

Editorial—

Sen. Ernest Gruening - The Proud Old Man

The proud old man, 81-year-old Sen. Ernest Gruening, finally bowed to defeat in the August 27 primary election beginning the end of a distinguished career in public service for Alaska and its citizens. His stunning loss, and equally stunning and sparkling victory

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'I may not agree with a word you say but I will defend unto death your right to say it.' - Voltaire

The Proud Old Man . . .

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of his young, vigorous opponent, 38-year-old Mike Gravel, will be recorded in Alaska's history as one of the great political surprises of the young state.

Although Sen. Gruening was, as usual, clear and nimble-minded, the voters apparently looked six years hence when his term would be up and his 81 years plus six at that time probably cast some doubts. The surprising old man, no doubt, would probably be as clear-minded then but the voters apparently chose to be cautious and reluctantly retired the estimable octogenarian from his Senate office in Washington, D. C.

Tundra Times did not always agree with Senator Gruening but the newspaper never lost its well-meant respect for the old man. We had always been constantly amazed at the thought qualities and nimble mind of the man. We took pleasure in the interviews with him as he was, easily, one of the most easy-to-interview people we had ever known. His vast storehouse of knowledge on great many things from which he plucked authenticity for his remarks was a constant source of enlightenment. Whatever faults he might have had were far overshadowed by his vast reserve of knowledge which he kept at fingertip readiness at all times. He kept this equipment, necessary in his high office, on tap at a moment's notice—a commendable quality.

The voters have forced a change in the delegation at Washington. Just what kind of change it is going to be is still in doubt but the beginning of it will be decided in the general election on November 5. The new man in Sen. Gruening's stead will either be in the person of Mike Gravel or Elmer Rasmuson. Both are able men with varying degrees of backgrounds.

Mike Gravel is a young man 38 years old. He is aggressive without being flamboyant. He has established himself as an able businessman. He has said with apparent seriousness and humility that he wants to serve in public life—a rather unique admission seldom heard but Gravel came right out with it. He also has legislative experience having served as a state representative and later as a Speaker of the State House of Representatives.

On the other hand, Elmer Rasmuson is one of the leading businessmen in Alaska. He is older, being 59 years old. He is a home grown product. He commands respect in Alaska's financial circles. He has been a mayor of Alaska's largest city, Anchorage. He is the president of the Regents of the University of Alaska. He is quick to say, "I can get things done."

One of the two men will be in line to fill Sen. Gruening's considerable pair of shoes which the old man fashioned during his more than nine years of service in the United States Senate. Filling his job will be a formidable one and it will take ability, hard work and dedication. Sen. Ernest Gruening has set a firm foundation and it will be a challenge to achieve its level and a signal triumph to surpass it. The old man has set a great example.