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The last two papers I have done for Athenaeum were on the State of Kentucky' educational system as it relates to the local economy and the last one was on gun control. I decided it is time to lighten up and tonight I am simply going to offer some recollections and observations as a result of my involvement in the state and local government in the political system.

I was drawn to the law very early in my life and as a result was drawn to the political system. When I was a child, the City of Dawson Springs had its own court, jail and police force, as well as various constables. All the major offices were usually occupied by the people in Madisonville, although by the time I was in high school we had elected sheriffs and county judges from Dawson Springs. My first activity in a political race was supporting the local grocer for sheriff, which meant that I went from door-to-door handing out campaign cards and stood at the precincts on election day and handed out cards to voters who were overwhelmed by poll workers while trying to get to and from the voting booth.

It was here that I first got to observe the practice of chain voting. People who bought votes in those days were usually able to verify that their money was well spent. What would happen is that a worker would go in and vote very early but when he left the voting booth the paper he dropped in the ballot box was a blank sheet of paper and he would have folded up the actual ballot and hid it on his person before he left the booth. Then the person whose vote was bought was given a marked ballot to take in to vote and in order to

receive their pay had to return with an unmarked ballot to the precinct worker before receiving his money or whiskey.

I was raised in a Republican household which sort of made me an outcast in Hopkins County; however, my family was registered Democrat in order to vote in local races; but, we were pretty much outsiders when it came to presidential races.

After graduating from high school, I briefly went to work for the Courier-Journal in Louisville, who offered to pay my tuition at U of L if I took the courses they selected; however, living in a hot YMCA in downtown Louisville in the middle of the summer lost its appeal very quickly to me and I returned home to look for work for the summer. My family had supported Clarence Maloney for the State Senate and Mr. Maloney was kind enough to put me to work with the Department of Highways. I don't know if you remember Senator Maloney, but at that particular time, our senatorial district was made up of Hopkins and Christian counties, and there was a gentleman's agreement that the counties took turns on who served in the Senate. I think perhaps Frank Bassett was the last Senator from Christian County who served under that agreement and Freddie Nichols was the last Senator in Hopkins County to serve under that agreement, as a result of redistricting the agreement was eventually abandoned.

This is the only job I ever held where the only admonitions directed at me were for me to slow down, take it easy and make the job last longer. The signs along the highway that said "Slow, men working" were absolutely correct. Most of the men I worked with were probably not able to work very hard. They were usually retired deputy jailers or deputy sheriffs or other courthouse personnel who

could no longer get county jobs. I particularly remember leaving Madisonville one day with two old gentlemen with a load of cold patching, which is blacktop used to fill holes. I recall specifically going from Madisonville to Morton's Gap to Nortonville to White Plains where we took a two hour lunch and all along the trip we would hit potholes that would almost knock you off the seat, and I would point out that that might be a good place to deposit some of this cold patching and their response was "We've got to make this last all day." The two old gentlemen visited various political friends around the county after we went to White Plains, came back to Nortonville and then over to Dawson Springs and then started out from Dawson Springs on Highway 109 North toward the community of Beulah, and suddenly our time was running low and we hit a slight wave in the road. We stopped immediately, placed all of the load of cold patching we had on the spot and the last time I was through that area, that road still had a big bump in it.

When I got out of the Army, I returned to Murray State in 1956 and there was a presidential and senate election underway and I did some work locally with the Republican party. Much to everyone's surprise, not only was John Sherman Cooper elected to finish the term of Alben Barkley, but Thurston Morton beat Earl Clements, who was then the Majority Whip of the U. S. Senate under the leadership of Lyndon Johnson, and I would point out that this is the same post that Wendell Ford now holds, which I think might run some risk for him. By 1959, I had been active in student government and was president of the student government when I was contacted by Wilson Wyatt, who at that time was running for Governor and after meeting and talking with

him several times, I was impressed with him and thought he would make a good Governor and agreed to work for him. I naively thought things were going pretty good until I got a wire from Wilson early one morning telling me that he had made an agreement with Bert Combs to run as a team with him running as Lieutenant Governor. Unfortunately, the wire did not reach me before the Courier-Journal did. I liked the program that the new team had outlined and continued to work with them.

I would meet with Wyatt and travel around the area with him and often did the same with Combs. You must keep in mind that Harry Lee Waterfield was the candidate who was opposing the Combs-Wyatt team and had strong ties with Murray and, in fact, ran pretty well in Calloway County. To give you a picture of how political our educational system was at that time, Ralph Woods, who was the President of Murray State, secretly wanted Bert Combs to win because he knew that was the only way to get anything done for education. However, with Happy Chandler in the Governor's Mansion, the President of a university could not afford to be seen talking to Bert Combs. Therefore, in order for them to get together, Bert and I met in a restaurant at night in Murray and then we walked around campus in such a path to avoid running into anyone and got him to the back door of Oak Hurst, the President's home, which had all outside lights turned off, so that a future governor and a president of a state college could discuss the plans for the future.

On another occasion, it was decided that Combs and Wyatt and possibly John Breckinridge would all appear on a panel on Paducah television, which was in its infancy at the time, and it was decided that the interview would go much better if we had friendly questioners. We

decided then to limit the interview to Combs and Wyatt so Bert Combs, Wilson Wyatt, Tommy Chandler, who is now a Circuit Judge in Webster County, and I met in a hotel room in the old Irving Cobb Hotel and sat there on the side of the bed and each candidate told us which questions they wanted to be asked, which we obliged them in doing.

No one can talk about traveling with Wilson Wyatt without talking about Fred Tucker. Fred was probably the wildest driver I have ever ridden with and he is the type guy of who was always talking with his hands, taking both hands off the wheel, looking back, turning around and generally scaring you to death, if you paid any attention. One night Fred was driving a station wagon and Wilson and I were in the back talking and all of a sudden we started bouncing all over the place and we looked out the window and then looked at each other. We were sitting in the middle of a corn field. Fred had missed the turn. The best Fred Tucker story I know is the one when he had wrecked the station wagon and shattered the windshield. He decided he could finesse this and so he carefully cleaned out all the broken glass so that you could not tell that the glass had been broken. He then went to pick up Wilson in the morning and Wilson got in the car, opened up his Courier-Journal and as Fred took off, suddenly the paper was wrapped all over Wilson's face. Wilson turned and said "Fred, is there a problem?." He was always unflappable.

On the primary election night I was at the headquarters in Louisville and Robert Martin, who headed the Combs' campaign before the merger, was heading up things that night and keeping count of the incoming vote. This was on the fourth floor of the Seelbach before air conditioning and Bob had a big desk sitting at the end of the hall and

anyone who knows Bob Martin, especially in that time period, you would know that he is a man who probably weighed well over 300 pounds and the headquarters and hallways were crowded and Bob did not have a dry stitch on him and was dripping everywhere he went. I also observed that night bellhops walking up and down the hallway with trays covered with fifths of liquor. Fairly early in the night for elections in that era, it became apparent that Combs and Wyatt had won and the celebration ensued. As a matter of fact, I observed a former Governor walking down Fourth Street waving a fifth of whiskey in one hand with his other arm around a young lady celebrating the victory. Without interstates, the trip from Louisville to Murray was a long one, so luckily since the returns came in early enough Wilson Wyatt decided to go back to his home and gave me his suite so that my friends and I could stay overnight and make the trip later.

The following summer I worked at Pennyrile Park while looking for better employment. Also during this time I worked part-time in Louisville for the State Democratic Headquarters, which was trying to elect Jack Kennedy, President and Keene Johnson, Senator. Smith Broadbent was Chairman and we all knew that we did not have a chance in Kentucky with a Catholic in 1960. At the time, Keene Johnson was fairly old and each time he visited the headquarters, he would re-introduce himself to each member of the staff. His appearances had to be scheduled around his various naps during the day.

For the Jefferson Jackson Day Dinner fund raiser, Senator Bob Kerr of Oklahoma and former President Harry Truman appeared as speakers. Mac Sisk, who was from Dawson Springs, was Wilson Wyatt's

PR man and Mac arranged for me to be present in a side room with them before a press conference where Mac, Wilson Wyatt, President Truman and I waited. This was a noon meeting; however, when I spoke with the President, who reportedly had a shot of bourbon every morning when he got up, it was obvious from his breath that he was enjoying Kentucky bourbon while visiting our state. After a few minutes, the ex-President went out and held a news conference and proceeded to give Richard Nixon hell.

After the Park job expired, I moved to Frankfort and initially went to work for the Veteran's Bonus as a claims examiner. All a claims examiner did was have a little list and checked to see that each claim had conformed to whatever you had to check on this list. It was not the type of job that you took home with you or had to worry about when you weren't working. If I recall correctly, we determined that the cost of paying the Veteran's bonus was \$2.31 in administrative costs for every dollar delivered to the Veteran. From there, I moved over to the Department of Personnel and was placed in the recruitment division. This was a pretty exciting period because we were trying to implement the merit system, but at the same time take care of political debts. It was a job that involved very long hours, including writing job descriptions for all the various positions of State Government and determining what qualifications were needed for the positions in addition to interviewing applicants.

However, the more interesting phase was the political phase, which sort of made me the contact man within the Personnel Department for the Governor's office. Most of the patronage problems were handled by Fontaine Banks, who was in the papers recently for raising a

mailroom clerk to a \$40,000 a year job in the Jones administration. However, Wendell Ford was my other contact in the Governor's office and he and I would work on whatever Fontaine could not accomplish. This also resulted in me doing some other odd jobs for the Governor's office.

There had been a few scandals early in the administration and in particular there had been one of the Governor's staff members, simply a "gofer", but who had been convicted of a felony and the Courier-Journal had run the story prominently and the Governor's office was kind of gun shy. Ned Breathitt had proposed that Skippy Wade be appointed to the Parole Board. This was considered pretty much a "done deal" until I got a call from the Governor's office and said they had a problem. It turns out that Skippy had checked the block on the application that indicated that he had been convicted of a felony. They were not quite sure what to do so I think they believed it would be better if someone outside of the Governor's office checked into this, rather than having people from the Governor's office quoted if things went badly. I simply called Skippy and talked to him and it turned out the only prison he had been in was a German prison as a prisoner of war and he had inadvertently checked the wrong block and after I reassured the Governor's office that he was okay, the announcement was made and he served on that Board for more than 20 years under several Governors.

Also, there was an incident where a black lady had written President Kennedy about discrimination in state employment and understanding how government works, Kennedy forwarded it to the Governor's office and the Governor's office forwarded it to me to



answer. I can't imagine how disappointed that lady was when she had written Jack Kennedy and gotten a reply from Paul Turner.

Throughout my time in Frankfort, I kept a key to Wilson Wyatt's private office and was asked in my spare time to go over nights and on weekends and use his office to make calls around the state to political supporters, since Wilson intended to either run for Governor or Senator. At the time, I was hoping he would run for Governor; however, he chose to run for Senator which worked out better for Hopkinsville which meant that Ned got to run for Governor, which calls my attention to a discussion of our present congressman. The next day after the primary was over, Carroll Hubbard contacted me and wanted to join up with the Combs-Wyatt team and proceeded to hang around Frankfort after the election and then attempted to establish a political base in Calloway or Graves County and wound up settling on Graves County. He wanted to be the Representative for the First Congressional District in the Young Democrats Association. At that time I was staying at my grandmother's residence in Dawson Springs and she was living over here. I started getting calls from all of the leaders in the First District asking me to run and technically at that time, Hopkins County was in the Second District. It was not that they wanted me, it was that they wanted to block Hubbard, so I agreed to it and used my grandmother's address in Hopkinsville and was unanimously elected to the job that did nothing.

After Wyatt was in the Senate race, one morning I received a call from Carroll Hubbard telling me that if Harry Lee Waterfield did not run that he was going to support Wyatt. That call came at about 9:00 a.m. At about 11:00 I got a second call from Hubbard saying that it

was a matter of principle and he did not care whether Harry Lee ran or not, he was going to support Wyatt. I immediately phoned Wyatt's office and told them it was definite that Harry Lee would not be running. After that phone call, Terry McBrayer came by my office and we went down to the cafeteria and had lunch and after lunch decided to walk over and see what was going on in the House since the Legislature was in session. When we got over there, there was Carroll Hubbard working on the House Floor and wearing a big Harry King Lowman button. Harry King was running against Wyatt at the time and had given Carroll a job during the lunch hour.

Probably one of the most memorable meetings I ever attended occurred during this period was a strategy session held in the Lieutenant Governor's mansion on a Saturday afternoon. At the meeting, along with Wyatt, was Combs and Ed Pritchard, Doc Beachman and a few other advisors. I was seated with Pritchard in the middle and Combs on one side and me on the other and being that close to Pritchard could be dangerous at that time, if any of you recall his size, especially if you got between him and the refreshments. What I observed was that on most issues Combs would generally turn around to Pritchard and say, "Perfessor, what do you think?" Combs relied heavily on Pritchard throughout his administration. It was determined at that point that Harry King Lowman would be ignored and the race would be run against Happy Chandler who was not a candidate. Harry King Lowman, as Speaker of the House, was a very egotistical type fellow and was always wobbling his head up and down, sort of like his head was not tied on very well to his body. He always carried a big briefcase with him, which Freddie Nichols said contained only the

current day's copy of the Courier-Journal and a tobacco pouch. In any event, shortly thereafter, Harry King decided he had a heart condition and withdrew. However, before we adjourned the meeting at the Lieutenant Governor's mansion that afternoon, Bert got up and took the floor and said the first man who talks to a reporter when we leave here is a "shitass". Sure enough the lead story on the Sunday Frankfort State Journal the next morning was the meeting at the Lieutenant Governor's mansion.

I left state government shortly after that and went to law school, which is what I had always wanted to do. I was further motivated by the fact that in the short two years I was there, I was moved from a newcomer to a position as an assistant director of a division. This meant that if I made another move, I would serve at the pleasure of the Governor and would not be subject to any merit system appointments. I had observed the executives who had come back after the previous administration and who would leave again if they supported the wrong person. I didn't want to live that way.

I have not seen Wilson Wyatt much since then. I have talked to him on a few occasions and the last time I talked to Combs, he told me that Wilson was staying largely on his farm over in Shelby County and was still doing very well. I did visit him in his home in Louisville a time or two and had dinner with him one Sunday there, but did not see him as much as I later saw Combs, who, of course, made another run for the Governorship. Combs was also very active in the practice of law and as a matter of fact, when we were on different sides of the Hopkinsville Cable case, lunch was brought in to us up at City Hall. While we were eating and I told Bert then the story he had not known

but suspected. I told him that his father used to come see me and usually have a little mountain girl with him and would come in and sit down in my office and say, "I am the Governor's Pappy and this little girl needs a job." I would call either Wendell Ford or Fontaine Banks and that girl usually got a job. Combs said his Daddy never mentioned anything about that because he would have made him stop had he known it, but he said he did suspect it.

The last time I talked with Bert was about a mutual client who was a good friend of his and a good friend of mine. We were on the phone together about an hour going over the client's case but then he was also thanking me for the work I did in the campaign for his administration. However, I cannot help but think that Ned Breathitt had refreshed his memory, realizing that the number of people Combs deals with, it is unlikely that he would remember his college campaign workers.

I still enjoy keeping up with politics and playing a quiet role in the background. I think the last thing I would want to be is a candidate for office. My last official role in a political campaign was that I was campaign manager of the Fall election of the Mayor of Hopkinsville and the Sheriff of Christian County. The Mayor lost to a Republican for the first time and the Sheriff was later indicted and convicted, so I have not taken any official roles since then. However, becoming involved is interesting and I would urge all of you to become involved. Alben Barkley has stated that a politician thinks of the next election and a statesman thinks of the next generation. I am afraid we have only politicians in Congress now. But remember that in a Democracy, you always get the government you deserve.