

O'CONNOR, 63, SUCCUMBS AT HOSPITAL

Ex-Governor, Senator, Attorney General Had Heart Condition

Herbert R. O'Connor, the only Marylander in this century to serve as attorney general, Governor and United States Senator, died in Mercy Hospital yesterday at the age of 63.

Mr. O'Connor, who had been actively engaged in the practice of the law since his retirement from the Senate in 1953, had suffered from a heart condition for several years.

He was stricken early Thursday morning at his home at 101 Highfield road and taken to the hospital by ambulance.

Was Son's Best Man

Death came early yesterday afternoon. His wife, Mrs. Eugenia Burns O'Connor, and four of their five children were at his bedside.

Later Mrs. O'Connor collapsed and was admitted to the hospital as a patient.

His youngest son, Robert J. O'Connor, was honeymooning in Bermuda. Just last Saturday Mr. O'Connor had acted as his son's best man.

A product of Baltimore's Tenth ward, once as solidly Irish as County Cork and as solidly Democratic as the present Maryland Legislature, Mr. O'Connor made his mark in party politics long before he was eligible to vote.

Public Life Detailed

Chronologically, here is a synopsis of his public life, a synopsis which has no parallel in Maryland annals:

1921-23—Assistant State's attorney.

1923-24—People's counsel before the Public Service Commission.

1924-34—State's attorney of Baltimore.

1935-39—Attorney general of Maryland.

1939-46—Governor of Maryland.

1947-53—United States Senator.

Mr. O'Connor was genial but austere; kindly yet businesslike; soft-spoken but firm. Above all he was adept in the practice of politics, in the best sense of the meaning of that word.

He possessed a sort of political intuition for making the right step at the right time. No Mary-

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der of his time was better at gauging issues, and how the public would respond to them.

His sense of timing was magnificent.

Mr. O'Connor could be spectacular when circumstances demanded.

But business like caution and circumspection were deeply ingrained in his being—and they showed in the manner in which he carried out his duties as Governor and United States Senator.

Mr. O'Connor was born in a three-story row house on Homewood avenue, on November 17, 1896, the fourth son of James P. A. and Mary O'Connor.

Evening Sun Reporter

He attended St. Paul's parochial school and Loyola High School before entering Loyola College, where he distinguished himself as an orator, a baseball player and a fine scholar.

While a student at the University of Maryland Law School and for a year thereafter he worked as a reporter for *The Evening Sun*, covering police headquarters.

His editors remembered him as reliable, energetic and imaginative. One of his reportorial associates at headquarters remembers him as a young man who closed himself with his law books whenever his work hit a dull period.

But like almost every other personable youngster of the Tenth ward, Mr. O'Connor had his mind set on a political, rather than a newspaper, career.

So in 1921, he accepted an appointment as an assistant State's attorney.

The political gods smiled upon him, for the following year he became involved in a case which was to put him in the public eye and keep him there for the remainder of his life.

Walter Socolow, a 19-year-old, was wanted here as the trigger man in the notorious William B. Norris murder case.

Socolow had escaped to New York. He was picked up there and assistant State's attorney O'Connor was sent to bring him back.

At 4.54 P.M. on September 21, 1922, as Socolow's lawyers were seeking a writ of habeas corpus in a New York court room, Mr. O'Connor shoved his Baltimore detectives forward and cried "Take him, boys."

Socolow Returned

Socolow offered no resistance. Mr. O'Connor and the detectives got their prisoner out of the courtroom and into a waiting New York police car. Within five hours, they were back in Baltimore with their man.

Many of the legal opinions he gave during his four years in that office still are cited as among the clearest expositions of points of Maryland law available.

In 1938 Mr. O'Connor was the choice of the late William Curran, a Baltimore political leader, and Howard Bruce, Democratic National Committeeman, for the party's gubernatorial nomination, for which Howard W. Jackson, then the three-term Mayor of Baltimore had declared himself.

Won After Long Count

William S. Gordy, Jr., of the Eastern Shore, and Lansdale G. Sasser, of Southern Maryland, also were candidates for the nomination.

A memorable primary followed—and it took more than a week of counting and recounting afterward to decide that Mr. O'Connor was the winner. He had beaten Mr. Jackson in all six of the Mayor's city districts.

He went on to defeat Harry W. Nice, the Republican incumbent in the general election by a big margin.

Mr. O'Connor found a State debt of \$48,000,000 when he assumed office. He cut it to \$13,000,000 in four years, and had a treasury surplus of \$8,000,000. And, with World War II preventing construction of new roads and new institutions, he was able to cut taxes during his second term and still leave a surplus.

From then on, there was no

stopping of Mr. O'Connor, who overnight had become a public favorite.

After a short time out as People's Counsel to the Public Service Commission, Mr. O'Connor easily became elected State's attorney in 1924, when he was just 27 years old.

The prosecutor's vigor and skill brought him praise from the Supreme Bench of Baltimore and a series of notorious murder cases—the Richard Reese Whittermore case and the Herman Duker case, among others, kept Mr. O'Connor's name in print.

Named Attorney General

During his ten years in that office he picked up a devoted political following which had its hard core in the old Tenth Ward.

By 1934, Mr. O'Connor's sense of timing made him realize that his career must take a new tack.

So he stepped out upon the State-wide scene and nailed down Democratic nomination for attorney general. He was a landslide winner of the general election which followed.

Aspired To Senate

During his terms in office such innovations as what has become known as the Sherbow plan for redistribution of some of the State's revenues among the subdivisions was instituted, the Legislative Council was established and the county magistrate's court system was overhauled.

After two terms as Governor, he decided to run for the United States Senate, a post on which he had had his eye for many years. Mr. O'Connor took on George L. Radcliffe, the two-term Democratic incumbent, in the primary, which he won handily.

However, he just barely managed to squeeze by D. John Markey, his Republican opponent, in the general election.

During his six years in the Senate, Mr. O'Connor identified himself with action against alleged subversives, including those accused of communistic tendencies in the secretariat of the United Nations.

Active In Crime Probe

Devoted to the interests of Baltimore and Maryland, he fought hard to improve the port and to strengthen the merchant marine. He was a foe of the St. Lawrence Seaway project, and of the development of an airport in Virginia to serve Washington. Neither project was approved until after he left office.

When Senator Kefauver (D., Tenn.) gave up the chairmanship of the Senate Crime Investigating Committee, Mr. O'Connor, who had been a member, succeeded him.

Senator O'Connor sent investigators to Florida, Kentucky, New Jersey and Maryland to develop evidence later presented at committee hearings.

One of the results of the hearing into crime conditions in Maryland was the firing of a lieutenant who had headed the Baltimore Police Department's vice squad.

Detected GOP Surge

Mr. O'Connor's highly-developed sense of political currents and cross-currents came to the fore again in 1952 when he detected a Republican surge in the offing.

He announced he would not be a candidate for a second term and said he wished to be "free" to object to some of the policies of the Truman Administration.

J. Glenn Beall, a Republican, was a big winner over George P. Mahoney, the Democrat selected to try for the seat Mr. O'Connor was giving up.

It was Senator Beall, incidentally, who rose in the Senate chamber yesterday to announce Mr. O'Connor's death. He and several other members of the Senate paid their respects to Mr. O'Connor in floor speeches.

Even after Mr. O'Connor left the Senate he continued his personal campaign against communism.

Deeply Religious Man

In 1955, for instance, he was chosen by the American Bar Association to go to Tallahassee, Fla., to represent the association's stand against lawyers who resort to the Fifth Amendment in inquiries about their own alleged Communist affiliations.

Mr. O'Connor served for a time in the mid-1950's as labor consultant to the city of Baltimore. He also was general counsel for the American Merchant Marine Institute, a post that kept him in Washington a good part of the time.

A deeply religious man, Mr. O'Connor was a life-long participant in the lay activities of the Catholic Church. In 1955, he headed the lay committee directing the Catholic Charities Appeal. Just a few months ago, he marched in the procession, the insignia of a papal knight on his lapel, when the new catholic Cathedral of Mary Our Queen was dedicated.

Special Annapolis Trip

Mr. O'Connor's last trip to Annapolis, in January, was a happy, proud one.

He went there to watch one of his sons, Herbert R. O'Connor, Jr., file for the Democratic nomination to the House of Representatives from the Seventh Congressional district.

One of the first persons to pay his public respects to Mr. O'Connor yesterday was Representative Friedel, the Democratic incumbent

Herbert O'Connor, Jr., is opposing.

Mr. O'Connor put in an appearance at a Loyola College alumni banquet on Tuesday night. The next night about six hours before he was stricken, he went to a Catholic church to receive the traditional Ash Wednesday blessing.

The immediate cause of death was listed as a cerebral hemorrhage.

Although Mr. O'Connor had been in ill health for several years, the news of his death came as a shock to leading Marylanders who had known and worked with him for many years.

TrIBUTES poured in, from throughout the State.

Governor Tawes issued this statement:

"I was profoundly saddened to learn of the death today of that great Marylander, Herbert R. O'Connor. His death will be mourned by the many thousands of Maryland citizens who knew him and loved him.

"Herbert O'Connor was one of the most eminent statesmen the State has produced in this century....

"It was my privilege to be associated with him closely during a part of his career, having been Comptroller of the Treasury while he was Governor of the State.

"Great Loss" To State

"His intelligence, his integrity and his great zeal was an inspiration to all of us who had that privilege.

"I extend my heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. O'Connor and the other members of his family. The State has suffered a great loss, and I know all Marylanders share my grief at his passing."

Among others paying tribute to Mr. O'Connor's memory were Mayor Grady, former Mayor Thomas D'Alesandro, Jr., and other leading Marylanders.

In addition to Mrs. O'Connor, whom he married in 1920, the former Governor is survived by his four sons, Herbert, Jr., Eugene F., James P. and Robert J. O'Connor; a daughter, Mrs. John A. Farley; twelve grandchildren; three brothers, James O'Connor, of Washington, and William and John O'Connor, of Baltimore, and three sisters, Mrs. Vincent DePaul Fitzpatrick, Mrs. William D. Gentry and Mrs. Edgar H. Hammann, all of Baltimore.

Never Smoked, Nor Drank

A man of many friends but few really close ones, Mr. O'Connor was devoted to his family, and spent all the free hours he could take out from a busy career with his wife and children.

Personally, he maintained idealistic standards in his own habits. He never smoked nor took a drink, although he was an anti-prohibitionist during the days before repeal.

After a hard day of campaigning, he would relax with a double chocolate ice cream soda.

Herbert R. O'Connor, Jr., said that in keeping with his father's instructions of long standing Mr. O'Connor's body will remain in his home until the funeral.

A requiem mass for Mr. O'Connor will be offered at 10 A.M. Tuesday at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, 5200 North Charles street, following services at 9.10 A.M. at his home. Burial will be in Cathedral Cemetery.

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