Walter Sundlun dies; GOP notable

PROVIDENCE — Walter I. Sundlun, 86, a Providence lawyer, businessman and philanthropist long prominent in Republican politics and twice an unsuccessful candidate for U.S. Senate, died last night in the Jane Brown Unit of Rhode Island Hospital.

Mr. Sundlun was one of two unendorsed GOP candidates in a bitter run for the Republican nomination for Senate against Thomas P. Hazard in 1948, a campaign which saw charges and countercharges of vote fraud.

During his outspoken campaign against what he called the Republican "old guard" he termed a plot charges that some of his nomination papers had been forged. The issue dominated headlines for weeks but formal charges were never brought against him.

Hazard ultimately lost the election to Sen. Thedore Francis Green.

Mr. Sundlun later ran an unsuccessful campaign for the U.S. Senate in 1954.

His political career grew along with his law career, which began in 1922 with his admission to the state bar with a degree from Boston University.

Born in Providence Sept. 9, 1890, one of eight children of Lithuanian immigrants, the late Morris and Evelyn Sundlun, he started work at age 12 as a delivery boy. He worked as a youth as a baggage agent, an organist on Narragansett Bay steamers and at other odd jobs, while attending public elementary schools, Hope High School and Lincoln Preparatory School.

After high school he traveled the country as New York sales representative for two local jewelry companies and later operated a jewelry store on Main Street, Pawtucket.



Walter I. Sundlun

At the age of 29 he began law school in Boston. Two years after joining the bar he became public defender.

In the early 1920s he began his involvement in philanthropy and served 10 years as president of the Jewish Orphanage of Rhode Island. In later years he was president of the Congregation Sons of Israel and David, now Temple Beth-El, and raised money for building funds and for other causes such as the Freedom Crusade, which financed the Radio Free Europe Broadcasts.

Mr. Sundlun was a delegate to the GOP National Convention in 1932 and two years later ran unsuccessfully for state senator.

In 1940 he worked on the presidential campaign staff of Wendell Wilkie.

During World War II he was chairman of the Rhode Island Committee for oppressed minorities and gained a reputation as a tireless listener to German propaganda broadcasts, which occasionally featured the names of surviving American fighters missing in [illegible]

Mr. Sundlun's son, Bruce, now president and chief executive officer of the Outlet Company, was missing for a time after an air mission from the British Isles in 1943.

After the war, Mr. Sundlun, then president and treasurer of the National Real Estate and Investment Co. remained active in politics, conducting his two campaigns for the Senate.

As a lawyer, he gained attention for his action in 1947 and 1948 on behalf of Boston Mayor James M. Curley's bid for a pardon from President Truman. Curley had been convicted of mail fraud. Curley was given a pardon.

Mr. Sundlun was an incorporator and trustee of Miriam Hospital, the Jewish Home for the Aged and the Jewish Children's Foundation and a member of Barney Merry Lodge, F&AM; Providence Lodge of Elks, the Eagles, the Rhode Island and Bristol Yacht Clubs, the Ledgemont Country CLub and other organizations.

He is survived by a son, Bruce G. Sundlun, two sisters, Mrs. Ruth Rodman of Fall River and Mrs. Rosalyn Warenback of Los Angeles and three grandchildren.

The funeral service will be held Sunday at 1 p.m. at Temple Beth-El. Burial will be in Sons of Israel and David Cemetery, Providence.

Obituaries

SUNDLUN, WALTER