

Colorful Career Ends

W. H. Fryer Dies At Age of 83

William H. Fryer, pioneer El Paso attorney, died early today in a local hospital after a long illness. He was 83.

Funeral arrangements are pending with Harding-Orr and McDaniel Montana Avenue Funeral Home.

A native of Brooklyn, N.Y., Mr. Fryer was on vacation on July 8, 1904, his 24th birthday, when an attack of typhoid fever forced him to leave the train at El Paso. He spent a year here recuperating. On his return to New York he quit his job with the Southern Express Co. and returned to the Southwest.

HAVING STUDIED some law and knowing shorthand, he worked his way through the University of Texas as secretary to the law school dean. After graduating in 1908 he came to El Paso to practice, becoming one of the Southwest's ablest and most colorful lawyers. He handled many major criminal cases.

For a while after his arrival here he was court reporter for 34th District Court. In 1916 he defeated Charles L. Vowell for County attorney, and set out to clean up the underworld.

"I was a crusader and I went after the vice district and the gamblers and got most of them 30 days in jail plus a \$500 fine," he once said. "But I lost the next election by a large and enthusiastic majority. I believe I was the only County attorney who was not re-elected."

He served as assistant U.S. district attorney and in 1920 entered private law practice with the late Dan M. Jackson. Later partners included Watters Davis, R. E. Cunningham and Coyne Minstead.

ATTY. FRYER knew Spanish and had many clients from south of the border, being an expert in international law and immigration. One of his clients was Salvador Ateca, one-time gambling

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William H. Fryer

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casino operator who allegedly fled to the U.S. with a large sum of Mexican money after the abortive Escobar revolt in 1929. He was defense counsel for such alleged slayers as Edna Mead, Mrs. Pearl Johnson, and Mary Jean Parsons.

Mr. Fryer's bubbling sense of humor seldom left him. He once campaigned for County Democratic chairman on a pledge to appoint "only my friends" as election judges. He had a remarkable gift of mimicry, developed in amateur theatricals, and he liked to play harmless prac-

tical jokes by impersonating others. Pretending to be a client, he would telephone another lawyer and upbraid him — then call back in his natural voice to give away the joke.

FROM HIS long association with not-so-law abiding characters, he acquired a vocabulary of underworld slang which he would reel off, with appropriate gestures, for the amusement of friends. He often referred to himself as a ham actor and actually took part in El Paso theatrical productions. Perhaps his last was with his daughter Helen in the play "Daddies" in 1931. He disliked office routine and was at his happiest when addressing a jury.

Mr. Fryer was interested in Southwest history and recorded statements from pioneers. He often lauded El Pasoans as the "most lovable, warm-hearted people in the world." Even so he continued to root for the Dodgers baseball team. In 1947, as the only surviving member of the class of 1897 of St. James Academy in Brooklyn, he was guest of honor at an academy reunion.

He was a member of the American, Texas and County bar associations and was president of the El Paso bar in 1948. He attended several National Democratic Conventions. He was a member of the Immaculate Conception Church and Knights of Columbus.

He is survived by his widow, Mrs. Mary Alice Fryer of 1008 Prospect street; and four daughters, Mrs. J. D. Chatfield of Newark, Ohio, Mrs. Park Krund of Hinsdale, Ill., and Mrs. Jack Hart and Miss Rosemary Fryer of El Paso.

Old Family Album.

By G. A. MARTIN.



WILLIAM HENRY FRYER, AGED 12

WH. FRYER was born in Brooklyn, N. Y. His maternal grandfather, Michael Flannigan, was a political leader of the old sort of Brooklyn in the early forties, and his paternal grandfather, an Englishman, was a deep sea captain out of the port of New York.

After basking in the lights of Broadway, New York, for 20 odd years Mr. Fryer concluded to "go west," and came to El Paso 16 years ago. After a taste of the Rio Grande water he concluded to settle in the Lone Star state, so went to the University of Texas, and after a two years' course in law, graduated with the degree of LL.D., returning to El Paso in 1908, where he took up the practice of law.

In 1916 Mr. Fryer was elected county attorney of El Paso county, but was a little ahead of his time in his fight on liquor and illegal clubs, so was not successful in his race for reelection in 1918. In the latter year, however, the U. S. government concluded to avail of his prosecuting propensities, and he was appointed assistant U. S. district attorney at El Paso.

For the past year and a half Mr. Fryer has been busy putting new names in the city directory of Leavenworth, Kan., and has attracted the attention of the "powers that be" in Washington by his vigorous prosecution of border criminals.

He has many friends and admirers in El Paso, and a keen sense of humor. That he may go still higher is the expectation of his loyal acquaintances in these parts.

Mr. Fryer was married in 1913 to Miss Mary Alice Kelleher, of Austin, Texas, and is the father of two girls and a boy. He is a strong believer in Roosevelt's policy of better children and more of them.

The accompanying picture was taken during the Columbia exposition