

2019-01-09 PT. 1

Memorial service for Kathleen Mike Dalton

Mike Stepovich, eulogy

March 9, 2019

Pioneer Hall at Pioneer Park in Fairbanks, Alaska

Series: Kathleen "Mike" Dalton Life History Recordings

Joan Skilbred welcomed everyone and introduced herself. She talked about the ceremony of the Pioneers of Alaska. It has been the same since 1923. Skilbred went over a few items before the memorial started. She introduces people at the front of the room, Joyce Chace, Sonja Campbell, Wanda Huber, Tammie Wilson, Mike Stepovich, and Libby Dalton.

Libby Dalton thanked everyone for coming to honor her mother. The room they were in had some special memories for her mother. It was where many of Mike Dalton's closest friends had their final farewell gatherings. This place was also the location for the Pioneers of Alaska Igloo no. 8 meetings. Libby Dalton said the Pioneers of Alaska is an organization full of legendary characters, historical figures, and rich history. It was formed by the people who built this state. It was started to help the old timers who came here in search of a better life. After the gold rushes were over some stayed and they didn't have much. They needed a little help. Igloo no. 1 was formed in Nome, Alaska in 1907. Igloo no. 2 was formed in Candle, and Igloo no. 3 in St. Michael. The Grand Igloo was formed the following year in 1908 from the three original clubs. In 1913 the first Territorial Legislature established the first Pioneers Home in Sitka for elderly miners. Her mother believed in that spirit – helping others out along the way. She introduced her family and friends. Dalton said her mother had a great life until a couple of falls in recent years. She had a stroke in 2017 after surgery and never fully recovered. During this time she had two visits from a candidate for governor and had two more Republican candidates called her. Mike Dalton's final year and a half were not spent in mourning. She was in her cozy log home in northwest Fairbanks. They looked through her slide collections, her historical collections, and identified people in photographs for the Women's Club. Her mother participated in an oral history series with Karen Brewster. It was a good experience for her mother and they appreciated the visits. Mike Dalton did some of the earliest oral histories if not the first for the University of Alaska from 1973-75. Mike Dalton traveled all over the state and did many of them. They are available online. Her mother was still sharp through her final days. Her final project and the most cherished happened on September 23, 2018 at mile 1 of the Dalton Highway. It was the dedication of the interpretive sign named after James Dalton. The road was named the Dalton Highway. It is the road to the North Slope oilfields in Prudhoe Bay. She thanked the efforts of Clark Milne, Patty Peirsol and Ron Inouye. The sign was designed, built and sits at the beginning of the road. One hundred people traveled up for the dedication on that day. Her mother was grateful and appreciated the efforts. She closed with some facts about her mother. She had polio as a young child, attended parochial school until her junior year in high school, drove the Alcan Highway in 1949 from Arizona, ran for borough assembly in 1964, and ran for Lt. governor in 1978 and finished middle of the pack. Her mother worked on the first Don Young campaign for state house in 1966. Her mother loved vegetables and the Goldpanners baseball team. Mike Dalton could knit profusely. She

completed the equinox marathon two or three times and hiked the Chilkoot Trail four times. She traveled the entire Yukon River and loved dressing up for Golden Days. She shared the same birthday with Joyce Paskvan – September 10, 1925. Libby Dalton said her mother loved to be productive. She was a worker and liked to have fun along the way.

Tammie Wilson presented the legislative tribute. She shared what Mike Dalton meant to her. Dalton would tell Wilson that she could never be a sourdough because she could never live that long. She had a plan anyway for those who hadn't been born in Alaska. Mike Dalton sent Tammie Wilson an email when Wilson was running for mayor. Wilson said Dalton took her under her wing. She made a club just for her named the Petunia Club. They set Wilson down every month and trained her about what to do. Wilson said Dalton distributed political signs for Wilson. Wilson said she is who she is today because of Mike Dalton.

Mike Stepovich gives the eulogy. He said there is only one way to describe Kathleen Mike Fitzpatrick Dalton. She was a force. He loved Mike Dalton because he loves history. In Dalton's seventy years in Alaska in addition to preserving its history for generations she made history. Dalton was born in 1925 in Arizona. She was a card carrying member of America's greatest generation. He said he can't do justice to Dalton's life-long accomplishments. She was a trail blazer, leader and pioneer. Until the age of ten she lived on a Navajo reservation. She obtained an English degree from Northern Arizona University. She came to Fairbanks, Alaska in 1949. There she found work with Arctic Contractors and met James Dalton. They were married in 1950 in Barrow. They were married for 27 years. James Dalton was an engineer who played an integral part to develop the United States Petroleum Reserve on the North Slope. His knowledge and lobbying resulted in the state laying claim to the land where the Dalton's spent the first seven years of their marriage. The state has 365 million acres and through the Statehood Act we were entitled to select 105 million. With the addition of their son, George, and Mike pregnant they moved to Fairbanks where daughter, Libby, was born. With her husband away a great deal on the North Slope Mike Dalton was a single mother at home with two toddlers. She became active in the community. In the summer of 1962 Mike joined the Republican Women's Club. She created phone and walking lists. She was the matriarch of the Interior Republican Party. Candidates wanted her advice and blessing. Mike Dalton went to work for Bill Snedden as a reporter for the Fairbanks daily news miner for ten years starting in 1961. She never went anywhere without a camera. She covered a little bit of everything as a reporter including the 1964 earthquake, 1967 flood, the oil discovery at Prudhoe Bay, births, deaths, and crime. As a leader and tireless activist Dalton shined. In 1964 Mike ran for an assembly seat in the newly formed borough and was the top vote getter and served over five years. Fairbanks was Dalton's base for more than a half a century. She preferred to work behind the scenes. Mike played a major part in shaping Fairbanks and the states' social, political and economic future. In 1968 Ted Stevens was appointed to fill out Bob Bartlett's term. Stevens chose Mike Dalton as his Interior Alaska field manager. She held the position for close to ten years. Few people realize that Mike Dalton helped gain 44 million acres from the federal government through her support of early Alaska Native leaders and her community involvement played key roles in helping organize the Alaska Native Land Claims fight. She was the first non-Alaskan Native to be honored by the Fairbanks Native Association. Stepovich said Dalton's large footprint has been left throughout the state. She was on Jack Coghill's staff during his tenure in the Alaska legislature. She managed Jay Hammond's office in Washington, D.C. office. She obtained a two year degree from the University of Alaska in petroleum technology. Mike knew oil. She was an amazing, enthusiastic woman. She worked for the city of Unalaska and helped to organize the

50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Dutch Harbor and the Japanese occupation of the Aleutian Islands of Attu and Kiska. As a pioneer she excelled. She was a dedicated member of the Pioneers of Alaska and served in every office of Igloo no. 8. She was the first to record interviews with old timers for the University of Alaska archives. She organized the project and successfully wrote a grant to fund the assignment. She traveled to Nome, Kotzebue, Rampart, Nenana, Fort Yukon, Central, Eagle, Juneau and Anchorage preserving Alaska history. She and Lael Morgan were responsible for returning to the state twenty-four Sidney Lawrence paintings. Stepovich points out the Rusty Heurlin paintings in the room and said if you would be in this room with Mike she would educate you on the paintings. She was a valued member of the Tanana Yukon Historical Society and Women in Mining. She was a charter member of the Arctic Sisterhood. She touched everything that was Alaska. She traveled the Yukon River with her husband, made four trips over the Chilkoot Trail and made 24 trips to Prudhoe Bay over the Dalton Highway the last just last year with her daughter. They collected holy water from the Arctic Ocean for initiation into the Arctic Sisterhood. Mike preferred to work behind the scenes for the benefit of others. She didn't want to attend honors for her ninetieth birthday until others were honored and included at the same time. She was tireless to make this a better territory, state and world.

#### Pioneers of Alaska Memorial Service

Joyce Chace begins the service. She said during Mike's life on Earth she personified the qualities befitting a true pioneer – resourceful, dedicated and always helpful to her fellow man. She promoted sisterly and brotherly love. She said we mourn the life of her sister, but belief in life eternal sustains us in our sorrow. She asked sister chaplain if our trail ends here. Wanda Huber said the trail ends not here. Death is but an episode of life. All those good and generous things which live within our sister are immortal. They cannot die. Faith, love, and hope abide. She reads a prayer.

Joyce Chace calls upon historian Sonja Campbell to call the name of their departed sister. Sonja Campbell said Kathleen Michael Mike Dalton. Joyce Chace reads a prayer. Joyce Chace asks the historian for their sister's record. Sonja Campbell said Fairbanks has lost a friend in the passing of sister Mike and she will be greatly missed by all who knew her. Sister Mike was born September 10, 1925. She passed away in Fairbanks on January 28, 2019. Sister Mike married James Dalton. They had two children, George Dalton and Libby Dalton Slane. She was known as sister Mike because her father always wanted to name his children Pat and Mike. Her sister became Pat and Kathleen became Mike. She lived on a Navajo reservation as a child when her father worked on the reservation. Mike attended school in Tucson, Arizona. She graduated from high school there and graduated from Arizona State College in 1949 with a degree in English. She headed to Alaska with a girlfriend and arrived in Fairbanks in October 1949. She spent her first night on Eva McGown's couch in the Nordale Lobby. Mike started working for Arctic Contractors. She met Jim Dalton who was the son of Jack Dalton. The highway heading north from Fairbanks was eventually named after Jim Dalton. They were married August 17, 1950 in Barrow, Alaska. The family moved to Fairbanks in 1955. They started building their home on thirty acres off of Yankovich Road. Mike covered stories as a reporter for the Fairbanks daily news miner. She covered stories such as the 1964 earthquake, the 1967 flood in Fairbanks and the discovery of oil in Prudhoe Bay. Libby Dalton said everywhere they went they had to throw the camera in a bag to take with them. During the 1967 flood she met with Wally Hickel and traveled by helicopter with him. Sister Mike became creative finding transportation to the North Slope to see her husband. She made twelve trips across the Arctic Circle between 1968-1969. She joined the Republican Women's Club. She raised funds and support for Republican candidates. She was elected to the North Star Borough in 1964. She worked for the

Fairbanks news miner from 1961-1971. She managed the state of Alaska office in Washington, D.C. during Governor Hammond's administration. She worked as the Interior Alaska Field Office manager for U.S. Senator Ted Stevens from 1971-1978. She also worked for Senator Jack Coghill. In 2013 she was honored as the Ruth Burnett Republican of the Year and also the Republican of the Year. In her retirement years she spent some of the winter months in Tucson, Arizona. She loved volunteering. She went to the Veteran's Administration Hospital and volunteered. Mike was here before Alaska became a state and not only became part of the history, but also kept track of it all. Mike and her family celebrated the new Dalton Highway interpretive sign in September 2018. Mike pointed out that she outlasted four governors to get that project completed. Sister Mike was a force of nature who never stopped advocating for what she believed was the best for Alaska. Sister Mike was initiated into the Pioneers of Alaska Auxiliary Igloo no. 8 on November 1, 1965 with number 565. She was a life member and became a veteran member in 2006. She served on the museum board, was marshal, chaplain, historian, second vice-president, first vice-president, president, and trustee.

Joyce Chase explained the resolution is kept in the files. She calls on chaplain, Wanda Huber.

Joyce Chase said the official flower for the women's igloo are the Alaska forget-me-not. She explains the meaning of the colors of the flower. She calls upon Sonja Campbell. Campbell said as a tribute to Sister Mike they present a sprig of forget me nots and the Alaska state flag to Libby and George Dalton.

Joyce Chase reads a farewell prayer. She asked the audience to share stories about Mike.