

"Tell them I lied"

Bill Dodd, a real friend until he died, tells the story pretty much as it happened. The final point, "Tell them I lied," has become famous....but it was reported by me to all our friends, not Dodd. He places himself in the governor's suite when that happened, but in fact, only Mr. Louie Roussell was present. The governor was seated behind his desk studying the Racing Form, since he was addicted to horse bets. He would bet every horse running in every race on a given day to make sure he had winners. One small detail: I didn't write the letter to the theater owners about lifting the amusement tax; it was Earl who wrote the letter and I promoted it by making copies and sending it to theater owners over the state.

There was no XEROX in those days so I took the original letter to the office of a Clerk of Court in New Orleans who were first to have such duplicating equipment which ran through water much like old film was developed. I was a young 29 year old when we sent the letter around, hardly established sufficiently to be believed if I wrote the letter myself. Candidate Earl wrote the letter. Mrs. Evelyn Lockhart, his trusted secretary, typed the letter and he signed it during the campaign. It was a funny incident. I was pissed because I was missing a \$15,000 fee if it passed, as the fee was conditional on passing. I got nothing. Absolutely nothing in advance. It was then and there I broke with him in my own mind and heart. I repaid him in the Democratic Convention later, after his election, when Camille and I stole the Louisiana Delegation to the Convention from him while he and Mrs. Long were at the horse race track, while he was thinking he had the delegation for Senator Kefauver of Tennessee. After the latter incident of stealing the delegation from him, we never again spoke until he was trying to run for another term, which was forbidden by law. He came to me and asked me for my help. I told him where to go and a few other things. He later tried to make up with me by sending me cantaloupes he sent from the Pecos Valley where they are so sweet, when he was on a wild tour filled with antics of an insane man. He sent them by Railway Express (now extinct) "Collect." I had to pay the freight!!!

When I was a hot "celebrity on the stump speaking tour, he wanted me to run for Attorney General when Camille turned it down for low pay and a big family. I turned it down because my mother and your mother asked me not to do. I knew I could win because I would have been on his ticket and he was as strong as garlic, and later defeated 5 candidates in the first primary. It was good that I didn't accept; I would have been elected instead of Jack Gremillion, but I think I would have been impeached because I would not have gone along segregation in the schools in defiance of the Supreme Court Brown decision. He hounded me to run for Congress against incumbent T.A. Thompson, but again Mama and your mother asked me not to do and, frankly, I really didn't want to run, leave home so much while we were raising our young children. But I knew that I would win if I ran. Remember, The 7th District was my home, and I was naturally better known there than anywhere else. I had just come off the stump with Earl and was known for that and the TV talks for him. Your mother and I felt that the job took two of us to raise our family.

Earl ran for Congress (8th District, his home district) when his term ended as governor in 1960, and he proved to still be a crazy but wise politician and gave away little fingernail files that had his ad for congress on one side and on the other was an ad for electing JFK for president. He knew the wave was coming and Camille and I were organizing for JFK for a sweep. Remember the Crowley Rice Festival had just happened in 1959 and the 135,000 crowd was convincing, since it was the largest political rally in Louisiana history. He wanted to be in on the sweep, and was. He died right after the election which he won for Congress, in his bed, at the old Bentley Hotel in Alexandria. I went to the huge funeral he was given. A funny little saga in my life. Love to all. dad