

the nation

Last marine who helped raise flag for America at Iwo Jima dies

United Press International
 MANCHESTER, N.H. — Rene Gagnon, the last surviving Marine who helped raise the American flag on Iwo Jima in World War II, was buried Monday with full military honors.

"He was proud to be a Marine. He was proud to be a part of the flag raising," his son, Rene Gagnon Jr., said fighting back tears at interment ceremonies.

Gagnon, 53, was one of six soldiers who planted the Stars and Stripes atop the rocky summit of

Iwo Jima's Mount Suribachi on Feb. 23, 1945, after four days of bloody fighting that eventually claimed the

lives of 6,895 U.S. fighting men.

The historic picture of Gagnon and his colleagues became a symbol of American determination and bravery.

Although offered a movie contract when he returned from the war, Gagnon lived out his life in relative anonymity, working at various blue-collar jobs, the last as an apartment complex maintenance man. He was found dead at work last Friday.

At funeral services at the Holy Rosary Church, just across the Merrimack River from his home, the Rev. Aime Boisselle said a part of Gagnon "will always be with us."

"He will leave with us something we need very much — his courage."

About 150 people received communion at the foot of Gagnon's flag-draped coffin inside the simple white clapboard church as the organist played the Battle Hymn of the Republic.

Outside the Roman Catholic Mausoleum where he was buried, a Marine honor guard fired three rounds into the cold gray skies and a lone bugler played taps.

Carter sees fights in upcoming race

United Press International
 CHICAGO — President Carter sounded like a man scrapping for a fight.

But Chicago Mayor Jane Byrne warned against a battle, saying the Democrats could not afford "a national intra-party bloodbath at this crucial time."

Carter, after speaking Monday night at a \$1 million, 11,000-person Democratic Party fund-raiser, wound up a two-day foray into the Midwest today with a town hall meeting in suburban Dolton.

"As a Democrat and as president, I'm not afraid," Carter said. "I look forward to tough political fights and, with your help, we will not lose those fights ahead."

The president said he would meet head-on anyone who tried to deny him his party's renomination.

The fund-raiser was the first for the maverick mayor, who is in the first year of a four-year term.

Carter's remarks followed a curiously worded, quasi-endorsement by Byrne, who called Carter the "greatest president to the nation's big cities."

"I would vote in our party caucus without hesitancy to renominate the present leader for another four years" if the national convention was held now, she said.

Byrne issued an obvious criticism of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., who is flirting with a bid for the 1980 Democratic nomination. While not mentioning the Massachusetts senator by name, she told 11,000 party supporters:

"I cannot pass up the opportunity to admonish those who would divide the Democratic Party in the national elections that they may reap the wild political wind."

"I do not think we can afford a national intra-party bloodbath at this crucial time," she said. "The times call for unity and discipline."

Possibility of disaster alleged

Problems close reactors

United Press International
 Nuclear reactors were silent Tuesday in Colorado and Ohio, and Virginia's largest electric utility is considering conversion of two unfinished nuclear plants to coal because of "growing uncertainty" over nuclear power.

In Surry, Va., a jury was convened Tuesday to consider the case of two young men charged with sabotaging the Surry nuclear power

plant to draw attention to alleged hazards they feared could cause a disaster.

The Fort St. Vrain nuclear generating station, Colorado's only nuclear plant, 40 miles northeast of Denver, was shut down early Sunday after the release of what officials called a minute amount of radioactivity into its reactor building.

No employees were exposed to radioactivity and no contamination escaped into the atmosphere, said

Gary Reeves, spokesman for the Colorado Public Service Co., who owns and operates the plant.

Reeves said whether the plant would be reopened Tuesday depended on results of an inspection and equipment analysis.

The incident was the third in the past two years at the plant. All incidents were in the reactor helium coolant circulator system and all involved "minute" amounts of radioactivity, Reeves said.

In Oak Harbor, Ohio, a Davis-Besse nuclear power station was shut down Monday for the fourth time in a month. The shutdown was caused by a malfunction in the turbine control system, representatives for Toledo Edison

said. "No radioactive gases of any escaped and nothing has happened to endanger the public," said company spokesmen. They did not know when Ohio's only nuclear plant, near Lake Erie, would open.

Davis-Besse's reactor was built by the Babcock & Wilcox Co., and similar to the Babcock & Wilcox reactor that failed at the Three Mile Island plant in Pennsylvania.

Virginia Electric and Power Co. said Monday it is studying conversion to two unfinished nuclear power plants to coal because of "growing uncertainty over nuclear power."

Company President Stan Ragone said the study involves North Anna Units 3 and 4, under construction in Loudoun County. He said the company would not make a final determination until it has a person who is mentally expected to take six months a year, is being made because of certainty over the government's commitment to nuclear power, changing regulations and rising construction costs.

William Kuykendall and Jim Merrill, former control room operator trainees at the Surry clear power plant, were accused of pouring caustic soda on stored rods at the Virginia Electric Power Co. plant.


The two testified they damaged the fuel rods April 27 to try to prompt the company into correcting plant problems. Vepco has denied any serious safety and security problems exist at the plant.

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