

J. Noland Wrangell's UA Regent by Lael Morgan, Staff Writer Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, October 28, 1967

(Editor's Note: This is the third in a series describing the members of the University of Alaska Board of Regents which met here recently.)

Regent Jim Noland is Boston-born. His father was in the theatre there. At 19 young Noland had had enough of the East and decided to join an uncle who was prospecting in Alaska. He came to Wrangell and traveled with him six or seven months. The uncle died but Noland stayed on. He spent a year trapping, then worked for the West Coast branch of Vermont Marble three seasons.

Finally he decided to go into business in town. He started a soda fountain and in 1929 took over the drug store.

"That's 40 years experience with chocolate malts," he said with a grin.

But Noland was more than a soda jerk. Politics came as a "natural inclination." In 1928 he was asked to work for the Democrats in the Wrangell area. In 1946 he won a seat in the Territorial house and served on into statehood for 20 consecutive years. In 1955 he was president of the Senate. He lost his first election last term and seems to be enjoying the vacation.

"In fact I wonder why I stayed so long," he marveled.

Noland met his wife Elsie when she came home to Wrangell for a visit after living outside in Hollywood. Her brother-in-law was a film maker and did a lot of newsreel work in Alaska. The couple were married in 1925.

They both enjoyed traveling and if you can't find them in Wrangell Hawaii is the best bet.

Last year Noland was appointed to the Board of Regents over a loud protest from citizens of neighboring Juneau who wanted a representative from their town.

"I was a hotly-debated appointment and still am, I guess," he concedes.

But the former legislator has long dealt with the University of Alaska. As a member of both House and Senate finance committee he "sat on their budget many times."

He appears to be enjoying his seat on the other side of the table for a change.