

Tatum: Gearing up for November fight

By ROBIN ADAMS
Chronicle Staff Writer

The talk in political circles was that Bill Tatum wouldn't make it through the May 8 primary. But he defied the odds and will run in November as one of four Democrats for the city-county school board.

But, says Tatum in a recent interview, he was always a serious contender.

"I was elated by the win," Tatum says. "And I viewed it as people seeing me as a viable candidate throughout the race."

"But I can't sit back on my victory because it wasn't a strong victory. I've got some work to do."

Tatum defines work as continuing his grassroots organization efforts, fundraising and contacting the candidates who did not survive the primary for their support and ideas.

"Now I'm going through some things that will make me a better candidate," Tatum says.

Tatum has built his primary platform around two issues -- better discipline in the schools and fairness. He says that while he doesn't believe in paddling children who misbehave, there has to be some solution to curb the rising discipline problem.

"We need to develop a task force to set a discipline policy that will be accepted by 80 to 90 percent of the parents," he says. "Discipline has gotten away."

The rest of his platform rests on stands for salary increases for teachers, against a prescribed school prayer (he believes in silent individual prayer) and against busing.



Surprisingly, Bill Tatum survived the May 8 primary, but he will be the first to admit that the road ahead is rocky (photo by James Parker).

"I don't want to go back to segregated schools," says Tatum, who voluntarily attended then predominantly white Reynolds High School before local court-ordered integration. "But let's cut down on some of the busing burden of black children. Let's have freedom of choice."

Eliminating the district in predominantly-black East Winston where the students are bused to the western part of the county in order to integrate the schools, the closing of schools in the inner city, and the lack of black contractors doing business with the school system are other concerns that need to be addressed, Tatum says.

But Tatum's concern for issues affecting the black community, his involvement with the Black

Leadership Roundtable Coalition and his stance against the city-county \$35 million bond referendum last fall have given him the label of a "black" candidate -- one who talks about black issues and who says he intends to work for those black issues if elected to the board.

Having that label has only made him work harder, he says. "If I took an individual for what he says (about me), I wouldn't run," Tatum says. "But when people are saying I can't, that is my opportunity to strive ahead. When someone says I can't, then I try harder. Whites need to know that we have some real serious issues that need to be addressed."

"I know people would like to see me tone down

because it would help me get elected by white people. But I've had white people call and say they voted for me and will work for me in November."

The reason for that, Tatum says, is that he is an honest candidate.

"People can put trust in me," he says. "They can rely on me. I'm a hard-working individual and very aggressive towards getting ideas and doing the job. I see myself as a behind-the-scenes person and I don't want the glory. I'm not selfish."

That unselfishness is what Tatum feels will make

him the type of person who can work effectively with the other seven board members.

"I'm not going to change the board around," he says. "But I'm going with some innovative ideas. I can work with the board. I'm not a personality person."

But Tatum, who has run unsuccessfully before for the board of alderman and soil and water conservation district supervisor, knows that making it through the primary and actually winning the office are two different things.

"When I ran for alderman, please see page A12

Orphans to honor mom and dad

By ROBIN ADAMS
Chronicle Staff Writer

William and Sadie Peay never had any children of their own, but on Saturday night, the Peay's will be referred to as momma and daddy hundreds of times.

For 22 years the Peays were the superintendents of Memorial Industrial School, an all-black orphanage, and became parents to thousands of children.

On Saturday, June 16, at the M.C. Benton Convention Center, hundreds of the children who were often called Peay Girls and Boys will give thanks to Mr. and Mrs. William L. Peay, the school's superintendents from 1946-68.

"We have never gotten together as a group and told the Peay's thank you," said Verdell Hayes, who once lived at the orphanage. "This is our chance. We want to thank them for all the good things."

Once named the Colored Orphanage, Memorial Industrial School was established in the early 1920s. In 1923 it was taken over by civic clubs in the city and was moved from its location on Clemmons Road to a 425-acre farm in the Sawtooth Mountains, 11 miles from the city.

Memorial Industrial School was not a school for delinquents, but was a home for dependent and neglected children. Until 1960, the children attended school on the campus. Later they attended Carver Consolidated School, now Carver High School.

The orphanage was closed in 1970 and is now Horizons Residential Care Center for handicapped children.

Although many of them had to live with the stigma of being an orphan, Hayes said the family atmosphere provided by the Peays prohibited them from ever feeling alone or homeless.

"We were a family," Hayes said. "And you felt like you belonged."

"If a person felt like an orphan, it was probably in their own mind. Every opportunity was there for you. Kids were able to go to college and many turned out to be productive citizens."

Mrs. Peay, the more talkative one of the couple, said she and her husband tried to stress a family-like atmosphere, but she will be the first to admit that doing so was difficult.

"It was a challenge," Mrs. Peay said. "You had to go at it with an open mind. You just had to. Think about it this way: We did everything that a regular

household would do in those times, times one hundred.

"But it was fun. You had to know when to listen and be kind and when to pull in the reins."

The ability to pull in and hold firmly to the reins was a trait both Peays were known for.

"They were strict disciplinarians," said Betty Grace Dillard, who also lived at the orphanage. "You didn't play around. If you broke a rule, then you were in trouble."

And trouble, Dillard said, seemed to follow her.

"Verdell and I were good friends," Dillard said. "Verdell got about two spankings the whole time she was there and I got two spankings a week."

Mr. Peay added that discipline was a matter of teaching the children to be adults and teaching them to think and reason for themselves.

Only a small amount of time at Memorial Industrial School was spent disciplining children because most of it was spent tending to chores around the farm, cooking, cleaning and sewing. Mrs. Peay, herself a home economics teacher and a Bennett College graduate, took pride in making sure that each child had a new outfit every Easter and worked to make other clothing and draperies during the year.

To ask the Peays to list some of the more memorable moments at the school is more than can be bargained for.

"If we answer that, you would have to stay all afternoon and part of tomorrow," Mrs. Peay said.

She sums up the memorable moments by saying she and her husband had some good times and as a result have more children and "grandchildren" than most people could imagine having.

"A girl called long distance not too long ago and talked an hour," Mr. Peay said. "She wanted to tell us how well she was getting along. It was just like a child who had been home. They always want you to know that they are staying out of trouble, although sometimes that's not true."

Many of the Peay Girls and Boys left the home and went to college. Some are teachers and ministers; some have master's and doctorate degrees; some died during war; some have seen better times.

And Saturday, many of them will come together to say thank you to mom and dad.

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