

DREW PEARSON:

Huey Long Family Back In Quiet Sort of Way

WASHINGTON, July 3.—It has been exactly ten years since this column exposed the Louisiana scandals, resulting in the imprisonment of Gov. Richard Leche and various members of the old Huey Long gang.

Today, the Long family and friends have staged an amazing comeback. Huey's brother, Earl, is Governor of the state. Huey's son, Russell, is United States Senator from Louisiana. So the other day I went back to Louisiana—just ten years after writing the first column on the Louisiana scandals—to see how the rebuilt Long machine is handling its comeback.

Things have changed a lot in ten years. The name in the Governor's mansion is still spelled "L-o-n-g," but the atmosphere is much different. It's calmer, less spectacular and far more serious.

Earl Long is giving the state such an even-keel administration that it's almost humdrum. The City of New Orleans, under young Mayor De Lesseps Morrison, is still rowing with the Long machine, but the row lacks the melodrama and bellicose pyrotechnics of Huey's day.

Most interesting development is the way many of the old Huey Long crowd have staged quiet comebacks. Seymour Weiss, former Democratic National Committeeman, who went to jail for income-tax evasion, is now running the Roosevelt Hotel in New Orleans and going out of his way to be a patriotic citizen. Everyone respects Seymour's quiet comeback.

LECHE RAISES FLOWERS

Governor Leche, who got ten years for taking bribes, is living on his farm near Covington and raising flowers. His garden is so unique that tourists pay 75c to visit it.

Dr. J. Monroe Smith, former president of Louisiana State University, who got thirty years for embezzling university funds, is dead now. But before he died he was given a chance, as rehabilitation officer at the state penitentiary at Angola, to help others who had suffered his misfortune.

Governor Long was criticized for giving Doc Smith this job, but when Doc got out of jail he was refused a real estate license, found himself unable to make a living, and plead with the Governor to send him back to the penitentiary where he could help rebuild others.

Dr. Smith knew something about the difficulty of staging a comeback, and thought he was qualified for this job, so the Governor appointed him. He died, however, before very long in office.

Then there was George Caldwell, who went to jail for stealing WPA materials and padding WPA payrolls. He is now the leading building contractor in Baton Rouge. Abe Shushan, who built the New Orleans Airport, is now back in the business of being an honest man. Monty Hart, of all those convicted, failed to stage a comeback. He committed suicide.

HUEY WAS HONEST

It was always my belief that Huey Long—and I knew him well—was honest. He soaked the big oil companies, taxed the utilities and squeezed campaign contributions out of all sorts of people. But the money went back into free schoolbooks, better roads and a network of bridges that have left a lasting mark on the state.

Huey's brother, Earl, is a quiet, easygoing farmer, just the opposite of his brother's high-strung, ripsnorting bundle of nerves which once made Louisiana the most spotlighted state.

Earl also has followed a soak-the-rich policy, induced his Legislature to pass a heavy tax against the oil companies, put through free lunches for all school children regardless of their means, and has increased Negro schoolteachers' pay from \$70 to \$200 a month if they have a B.A. degree.

"The only way to have compulsory education is with free books and free lunches," says Governor Long, who has no children of his own. "Kids can't study when they're hungry, and an awful lot of kids down our way just don't get enough to eat."

He referred to his nephew, Russell now United States Senator.

"In fact, every mistake I make Russell gets blamed for," continued the Senator's uncle. He has all the Huey's good points and none of his bad.

"Huey wanted money for power," explained Earl. "He never wanted it for himself. As for me, I don't need money because I don't care about power, and I'm retiring from this job when my term is up."

Those who know Governor Long say he means it, that he would rather be on his farm than in the Governor's mansion and that even now he spends every spare minute he can slip away from Baton Rouge on his farm.

I got into a discussion on farm methods with the Governor.

"A pig," he said, "won't put on weight if it's unhappy. And a pig that is kept in cramped, dirty quarters is unhappy. A pig likes to keep himself clean just as much as a human being. When you coop him up in a lot of filth, he just doesn't put on weight."

I told the Governor that I was going to quote him to my wife who was still irked at the ornate hog barn I had built featuring running water and upstairs duplex sleeping quarters. The Governor allowed that it would be almost worth a trip to Washington to see this, and we both agreed that womenfolk didn't really appreciate the importance of comfort and cleanliness in the life of a hog.

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