

I think that most of the applicable statutes of limitations have run, and as a participant in the 1969 Bar convention at Nome, I do remember vividly what went on there, as does everybody else who attended. However, no one has chosen to talk about it until this moment — presumably because of the general “twilight zone” atmosphere that pervaded the whole strange affair.

The Departure of Fred

The Bar was much smaller then, and Fred Crane — District Attorney for Nome and the Second Judicial District — had prevailed upon the rest of us to honor his city with a convention. He promised a totally organized program, with many delights available only in the Far North. Unfortunately, he died during the winter — and according to Nome custom at that time — was stored in a warehouse awaiting, with the other residents who passed away during the cold months, the softening of the ground in the summer for burial. That didn't prevent him from attending the convention, however, as I will explain.

As I recall, Alaska Airlines had chartered a special flight that picked up many of the participants — originating in Southeast and proceeding north. It was a long trip, and most of the membership had seen the bottom of the glass long before we arrived. After we settled in, Tom Wardell (then Deputy Attorney General, and presently a District Attorney himself, at Kenai) invited me to accompany him to the Board of Trade, a bar on Main Street which was, and is, Nome's major attraction. Tom is a gregarious soul, who generally manages to conceal beneath an engaging exterior the fact that he — together with such other immortals as Bill Garrison and Stan Ditus — is one of the true bad actors of our legal community, and times.

The Return of Fred

Most of the other lawyers had already preceded us to the “Trade,” and it was a headstrong and spirited group that responded to the then Probate Judge J. Gerald Williams' stentorian cry (his normal speaking voice), “Let's bring out old Fred.” A delegation was dispatched, and soon returned with the guest of honor — who although he did not leave his box, certainly contributed to the gaiety and spontaneity of the gathering. Many toasts were made to him, and it was decided that he be given an eternal (as opposed to “lifetime”) position on the Board of Bar Governors. Things became a bit con-