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# James A. Vitale, served as mayor of Beverly for three terms; at 62

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BEVERLY - James A. Vitale, who served as Beverly's mayor for three terms in the late 1960s and early '70s and later became executive director of the South Essex Sewerage District, died Thursday in Beverly Hospital, reportedly of a heart attack. He was 62.

He was a lifelong resident of Beverly and attended Beverly schools. Mr. Vitale graduated from the University of New Hampshire, where he majored in engineering, and from the University of New Mexico, where he studied civil engineering.

For a number of years he was in the construction business with other members of his family. He later operated a construction firm of his own.

One morning in 1967 his daughter Theresa, then 11 years old, asked him "Why don't you run for mayor, Daddy?" He did, and won by 1,200 votes over challenger Herbert F. Grimes, to become the first mayor of Italian ancestry elected to the office in Beverly, which has a large Italian-American community.

Mr. Vitale, a Democrat, was both a colorful and controversial mayor. A man with much personality and of almost constant laughter, he loved to work the crowds.

During his first mayoral term, he lashed out at the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority for not providing adequate service to Beverly and said the city should get out of the organization.

He also called for the hiring of 10 additional police officers for the city police force and proposed that the city build and display a replica of the first Navy ship commissioned by George Washington. Beverly is known as the "Birthplace of the American Navy."

In early 1969, he gained much public attention when he and Police Chief Edward Aucone were placed under 24-hour guard when bullet holes were found in the sides of their homes. They had been receiving harassing and threatening phone calls in the days before the shooting incidents.

Facing his first reelection bid, Mr. Vitale lost in 1969.

Vitale retook the mayor's office



JAMES A. VITALE

again in 1973 and won his third term in 1975.

Before his first election to mayor and after his final term, he served as a city alderman.

After his final term as mayor, he became director of the Beverly Housing Authority in 1978.

He worked for Rep. Nicholas Mavroules in the early 1980s as a housing specialist. Yesterday, Mavroules pointed to Mr. Vitale's "extensive background in housing" as his qualification for the job. Mr. Vitale worked in Mavroules' Salem office.

"I had enormous respect for him. He was always straight with people," Mavroules said.

For the past four years, Mr. Vitale has been executive director of then South Essex Sewerage District, which serves Beverly, Salem, Peabody, Danvers and Marblehead.

Mr. Vitale was an Air Force veteran of World War II.

He leaves his wife, Jeanne E. (Lussier); a son, James L.; three daughters, Theresa P., Christina M. and Gina L. Vitale, all of Beverly; two brothers, Michael Vitale of Beverly and Patsy Vitale of Hampstead, N.H.; a sister, Theresa Vasile of Beverly; and several nieces and nephews.

A funeral Mass will be said at 10 a.m. Monday, Sept. 15, in St. Mary's Star of the Sea in Beverly. Burial will be in St. Mary's Cemetery, Beverly.

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