

Lt. Whitener Served His Country Well

It was early during the dark days of World War II when Basil Whitener left his bride of only a few weeks, his thriving law practice and the opportunity to hold office for a second term as a Representative in the State Legislature to take his place alongside his fellow Americans in battle.

Whitener chose to serve in the way he felt was the most important. Not the safest or most comfortable way, nor even the way more beneficial to his future as a civilian public servant, but right in the middle of the enemy-infested waters of the North Atlantic, the Caribbean and the Mediterranean.



LT. BASIL WHITENER

As an Ensign, Basil Whitener was assigned to the Armed Guard Service of the Navy. On his tours of duty in the North African and Italian war centers, he observed the peoples abroad and wrote letters home that were full of his deep sympathy for the sufferings and privations being borne by those who lived in the war torn areas.

Whitener made it a point not to lose contact with the folks from home who were crossing the same path. Although he sometimes didn't hear from his family and friends, who had remained in Gaston County for months, he wrote regularly. Like all of our courageous young men, Whitener longed for the day he could come home, and gave himself wholeheartedly to his duty in order to bring that day to pass.

As a Lt. (jg) acting as Navy Gunnery Officer of the SS Louisa M. Alcott, Whitener received a Commendation from the Secretary of the Navy, which reads as follows:

"The Department has been informed of your outstanding devotion to duty as Commanding Officer of the United States Armed Guard aboard the USS Louisa M. Alcott during action against enemy aircraft while engaged in convoy operations August 13, 1943. With the guns completely manned within a minute after the general alarm was sounded, your Armed Guard opened fire, fore and aft, port and starboard, as hostile aircraft converged and covered the entire convoy.

"Constantly alert to the enemy's strategy of coordinated attack by high-level bombers attempting to draw your fire torpedo planes came in from the low lying sun to strike at close range, your crew forced the hostile planes to change course and veer away while the guns of the SS Louisa M. Alcott scored numerous direct hits in a concerted barrage which downed several enemy planes.

"For your courageous initiative under fire, and the excellent combat discipline of the Armed Guard throughout this action you are hereby commended."

Another job well done, Lieutenant Basil L. Whitener returned home and has since continued to be a fighter, in like manner, for all that he believes is right.

He has continued his interest through the years in military affairs, and now holds the rank of Major in the Air Force Reserve.

The People Speak

One of the things that has characterized the service of Basil Whitener in the Congress has been the personal attention which he has given to the problems of his constituents.

The many expressions of thanks which Whitener has received from the people he has assisted in his district give some idea of the fine service he is rendering to the 10th Congressional District.

The people speak, and here are excerpts from some of their letters to Whitener.

"Just a note at the beginning of a new year to commend you upon the fine service you rendered the people of North Carolina and the citizens of the United States as a whole in 1963."—J.D.M.

"We certainly have admired your 'policies' in Congress and shall look forward to giving you full support in the upcoming elections."—R.E.H.

"I think that you have in this matter exhibited gallantry beyond the normal call of duty, and I am most grateful for your interest and efforts."—A.T.H.

"I want to thank you for your efforts in our behalf. I know you spent a great deal of time on this bill, with our company and our employees in mind."—J.A.H.

"Your prompt response proves you are on the job with immediate remedies for what ails those who call for remedies."—L.C.G.

"Your letter of January 27, 1963, gives us exactly the information we asked for and we appreciate very much your going to so much trouble to help us with this problem."—C.D.F.

"Thank you for your cooperation in this matter. I really do appreciate all you did for us. You shall always be remembered by all of us."—D.C.F.

"Again we want to thank you for your interest and continued efforts on our behalf. We sincerely appreciate all that you have done for the people of our community and vicinity."—G.F.

"Certainly you have always stood high on my list and my support is with you."—A.J.E.

"I only wanted to thank you for supporting the National Science Foundation and the Summer Science Training Program for high-ability secondary school students."—R.D.

"On behalf of myself and family, I wish to thank you for the most gracious service you rendered us."—C.R.B.

"Your efforts in getting passed the one-price cotton in the form of the wheat-cotton bill is greatly appreciated by our industry, and I wanted to take this

method of thanking you personally for your efforts and attention."

—J.D.M.

"On behalf of all my family, I would like to thank you and your

office staff for the courtesies shown to us on our recent visit to Washington. With such a busy schedule, we appreciate your taking time to show us around."—C.M.

Whitener Served His Fellowman

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sion Act of 1962 were under debate).

"I want to join my distinguished colleague in the remarks he is making today and commend him

Whitener Record

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colleagues feel that I can be of further service." He has served on several special assignments for the District Committee and is chairman of two of its more important sub-committees. Under Whitener's leadership, one of these committees is credited with saving the tax payers several millions of dollars through its investigation of an ill-advised program which was about to get underway in the Nation's Capitol.

DENOUNCES CASTRO

Whitener was one of the first Congressmen to urge the use of direct action to curb the lawless antics of Cuba's Fidel Castro. As early as June, 1958, even when a favorable attitude prevailed among Americans with Castro, Whitener is recorded in the Congressional Record as stating:

"It has always been my thought that this country should carefully avoid interference with internal affairs of any other sovereign nation. I still adhere to this view, but the situation in Cuba constitutes a direct attack upon the safety and security of the people of our nation by a band of outlaws. It should not be tolerated." Yes, the tall Congressman from North Carolina has made his mark as a leader in Washington.

Volumes could be written on his accomplishments as Congressman, and the record has only commenced.

With the established reputation, with eight years of seniority as a member of Congress and with the vast native ability and enthusiasm that he possesses, it is apparent that the Whitener record of outstanding leadership must continue to serve the people of our district and our nation. The leadership of Congressman Whitener must be recognized in a tangible way in the general election when we go to the polls and give him a resounding vote of confidence. We urge your help without timidity because of our conviction that when we support Congressman Basil L. Whitener we will be supporting our best interest as citizens of a free America.

as I have done so often for his continuing fight in behalf of the textile workers of this Nation. I think all of us who have served with him here can testify to the fact that he has been unrelenting in his demand that we retain the textile industry in a healthy economic condition." (Remarks of Congressman Robert W. Hemphill (D-SC) in the House of Representatives on August 27, 1963, during debate on textile import situation)

"Mr. Speaker, I want to pay the gentleman from North Carolina the highest tribute I know for delivering here this morning an historical paper that calls to the attention of America the great occasion that is taking place in the State of North Carolina in this tercentenary event." (Remarks of Congressman Herbert C. Bonner (D-NC) in the House of Representatives on March 25, 1963, in connection with the 300th anniversary of the State of North Carolina.)

"I want to associate myself with the remarks of the able and learned gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. Whitener. I am impressed by the clear-cut and penetrating statement he is making, just as I have been impressed with the constructive nature of his services here." (Remarks of Congressman James C. Wright (D-Texas) in the House of Representatives on July 16, 1958, during debate on H.R. 3, a bill to discourage further centralization of power in a strong central government to the exclusion of the several states and the people)

"I want to commend the gentleman from North Carolina for his excellent statement concerning the doctrine of delegated and reserved powers. The gentleman is an eloquent exponent of the states' rights principle which is based on the concept of reserved powers. I am pleased he has called attention to the fact that bankruptcy is a part of the delegated powers in the Constitution." (Remarks of Congressman Richard Poff (R-Va) in the House of Representatives on August 25, 1958, during debate on Federal bankruptcy bill)

"Mr. Speaker, may I commend the gentleman from North Carolina for bringing to the attention of this body this historical event." (Remarks of Congressman James T. Brophy (R-NC) in the House of Representatives on March 25, 1963, in connection with the 300th anniversary of the State of North Carolina)

Whitener Sought Justice For All As Solicitor

"Basil Whitener's first speech to a jury at the courthouse this week sounded more like a veteran's smooth plea than a beginner's attempt." This is an opinion expressed by Stewart Atkins on October 27, 1937, in his daily column "Through the Keyhole" in the Gastonia Gazette.

Since his law practice began at the age of 22 years in Gastonia, he has continued to be recognized as a lawyer of outstanding ability in the courtroom and in the office. His character has never been questioned.

Upon his return from Military Service in 1945 to his home community of Gastonia, he re-opened his law office.

He has maintained an active

interest in judicial reform legislation, court procedure improvement and statutory revision.

Membership in the American Bar Association, the Judicial Conference of the 4th Federal Circuit, the North Carolina Bar Association, N. C. State Bar, Inc., and the Gaston County Bar Association, and the active interest which he manifests in these professional groups, further evidences his broad interest in worthwhile professional programs.

He has served on several statewide committees of the North Carolina Bar Association. His fellow attorneys in Gaston County selected him as president of their county association in 1950. They

also commended him in a telegram urging Governor Umstead to appoint Basil Whitener to the U. S. Senate which appeared in May 14th, 1954, Charlotte News as follows:

"... and we urge his appointment as one fully capable of representing the State of North Carolina and all its people.

OUTSTANDING

"He is an outstanding Democrat, possessor of keen intellect, industrious, a gentleman of sterling character, capable, conversant with national and international affairs, and he has overwhelming support from all over Western North Carolina and is known throughout the state as a young man of learning, ability,

unquestioned character, and a loyal Democrat."

From 1946 until 1956, Whitener served as Solicitor of the populous 14th District composed of Mecklenburg and Gaston Counties. He brought dignity to the office which he held and earned the respect of those who saw him at work.

Some of the laudatory comments of presiding judges of the Superior Court of North Carolina have been recorded in the newspapers of Western North Carolina.

Judge Wilson Warlick was quoted in the Charlotte News as saying Whitener did not "prosecute to the limit cases of minor

importance in which there is scant evidence. The Solicitor does not waste the court's time and the county's money unnecessarily."

Judge Frank M. Armstrong made the comment in Gastonia, as reported in the Gastonia Gazette, as follows: "Not only in this particular case, but in all his work since he became Solicitor, Basil Whitener has exhibited the true qualities and characteristics necessary for such a job. He has been faithful, honest, and diligent, and above all, quick and zealous to represent the State—fair and impartial, fearless and unequivocal. He has played no favorites. He treats all alike, the big and little, rich and the poor, high and low."