, the Economic Development Corporation and the Board of Directors of the Salvation Army.

He was also a member of St. John's Catholic Church in Ishpeming, Knights of Columbus, St. Rocco and St. Anthony Society, St. Jude Society, Sons of Italy and the Paisano Club, Ishpeming Elks Lodge, Lions Club, Kiwanis Club and the Ishpeming Ski Hall of Fame.

Survivors include his wife, Laverne; a son, Joseph of Ishpeming; five daughters, Mrs. Knut (Rose Marie) Strom, Mrs. Allen (Clara) Kutchie, Mrs. Eugene (Mary) Tasson and Mrs. William (Frances) Ayotte, all of Ishpeming, and Evelyn Heikkila of Gwinn; a step-daughter, Judy Ann Williams of Ishpeming; a brother, Anthony of Chicago; 19 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews. His first wife, the former Cecelia Sarvello, died in 1986.

A Mass of Christian burial will be at 11 a.m. Tuesday at St. John's Catholic Church with Monsignor David Spelgatti officiating. Burial will be in the Ishpeming Cemetery.

Pallbearers will be grandsons.

Friends can call at the Bjork and Zhulkie Funeral Home from 3 this afternoon to 9 tonight, where a Sons of Italy memorial service is set for 6:30 p.m., an Elks service for 7:30 p.m. and a parish rosary at 8:30 p.m.