

Boston Attorney

A Boston attorney who helped shape the city's skyline over a 65-year legal career, John K. Dineen died on February 4th, surrounded by family at home in Nahant. He was 91.

Dineen was born at home on January 21, 1928, in Gardiner, Maine, the son of James J. and Eleanor (Kelley) Dineen. He graduated from Gardiner High School in 1945, and joined the U.S. Army in 1946, after a brief stint as a pre-dental student at the University of Maine, which both he and the academic dean agreed was not a great fit. He shipped out to Japan and spent two years in the Yokohama Signal Maintenance Depot.

After an honorable discharge he returned to University of Maine, this time for a Bachelor of Arts degree, taking pre-law courses and joining student government. At The University of Maine, he also met that year's carnival queen, Carolyn Foley, his future wife. He graduated from The University of Maine in 1951, and Boston University Law School in 1954.

As an attorney, he was partner with four Boston firms: Weston, Patrick & Stevens, Peabody & Arnold, Gaston Snow & Ely Bartlett, and Nutter. In the mid-19690's, he was appointed a special assistant attorney general for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts by then Attorney General Ed Brooke. He was a trustee of the Boston Local Development Corporation for more than 30 years, starting in 1982. He spent the last 16 years of his career at Nutter – the firm threw him a retirement party last spring when he was 90 years old.

In a day when the legal profession is highly specialized, he was a jack-of-all-trades. He was a key player in every aspect of developing two of downtown Boston's first office towers – the State Street Bank and Keystone buildings – assembling the building sites, building political support, lining up financing, and even getting involved in the marketing and leasing efforts. For decades he oversaw a swath of what is now known as the Seaport District, representing the Boston Wharf Co., which owned a 50-building portfolio of mostly brick warehouses.

But even more than his legal work he was known for his role as managing partner of Benners Hotel in Dingle Ireland, a small county inn in County Kerry, that he and a few Boston friends bought in 1973. Eventually they recruited dozens of Boston friends to buy shares in the venture – the only guarantee being that they would never

get their money back. Like most of Dineen's business ventures Benners Hotel was a money-loser but a great deal of fun – the only prerequisite for being offered a share in the property was that the potential owner would be good company at the Benner's bar on a rainy day.

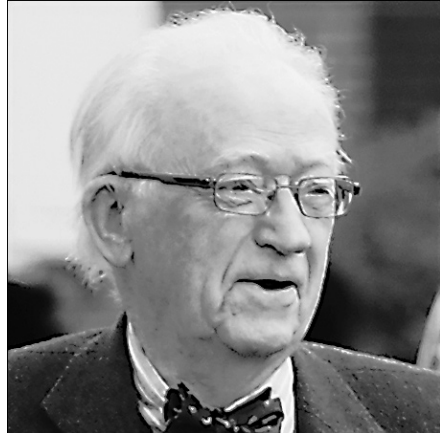
John Dineen's name was frequently preceded by the adjective "dapper." He wore tweed three-piece suits, bowties, and smoked a pipe. When he skied at Waterville Valley in New Hampshire he wore leather knickers. He had a beautiful baritone singing voice and enjoyed playing harmonica and accordion. If you asked him how he was he would always say, "near perfect." If you told him you would see him later he would say, "I'll be the tall, good-looking one." He was not quite 5 foot 7.

In the 1950's, he lived in a warehouse on T Wharf in Boston, one of only a handful of residents who resided on what was then an industrial waterfront. He collected friends the same way he collected canes, pocket watches, Irish caps, pipes, paintings, and pictures of his hero, Abraham Lincoln. He expanded his real estate footprint as a means of accommodating the memorabilia he collected as well as the paintings he was constantly bringing back from Ireland. When he built a garage, he filled its walls with art. When no more empty wall space remained in the garage, he had a shed built so he could fill that up.

He was happiest when surrounded by family – the more, the better. In the 1980's he had the vision to convert an old cow barn, horse stables, and granary on Kezar Lake in Maine into a retreat that could be enjoyed by the extended family. Today that property has become the Dineen gathering spot and other family members have purchased or constructed homes nearby.

He was a man who could not say no to a seat on a board. Some of the institutions for which he served as a board member or trustee include, Winsor School, Waring School, Hebron Academy, Emmanuel College, Boston Aid To The Blind, Boston University Medical Center, U.S.S. Constitution Museum, the Amelia Peabody Foundation, Catholic Charities of Lynn, and the Nahant Public Library.

In particular he was committed to his work as a trustee of Cambridge College, a board he sat on for 30 years. He loved the mission of the school – the idea that it was never too late for an education or new career, that working moms, immigrants or anyone who didn't have the chance to go to college when they were younger, could become



a teacher, therapist or entrepreneur. In 2001, Cambridge College gave him an honorary degree, a highlight of his life, not in the least because it allowed him to spend a few days with soul singer Patti LaBelle, who also received an honorary degree that year. He and Patti became pals and suddenly CD's by the woman who sang "Voulez-Vous Coucher Avec Moi" started to show up amid the King's Singers and James Last In the Mood For Trumpets.

If his penchant for boards of trustees was strong, even stronger was his tendency to join clubs. He was a member of the Marshall Street History Society, the Tavern Club, the Union Club, the Cary Street Club, the Apollo Club, and the Norway Weary Club, among others. For more than 65 years he sang with the Apollo Club of Boston every Tuesday night, a men's choir he said was cheaper than therapy.

Since 1960, Dineen lived in Nahant, where he was an active community member, serving as an elected library trustee, and playing a central role in preserving the old Valley Road School, and the Nahant Life Saving Station. He seemingly knew everyone in town and would frequently dine at the bar down at Kelley Greens, the pub at the town-owned Golf Course.

He was preceded in death by his first wife, Carolyn Foley Reardon (deceased 1982) and Susan Lowell Dineen, who passed away in 2011. He is survived by his five children: Jane Ellen Reardon Dineen of Lovell, ME, Martha Dineen Wales and her husband Ralph Wales of Providence; Louisa Dineen Attenborough and her husband Neale Attenborough of Boston; Jessica Dineen and her husband Terence Culver of Brooklyn, N.Y., and J.K. Dineen and his wife Megan Fletcher of San Francisco. He is also survived by 11 grandchildren, his sister Jane Ryan of Action, and brothers Dr. James Dineen of Boston and Dr. David Dineen of Gardiner, ME.

A Memorial Service will be held on April 6th, at 11 a.m., at the Nahant Village Church, followed by a reception at the Nahant Country Club.