

Ex-Rep. John J. Rooney Of Brooklyn Is Dead at 71

By MARY BREASTED

John J. Rooney, once one of the most powerful men in Congress, died in Washington Sunday night after having undergone surgery at Georgetown University Hospital. He was 71 years old.

Until his retirement last year, Mr. Rooney had represented the 14th Congressional District in Brooklyn and served as chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee for the Departments of State, Justice and the judiciary.

He had been undefeated, despite heated recent primary campaigns, for 30 years.

Often blunt in his language and demanding in his questions during Appropriations Committee hearings, Mr. Rooney was both praised and blamed for the shape of the State Department bureaucracy in the 1950's and 1960's, when he held to its purse-strings with a firm hand.

Was Friend of Hoover

He was considered a good friend of the late Federal Bureau of Investigation chief, J. Edgar Hoover, whose department budget also came under the scrutiny of Mr. Rooney's subcommittee.

In early 1974, a well-placed source familiar with the Federal Bureau of Investigation charged that Mr. Hoover had supplied Mr. Rooney and other Congressmen with sensitive material about their political opponents, but the charges were never proved.

Mr. Rooney was born above his family's flower shop on Court Street. As a young man, he played the cornet and sometimes earned money "blowing it in chop suey joints" as he studied law at Fordham University.

He received his law degree in 1925 and passed the bar a year later, going to work as an assistant district attorney under William O'Dwyer.

First Elected in 1943

He was first elected to the House of Representatives in an off-year election, in 1943, after the death of his predecessor and next-door neighbor, Thomas H. Cullen, who had served a quarter of a century.

State Department officials were wont to blame Mr. Rooney for the poor language training of Foreign Service officials because, they claimed, the Congressman would not let the Foreign Service Institute have enough money for its language classes.

For his part, Mr. Rooney was

fond of taking verbal pot shots at any State Department program he considered frivolous. He liked to call the United States Information Agency the "inflammation agency" and gleefully mocked some of the agency's more ambitious publicity gimmicks.

"Take that carrier U.S.I.A. wanted to fit out and send all over the world showing Cine-rama," he said in 1958. "Holy smoke, that was a beauty! We just took a look and figured out it would cost six or seven bucks for each one of them Cambodians to watch Cinerama. So we sunk the carrier."

Repelled Both Challenges

Mr. Rooney's support of the Vietnam war and his alignment with the older Democratic politicians in Brooklyn made him the target of liberal, anti-war insurgents in recent years, when he was challenged by Peter Eikenberry, a lawyer, and Allard K. Lowenstein, the former Representative who led the 1968 Dump Johnson campaign. Mr. Rooney successfully defeated both challenges, although in 1972, he was compelled to run in a second primary against Mr. Lowenstein after the Appellate Division Second Department ruled that their first primary race had been subject to irregularities.

The former Congressman is survived by his wife, Catherine, two brothers, five children and five grandchildren.

A funeral service is scheduled for 11 A.M. Thursday at St. Paul's Catholic Church in Brooklyn.



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