

Potential Senate Candidate Scott Traces Theses, Actions To Lineage

By HOWARD WHITE
Burlington Times-News

BURLINGTON — Early in the administration of W. Kerr Scott as governor he found an opportunity to tell civic clubs in the state that they weren't doing anything but eating and, consequently, too many projects were being overlooked.

That made a lot of civic club members mad, and some of them still haven't gotten over it. But late, as Scott saw how his comment had brought blasts to him from all sections of the state, he told a group of intimate friends: "That worked just like I hoped it would. I got some of them mad now, and I bet a lot of places

are going to see more civic activity than they've ever known before. These people who are mad are going to show me that I'm wrong, which I am."

Alamance County residents — and most everyone in the state — are wondering today if this type of strategy used by Kerr Scott with civic clubs again is being used as he goes about the state, in his words, "testing the thinking" of the people. Many people believe Scott is running, faster now for the U. S. Senate nomination than his favorite pack of beagle hounds, and he just isn't saying so officially. There are others, however, who will not be surprised at anything that comes from him when he does disclose his intentions. He's built a reputation, while seeking or holding public office, of pulling surprises.

But whether or not Scott actually does enter the Senate race he is back in the public's eye again, after four full years as governor and following a few months on his Hawfields dairy farm near here where he has been "catchin' up on my haulin'," and where he tells most of his callers that he's "on relief."

While he isn't "hauling", he's making a average of four trips a week away from his farm to various sections of the state, then returning to answer his mail and return telephone calls. With a secretary employed, he's in business as he seeks out public opinion on his chances in next May's primary.

Scott's method of making his decision already has set a new pattern of political strategy for North Carolina, according to many observers, and there are found to be few people who look upon it with surprise. This is attributed to the pattern he has established generally in his public career. He is keen on pulling surprises, in doing things differently, and in being relatively sure of himself in whatever he undertakes.

Relatives of Scott don't hesitate to say that he has not formed his work, his life and thoughts by public service alone, however. They will point out that he comes about his actions quite naturally, because he shows where he has some strong personality and action characteristics of men and women of the past, people who are well established in his family history.

"When he makes a decision, or a comment, and finds himself on the short end of popularity; and when he stands up for what he believes in the face of it all, he's showing how much he is like his father," says Robert Hughes of Cedar Grove, a cousin.

There are others who say that his strong ambitions to succeed, once he has decided his course, reflect strong characteristics of his grandfather, Samuel W. Hughes, who founded Cedar Grove Academy in Orange County, later Hughes Academy, and who was one of the most learned educators in North Carolina in his day.

In politics, he resembles his grandfather's brother and nephew, Thomas Harvey Hughes and John Knox Hughes, both of whom served as sheriff of Orange County for near half a century in combined service.

His background, through several generations, shows that his ancestors leaned strongest toward farming and teaching professions, through there are a number of instances where an uncle, or cousin, whom he has often referred to in the past as "kissin' kin", entered medicine, business, or the ministry.

But, in actions, it is his father

whom he seems closest to resemble.

In the dedication of Scott Hall at N. C. State College last December, the following description was written of Robert Walter Scott, his father, for whom it was named:

"Robert Walter Scott (1861-1929) was not only a good farmer, but he wished to see the whole South become a land of fertile soils, enterprising 'live-at-home' farmers, fine livestock, and happy country homes — and devoted a lifetime to working constantly for this realization. Appointed a member of the State Board of Agriculture by Governor Aycock in 1901, he served continuously under six succeeding governors. As a member of the Legislature, (he served two terms in the Senate and five terms in the House) he put through the bill for the building of Patterson Hall at State College and put through the act requiring that the Commission of Agriculture and the State Board of Agriculture must be practical farmers. He believed that farmers should have more authority in state affairs. He served as the first president of the North Carolina Farmers' Convention and was among the first to

be recognized as a 'Master Farmer'."

When Kerr Scott began advocating the roads and schools bonds issue during the first General Assembly of his administration, there were several oldtimers in Alamance County, and in the state, who pointed to his resemblance of his father in his thinking.

"Course, it's Kerr's program," said the late Jim Covington of Hawfields, "but it's also the program his daddy worked for all his life, this thing of better schools and better roads."

And Kerr Scott, himself, often has told how much of an influence Governor Charles B. Aycock had upon his father.

Governor Aycock, in fact, came to the Hawfields community, spoke to the people, and visited in the Scott home. As a result of his visit, Robert Scott led the community in approving a special tax for their Hawfields school. This tax set up the school as a public institution and came in time for Kerr Scott to enter the first grade there. All the other Scott children previously had received private schooling. The Robert Scotts had their own tutor for their children, as well as for many other children in the neighborhood.

Miss Ella Anderson, who in 1915 became the second Mrs. Robert Scott some years after the death of Mrs. Scott, taught all the Scott children in private schooling and later in the Hawfields school.

Mrs. Scott still is active and resides in Burlington. She, also, still is known to all the children as "Miss Ella", as they knew her as a teacher and later as a stepmother.

In commenting on the days when the Scott children were growing in stature and in education, Mrs. Scott said of Kerr Scott:

"He, when just a youngster, knew what he wanted and went after it with all his might. In writing, for example, when he

thought he could write as well as I could, he would turn to some other subject and begin learning in that field just as energetically and with just as much determination."

Mrs. Scott, when asked for a brief description of her late husband, said:

"He always devoted himself to helping other people to make life worthwhile, in raising the community to a better standard of living. He carried out this pattern of action throughout his life. Along the way he had a great deal of critics, but they didn't seem to bother him too much when he felt he was right in what he was doing. I would say that Kerr is very much like him in his thinking."

One of the big debates in which Robert Scott was engaged — on the state and county levels — centered on the location of Highway 54, running from Graham to Chapel Hill. It was through his work and interests that the road was located as it is today, the state accepting the location above the proposal which had been sent it through Saxapahaw. Scott drew much fire for what he did, but he won. Today, there could be found no one, likely, who would not agree that it was a right decision.

Kerr Scott's strong interests in the muddy road and the rural church goes back to his early childhood. He often has told, as have the other Scott children, how they all would bundle up and walk the muddy or dusty road to church on Sunday. It was a "must" in the Scott household for the children to be in church on Sunday. All of the 11 children didn't have transportation, which made it necessary for those who didn't have a seat in the buggy to walk.

Robert Scott worked for improvements in this type of environment through all sections of the state before farm groups, and Kerr Scott has kept up the program through his public career. And while Robert Scott spoke

before and worked with farm groups, he also encouraged education strongly. There was much in the soil, he pointed out, which would not be of help to the farmer unless it received proper treatment. The farmer, also, would not benefit greatly unless he used recommended management standards.

No one ever questioned Robert Scott's sincerity in what he advocated. They could merely look at his family. As a farmer, he sent all of his children to college. He also showed, in the system he used with his sons in tending the crops, that management was of primary necessity.

Says Dr. S. Floyd Scott of Union Ridge, regarding his father:

"We always thought that the reason he did so much speaking for the Farmers Institute was because he wanted to get away from home and all of us children, though we know that wasn't the reason."

"But whether he was at home, or away, we had our jobs to do. Ed would do the plowing, Kerr would take care of the hay, and on down the line. I was boss, usually."

"And we worked hard. Colonel Dr. Scott still refers to his father usually as the colonel, a practice the boys adopted when they still were at home) seemed to instill in those around him a desire to accomplish. You didn't want to be mediocre when he was with you. He would let the best come out of you and not tolerate anyone not making the best of their opportunities."

Robert Scott, in his later years, became a candidate for Commissioner of Agriculture but was defeated by the incumbent, Major William Graham. That defeat made a lasting impression on him.

As time passed, the family tells how he looked upon Kerr as the son who most likely would accept a career in public service. On his death bed, Robert Scott

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THE SCOTTS, FATHER AND SON—Pictured above are the late Robert Walter Scott, left, and William Kerr Scott, former governor and expected-to-be candidate for the United States Senate. Mr. Scott said last week he would make his formal decision early in 1954 on whether to oppose the incumbent, Senator Alton Lennon. The elder Scott was active in North Carolina politics, too, serving successively under six governors as a member of the State Board of Agriculture and also served in the General Assembly.

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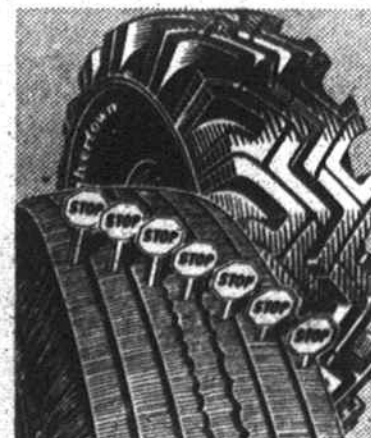
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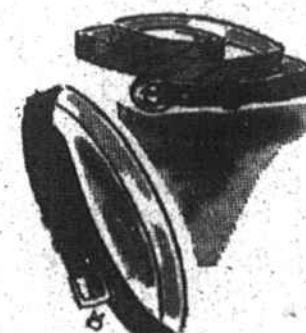
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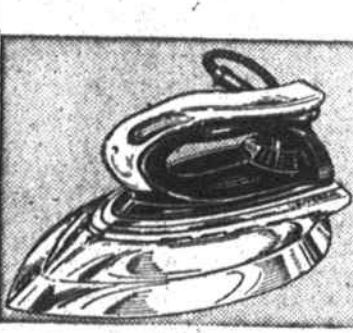
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