

## **FRONTIER POLITICIAN JAMES DOOGAN DIES**

Anchorage Daily News (AK) - Monday, April 7, 1997

Author/Byline: Staff

Edition: Peninsula

Section: Metro

Page: B2

James Patrick Doogan, 82, teamster, frontier politician, and patriarch of a well-known Alaska family, died Friday night at Memorial Hospital in Fairbanks.

He succumbed to old age, pushed over the edge by a variety of unspecific intestinal problems, his son Mike Doogan said Saturday.

"It was just death shopping around for a location," he said.

Doogan was born at Treadwell on Douglas Island in 1914, the eldest of Teague and Mary Doogan's 12 children. He attended Douglas High School, leaving at age 15, after his father died, to help support his family.

As a young man, Doogan moved to Fairbanks, where he attended the University of Alaska and worked in the gold fields from Deadwood Creek to Circle and into Canada near Chicken.

In 1940 he married Geraldine Feero of Skagway and moved her to a tent home on a placer operation called Cleary Hill Mines.

Like most Alaskans of that era, Doogan was a man of many skills, working as a truck driver, a mechanic for the Air Force during World War II, a volunteer firefighter and a surveyor. In 1944, he bought a delivery company, Pioneer Express, and ran it for 18 years, hauling freight, coal and fuel oil throughout the Fairbanks area.

He was an activist and fund-raiser for the territorial Democratic Party and a colleague of Bill Egan of Valdez, who became the first governor of Alaska after statehood.

He was twice elected to the territorial city council in Fairbanks and served more than six years between 1947 and 1959.

Doogan was an elected delegate to the Constitutional Convention that convened in Fairbanks in 1955 to prepare for Alaska statehood in 1959.

From 1962 through 1969, during the first Egan administration, he worked for the Alaska State Housing Authority.

The family, which by then included six children, moved in 1964 to Anchorage, where Doogan worked for Alaska State Housing Authority and the Alaska Oil & Gas

Association until his appointment as director of the state Alcoholic Beverage Control Board in 1971.

In the later 1970s, Doogan worked as a teamster on the trans-Alaska oil pipeline during and after construction, commuting between Anchorage and Fairbanks. In 1984, retired and in his 70s, Doogan and his wife moved to undeveloped land on Goldstream Road outside Fairbanks, where they built a log house, felling and peeling the logs themselves.

Long after his retirement, Doogan remained an activist on behalf of his favorite causes -- the University of Alaska and benefits for pioneers. "Jim Doogan was a very strong supporter of the Pioneer Home program back when Jim and myself never thought we were going to get old," said former state Sen. Jay Kerttula, now state director of agriculture. "He was ahead of his time."

Doogan is survived by his wife and all six of his children, several of whom have made their own mark on the state. His son Mike is a widely read columnist for the Anchorage Daily News. James Jr., known as Pat, is a West Point graduate and long-time assistant Fairbanks district attorney. His daughter Peggy and her husband, Fred Witzleben, owned and ran the Witzleben Funeral Homes in Anchorage for many years.

Son Dan is a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force, stationed at Fort Scott near St. Louis. Daughter Maureen Beeson lives in Homer, and daughter Kathleen Garrett lives in Anchorage.

"As a father he tried to teach his children to obey the Ten Commandments, get educated and vote Democrat," Mike Doogan said. "And with the exception of a few of the minor Commandments, we have."

Moving up the Doogan family tree are 15 grandchildren and the first great-grandchild.

Long active in the Roman Catholic church, Doogan will be remembered at a funeral Mass Wednesday afternoon at Monroe High School in Fairbanks.