

# Huey Long Absorbed Fatal Fusillade in Disbelief

By ROBERT CAREY

BATON ROUGE, La. (UPI)—

In the space of six seconds on a hot night 30 years ago, the absolute ruler of the state of Louisiana fell in a fusillade of gunfire along the corridors of the towering State Capitol he built as governor.

"I'm shot," Huey Pierce Long said to no one in particular, and blood spread darkly across his shirt front. A slender young man in black-rimmed glasses, Dr. Carl Austin Weiss, was instantly shot down by Long's armada of bodyguards.

The physician, 29, was shot 61 times. Thirty wounds were found in the front of the body, 29 in the back and two in the head. Spent ammunition spilled from the riddled corpse onto the slick tile floor "like a handful of gravel" when it was carried away, a witness said.

Long raced from the Capitol and into the arms of Public Service Commissioner James P. O'Conner. "Jimmy, I'm shot,"

he said again. He could not believe it.

O'Conner testified later that Long said only one thing while they were driving to the hospital in O'Conner's car. "I wonder why he shot me."

That was Sept. 8, 1935. Thirty-one hours later he was dead.

**HUEY PIERCE LONG**, at 42, was the junior Democratic senator from Louisiana. "Kingfish" they called him; and behind the usually coarse language and hill-billy ways there dwelt a remarkable man.

He preached a modified form of socialism to the people. Power was his bread and meat. "Share our wealth," he said to those who were poor and hungry. And, "Every man a king but no man wears a crown."

At his death, he had a nationwide following.

He never forgot a friend or an enemy, associates said, and he had plenty of both. His social legislation had won for him the hearts of the little people, but others who resented his

hammer-handed political tactics hated him.

**THE NAME LONG** is still political magic in Louisiana.

Sen. Russell Long, Huey's son, is the majority whip in the Senate. Rep. Speedy O. Long, a distant cousin, serves in the House. Earl Long, Huey's brother, was twice elected governor of the state after his brother's death and was congressman-elect at his own death in 1960.

Most of the animosity toward Huey has vanished. A general aura of good feeling now sheathes his memory. No Louisiana politician in his right mind would have anything but good to say about the Kingfish today.

But in the 1920s, Long burst over Louisiana like an explosion. The state has never been the same since.

**BORN OF MODEST** circumstances at Winnfield, La., he hit the road as a traveling salesman in his teens. To save money, he stayed with rural families all over the state. He talked their language. They liked him, remembering him years later at the polls.

He whipped through a cram course at Tulane University Law School in seven months. He found a springboard in the Louisiana Railroad Commission, about the only state office a person didn't need to be 30 or 35 years old to get elected to.

Huey made it at 24. He tried for governor in 1924, missed, tried again in 1928 and won. At 34 he became the state's youngest governor and the first to come from beyond the pale of the power structure that had ruled Louisiana since Reconstruction days.

The establishment had lost control to a man who found his support in the backwoods with fire and brimstone speeches sprinkled with quotes from the Bible, which Huey knew by chapter and verse.

**THERE WAS NOTHING** in his speeches about the "Southern way of life," the "glories of the Confederacy" or any of the other generalities of Southern politicians.

Instead: "Where are the schools that you have waited for your children to have, that have never come? Where are the roads and the highways that you spent your money to build? Where are the institutions to care for the sick and disabled? Your tears in this country have lasted for generations. Give me a chance to dry the tears of those who still weep here."

Elected, he came through on his promises. He built new hospitals, more than 6,000 miles

of highways and bridges across every major river. He made school books free and slashed tuitions at the state's colleges so poor students could attend.

But he was rough. He threw out everyone he could.

He bragged in a speech that he dealt with the legislature "like a deck of cards." One remaining oppositionist threw a copy of the state constitution on the governor's desk. "I'm the constitution around here now," Long snapped back.

**WHILE HUEY** chopped and weeded among state employes and administrators, opposition in the legislature built against him. Impeachment was brought on 19 counts ranging from attempted bribery of legislators to singing in a cabaret in conduct unbecoming a public official.

But Huey beat it. Just when it looked like he would be convicted and removed from office, 15 members of the Senate announced they would not vote for conviction regardless of evidence because they considered the charges invalid. Overjoyed, the governor signed autographs,

"Huey P. Long, governor of Louisiana by grace of the people."

He ran for senator while still governor and was elected. He ran the state through a cronie whom he backed for election after he took the senate seat.

**HE HAD BEEN** in Congress but two days when banners appeared in Louisiana proclaiming "Long for President." The rest of the country might laugh, but Huey Long was deadly serious.

In the 1932 Democratic convention, he played an important role in securing the nomination for Franklin D. Roosevelt. But he and the president soon fell out over Long's "share our wealth" scheme.

Huey's plan was simple. All personal fortunes over \$7,000,000 would be confiscated and the remainder heavily taxed. All incomes would be limited to \$1,000,000 a year and the funds taken would be redistributed so that each family could have an automobile and a radio.

Economists later showed that such money gathered would not be near enough to buy all the

cars and radios, but it sounded good to the little fellow who didn't have either.

"Share the wealth clubs" boomed across the depression-strapped United States, and Roosevelt was worried about Long. Long said he might run on a third party ticket in 1936. He had helped elect a governor in Mississippi and a senator in Arkansas and could have been figured to cut deeply into Roosevelt's electoral total in the South.

**LONG'S PLAN** was to split the Democratic vote so badly in 1936 that Roosevelt would be defeated and then Long could capture the White House in 1940 when the country "was in a state of collapse" from a Republican administration.

No one gave Long much of a chance, but few laughed any more.

Then suddenly he was dead. The official version was that Dr. Weiss had shot Long because the senator had insulted his family and was gerrymandering Weiss' father-in-law, Judge Benjamin Pavy, out of office because of the judge's anti-Long views.

As far as it could be determined, Long and Weiss had never met.

Many questions remain unanswered. Two of the latest books on the subject draw opposite conclusions. One concludes that Weiss did it and the other hints he did not.