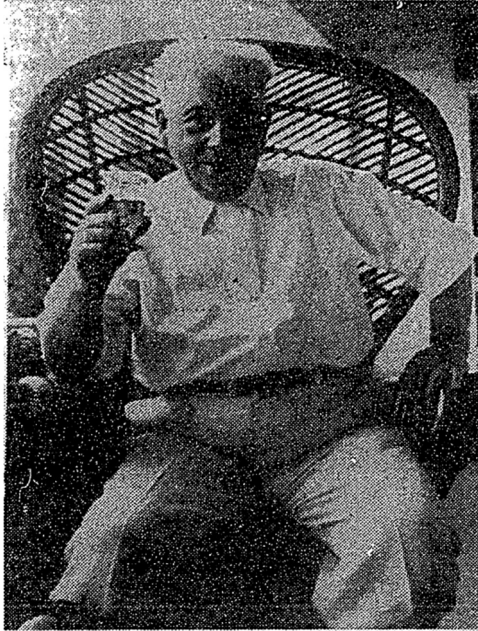


James A. LaFontaine

(- 21 Nov 1949)

LaFontaine, James A. On Monday, November 21, 1949 at the Maryland General Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland, James A. LaFontaine, beloved husband of Annie Bowling Fontaine and father of the late Henry F., Charles O., and Rose LaFontaine. Friends may call at the Lee Funeral Home, 4th street and



Massachusetts avenue northeast until 9:30 a.m., Thursday, November 24. Requiem mass will be offered at St. Dominic's Catholic Church, 6th and E street southwest at 10 a.m. Interment Congressional cemetery.

The Evening Star, November 22, 1949, p. A16

Requiem high mass will be sung in St. Dominic's Church at 10 a.m. Thursday for James A. (Jimmy) LaFontaine, gambler extraordinary, who died yesterday in Maryland General Hospital, Baltimore.

The body will be on view at Lee funeral home, Fourth street and Massachusetts avenue N.E., until 9:30 a.m. Thursday, when it will be moved to the church at Sixth and E streets S.W., where LaFontaine was baptized shortly after his birth, 81 years ago.

The man who for many years operated "Jimmy's Place," a big gambling house on Bladensburg road, just across the

District line, will be buried in the family plot at Congressional Cemetery.

Death came at 12:55 p.m. yesterday, five days after a physician gave him only five hours to live. He suffered a cerebral hemorrhage last Wednesday at a time when he appeared recovered from other illnesses which had kept him in the hospital eight weeks.

Last rites were administered at that time by a priest who had visited LaFontaine many times in the hospital. Two hours before death, the priest said the Litany of the Saints.

For more than half a century, the name of "Jimmy" LaFontaine has been linked with the gambling interests of Virginia, Maryland and the District. To the reading public, the name became synonymous with an almost legendary figure who bossed dice tables, numbers games, horse betting and roulette wheels in an aura of mystery and amazing immunity to the law.

The Evening Star, November 23, 1949, p. A12

Old Friends Pay Last Respects At Bier of Jimmy LaFontaine

From all walks of life they came one by one and in small groups to file slowly past the bier of "Jimmy".

And then little knots of old friends gathered in the anteroom of the Lee funeral home, but the talk dwelt only momentarily on the days when James A. (Jimmy) LaFontaine was king of the gamblers.

The body of the fabulous little man, who died Monday at the age of 81, lay in state last night in the funeral home at Fourth street and Massachusetts avenue N.E. and was on view again today. Requiem high mass will be sung for him at 10 a.m., tomorrow in St. Dominic's Church.

Man From Niagara Falls

The little white cards pinned to the flowers heaped around the small casket bore such legends as "From Charlie's Family," "The Marino Family," and "The Kids of the Mount Rainier Athletic Club" -- testimony both to "Jimmy's" ties with the single-name set and to his many charities.

His visitors included a man from Niagara Falls, N.Y.; Herman Taylor, Philadelphia boxing promotor; and several persons, both white and colored, some of whom had never seen the man who used to operate the big gambling house on Bladensburg road just across the District line, but who somehow felt linked to him through relatives and just plain legend.

Mrs. Jessie Ross whose only tie to "Jimmy" was that for a dozen years she had rented a house at 718 Seventh street N.E. from his niece, dropped by because she "wanted to pay her respects." She had never seen LaFontaine in life.

Friend's Daughter Visited

Another "proxy" visitor was Mrs. Hazel Faunce, 6012 Fourth Street N.W., paying respects for her ailing father, John H. Neitzey, of 1609 Allison street N.W.

In the old days LaFontaine and Mr. Neitzey often fished together at the latter's place, Ferry Landing, near Mount Vernon. Mr. Neitzey wept when he learned his old friend was ill, for he, too, was ill and unable to visit LaFontaine in the hospital.

A friend who had know LaFontaine for 25 years and who was at his bedside when he died -- Attorney Charles E. Ford -- spent several hours in the funeral parlor, sitting and talking with "Jimmy's" relatives and greeting mutual friends as they entered.

Old Time Recalled

Out in the anteroom, after a final look at "Jimmy," many old friends, some in crisp new business suits and a few in leather jackets gathered and talked the small talk that hides emotion.

For many, the last visit to "Jimmy" became an occasion to greet other friends unvisited for years. Words like "Where have you been you old rascal?" flashed several times across the room.

But, as one small, thin-haired man in Navy peacoat said:
"The old days are over, Mac."