

Seniors advocate J. Frank Gallagher dies

By KEITH MURAOKA
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — J. Frank Gallagher, one of Santa Cruz's staunchest advocates for senior citizens, died Thursday at Dominican Hospital after a short illness. He was 76.

A Mass will be celebrated Monday. The rosary will be recited tonight.

The tall, silver-haired Gallagher was well known in the county for everything from dressing up as Uncle Sam for Fourth of July parades to his dedication to Holy Cross Church where he was a devoted

parishioner. He also had been basketball, football, boxing and baseball coach at the old Holy Cross High School.

He was named "Man of the Year" in 1980 by the Santa Cruz Area Chamber of Commerce. He received several proclamations, from the city of Santa Cruz, Congress, Senate and even then-President Ronald Reagan at a 50th wedding anniversary celebration for him and his wife, Ruth, in 1988.

But Gallagher was best known for his senior advocacy. He was director of Project Scout, an outreach and service organization for seniors, from 1972 until just this

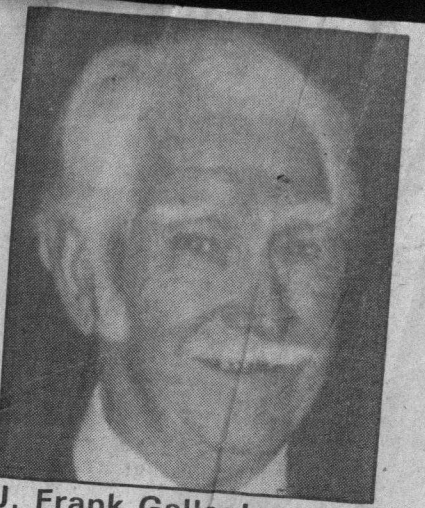
year. While with Project Scout, he helped with income tax assistance and worked for both a food and crafts cooperative.

For six straight years ending in 1988, local seniors elected him senator for the California Senior Legislature, an advisory body to the state Legislature made up of 120 seniors throughout the state to represent older citizens' interests. From 1982-1988, Gallagher served on the 25-member California Commission on Aging, having been appointed by the Senate Rules Committee. In 1981, he was a senior intern for Rep. Leon Panetta, D-Monterey.

Gallagher was a director for the California Grey Bears, and was one of its founding members, holding the number 004. He also worked with the National Council on Aging, California Specialists on Aging, the county Housing Advisory Committee, county Mental Health Board, county Rental Information and Mediation Service and the Dominican Hospital Foundation Board.

Senior employment and housing programs among Gallagher's helped write legislation for a number of senior issues that are now law.

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J. Frank Gallagher
Involved in many civic activities

Gallagher

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Jennifer Davis, executive director of the Seniors Council, said of Gallagher, "An awful lot of local senior programs had their beginnings with Frank. The Nursing Home Ombudsman, Grey Bears and Senior Network Services couldn't have begun without Frank's nurturing. He paved the way by his vision and support."

State Sen. Henry Mello, D-Watsonville, said he was saddened by Gallagher's death. "He was just a great friend and a person who gave of his life to try to help the lives of senior citizens."

John Riggle, executive director of the California Commission on Aging, said Gallagher was "one of the most popular members" of the commission. "He was the consummate gentleman." E. Stuart Hurt, who successfully won Gallagher's vacated senior senate seat in 1986, said, "Frank loved people. He did a lot of little things for people that others don't even know about."

Davis added, "Frank kept all the local government and community bodies aware of senior issues even before such issues were popular. He would stand up at city council or Employment Commission meetings, and merely introduce himself as, 'Frank Gallagher, senior citizen,'" she recalled, laughing.

In a 1985 Sentinel interview, Gallagher said, "The day you stop doing things is the day you die."

In that same interview, he described himself as "sort of a con artist on behalf of the elderly." But, he added, "It's an honest con."

Gallagher was known for his trademark sideburns, one which was slightly longer than the other. He diplomatically contended that one sideburn was for his conservative side and the other was for his liberal side.

Born in Heartwell, Neb., Gallagher married the former Ruth Kratochvil in 1938 and moved to

California in 1940. They have lived in Santa Cruz since 1949, with the exception of several years in Bakersfield. Gallagher worked in a number of capacities: coaching and teaching at Holy Cross High School, working as an executive with Metropolitan Life Insurance Co., and heading Project Scout.

As a volunteer, he was a Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus, he worked in local Democratic party politics, organized a regional Catholic sports association and served on the board of education for the local archdiocese. Sister Barbara Long at Holy Cross Church called him a "faithful parishioner, who never missed a 12 o'clock mass." He always ushered at the mass and had a smile for all.

Gallagher is survived by his wife, Ruth Gallagher of Santa Cruz; eight children, Dennis Gallagher of Albuquerque, N.M., Douglas Gallagher of Santa Cruz; Barry Gallagher of Merced, David Gallagher of Bakersfield, Brother Ron Gallagher of Moraga, Kathleen Gallagher of Greenfield, Mass., Sharon Tashjian of Sanger, and Maureen Chung of Kauai, Hawaii; a sister, Marcella Sims of Kearney, Neb.; 18 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. His daughter, Mary Patricia Hacker of Bakersfield, died in February.

Norman's Family Chapel, 3620 Soquel Drive, Soquel, is in charge of arrangements. Friends may call from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. today at the chapel.

The rosary will be recited at 7 tonight at Norman's Family Chapel. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 10:30 a.m. Monday at Holy Cross School, 126 High St., adjacent to the mission. Interment will be in Holy Cross Cemetery.

Contributions may be made to the Holy Cross Restoration Fund, 126 High St., Santa Cruz 95060 or to the Dominican Hospital Foundation, 1555 Soquel Drive, Santa Cruz 95065.