

Frank Reed, who came to Anchorage in 1915, dies at 99

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Frank Metcalf Reed, 99, who arrived as a babe-in-arms on the banks of Ship Creek in 1915, died Sunday, Jan. 22, at Providence Hospital after a sudden bout of pneumonia. He had probably lived in Anchorage longer than anyone, even serving his World War II enlistment as a naval liaison officer helping young seamen transiting the town on what is today Elmendorf Air Force Base.

He is survived by his daughter, Pauline Reed, of Mercer Island, Wash., who was at his side when he died, along with her daughter, Carrie Reed Scull. He was predeceased by his wife, Maxine, who died in Anchorage Jan. 25, 2009, after 71 years of marriage.

He is also survived by Pauline's two other children, Shelley Elizabeth Reed Buhler and D. Scott Reed Mackay, as well as three grandchildren from son Frank Reed Jr. who died in 2007: Tracy Reed Bauck, Travis and Ryan Reed. He had nine great-grandchildren. He is also survived by nephew John A. McGary of Seattle.

An informal and affable friend to almost everyone he met, he worked as an electrical contractor, head of the Small Business Administration in Anchorage and bank vice president. One of his proudest achievements was serving as chairman of the Anchorage Charter Commission, which in 1975 proposed the eventually successful vote to merge the City of Anchorage with the Greater Anchorage Area Borough. That merger formed today's Municipality of Anchorage.

Reed was born in Seattle Dec. 22, 1912, and came to Anchorage with his mother, Pauline Hovey Reed, and older brother Paul, when his father, Frank Ivan Reed, sold his interest in a gold dredging operation on Cache Creek north of Anchorage. The family moved to the rapidly expanding community, then known as Ship Creek Landing, shortly after the federal government decided to make it the headquarters of the federal Alaska Railroad. Most people lived in tents in the Ship Creek Valley until lots were auctioned to the south on Anchorage's original townsite in July 1915. The family promptly moved into a one-room log cabin above Ship Creek.

Reed grew up in the Anchorage Hotel located, where the Anchorage Hilton now stands. His father took over the hotel in an arrangement with a bank because the developer couldn't pay his bill to the lumberyard owned by Reed's father. Because his father showed little interest in the hostelry, his mother, older brother and he ran the establishment from 1917 to 1934.

"We played bellhop, desk clerk, maid, laundryman, coal shoveler, whatever. It was our living. There were months when income was substantially less than the outgo. It was not easy," Reed recalled years later.

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Among its guests was his friend, artist Sydney Laurence, who once paid for a year's rent with a huge painting of Mount McKinley. It later hung in the lobby of the Matanuska Valley Bank (later Alaska Bank of Commerce and First Interstate Bank of Alaska) on loan from Reed, its senior vice president and member of its board of directors.

He graduated from Anchorage High School in 1931 and attended the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines -- now the University of Alaska Fairbanks -- in 1931-32.

A graduate of the University of Washington in 1937 with a degree in economics, Reed returned to Alaska and worked at Anchorage Light and Power. The company was founded by his father to tap Eklutna Lake and provide the growing city of Anchorage with its first hydro power. He served as vice president from 1937-1942. He later served as president of Alaska Electric and Equipment Co., an electrical contracting firm.

He was also a partner in the development of the Turnagain Arms Apartments, across Third Avenue from the Hilton Hotel. His family home, built by his father in 1939, was on the land where the apartments were built. Ever economical, he moved the house to its present location on 12th Avenue, which is where he lived until he entered Providence Hospital on Saturday.

He retired in 1987 at age 75 when the state's economy crashed with the plummeting price of oil and First Interstate Bank was closed. Among his other duties he served as chair of the Anchorage School Board, on

the City Council and on the Anchorage Planning Commission. He was also president of the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce and in 1957 helped organize what became the United Way. Named to the Alaska Hall of Fame in 1969, he was also tapped as Outstanding Alaskan of the Year by the Alaska Chamber of Commerce in 1976.

He was also very proud of his longtime membership in the Anchorage Lions Club and attended up until the week before he died. Another source of pride was his work in fundraising for the Anchorage YMCA when it was in peril of closing.

Additionally he served until his death as a director and employee of the Marston Foundation (started by his friend Marvin R. "Muktuk" Marston, who commanded the World War II Eskimo Scouts) which provided rototillers, seed potatoes and other agriculture support to Native communities in Western Alaska.

He was looking forward to celebrating his 100th birthday on Dec. 22, 2012, at the Alaska Railroad Depot on First Avenue. For this reason, at this time, his family plans to hold a celebration of his life on that day at the depot.

Read more here: <http://www.adn.com/2012/01/22/2277650/frank-reed-who-came-to-anchorage.html#storylink=misearch#storylink=cpy>