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Walter Raleigh Petteway Twice a Judge, Twice a Second Fiddler (1891-1964)



History chronicles that Sir Walter Raleigh, a favorite of his Queen, Elizabeth I, spearheaded a pre-1600 voyage to Roanoke Island off the coast of what is now North Carolina. That noble adventure spawned the still unresolved mystery of the Lost Colony. But that's another story. Long before the appearance of any foreign invaders, American Indians and West Indies natives discovered a prolific plant indigenous to that area of North America which could be smoked with not unpleasant effects. They called it tobacco (from the Spanish *tabaco* - a pipe used by the natives). It is not known whether or not Raleigh inhaled, but he is credited with introducing the weed to England. Someone has reported that men who have lasted 100 years say one of two things: either that they smoked and drank whiskey all their lives, or that neither tobacco nor spirits ever appealed to them.

His namesake, W Raleigh Petteway, born in a log house on the family farm near Jacksonville, Onslow County, North Carolina on June 7, 1891, was the 14th and last (Whew!) child of Lewis Sparkman Petteway and Sarah Catherine Petteway. For several generations, indeed as far back as the Revolutionary War, the Petteway family populated the remote corner of the Tarheel State. Onslow County is where the United States Marines landed in 1941 with the opening of Camp Lejeune. They're still there.

Our hero stayed down on the farm during his growing-up years. He completed his undergraduate work at Buie's Creek Academy, then he attended the University of North Carolina, receiving an A.B. degree in 1913. Before coming to Florida, he attended Columbia University for one year. His L.L.B. was earned at the University of Florida in 1915. Two years later, he returned to North Carolina long enough to marry a handsome lady (assuming that her portrait taken by Blakeslee-Klintworth some years later is a good likeness). She was Naomi Hocutt of Graham, N.C.

At age 24, Petteway began what Robinson's 1928 History of Hillsborough County called a "highly successful practice (of law)." In 1919, he became judge of Juvenile Court, serving 5½ years in that capacity. In 1925, he moved up the judicial ladder, taking office as judge of the Criminal Court of Record of Hillsborough County. That was the forum for trial of felonies and most misdemeanors, with the exception of capital offenses which were exclusively under the jurisdiction of Circuit Court.

For the duration of his judicial career - all in Tampa - Petteway carried on the practice of law. In that era, judges' salaries were so low that private practice was not prohibited unless, of course, some ethical conflict presented itself. He had the good fortune, it would appear, to locate his law office in, of all places, the Petteway Building. It was a prime location at 312½ Twiggs Street (second floor, no elevator, only stairway) at the corner of Twiggs and Florida. A popular cigar store was on the ground floor, serving sandwiches, snacks, soft drinks, and affording adventuresome patrons the challenge of pinball machines.

As early as 1916, W. R. Petteway shows up in local directories as a judge and attorney in the building bearing the family name. Owner of the office building and a pioneer in development of the downtown Tampa area was Gustavus A. Petteway, the judge's older brother. The latter detoured in Tampa in 1906, became President of a local bank, and a serious real estate entrepreneur until his death at 61 in his home at Crescent Apartments (an upscale residential address for many years) in 1936.

Over the years there were numerous well-known lawyers with offices at 312½ Twiggs St. These included: Donald McMullen and sons, Fred (who later practiced extensively in Tallahassee) and Neil (who became Circuit Judge in Tampa in 1960); C. Jay Hardee and son, C. J. Jr.; Sidney Brown; Robt. Carlton; Raleigh Barber; Joe Gillen (later Clerk of the Second District Court of Appeal at Lakeland); John G. Hodges (prior to his career as a Tampa Circuit Judge beginning in 1960); Lewis Petteway, the judge's nephew, had a law office there about 1936. Later on, he became Executive Director and General Counsel for Florida Public Service Commission in Tallahassee. Bayard Angle, the writer's great friend, still with almost a full head of steam at age 91 at this writing, was a tenant there in the early 30s. His rent, he tells me, was the princely sum of \$15.00 a month. The Petteway Building succumbed to a demolition crew's wrecking ball when the now-defunct Exchange National Bank Building needed room for expansion.

Judge Petteway soon acquired a reputation for being tough on convicted felons. As a result he earned the titillating sobriquet: "Put 'em away Petteway."

One story that might not bear repeating concerns the County Solicitor at the time. It seems, this individual, reportedly a hard-drinking, lusty fellow, had an alleged assignation at Tampa Terrace Hotel, a wonderful downtown landmark, with a waitress from a nearby eating establishment. At some point in the liaison, he was arrested for battery upon his enamorata. When Judge Petteway heard about the episode, he is said to have remarked: "Seems like my prosecutor needs a chastity belt."

Petteway devoted lots of his time and energy to civic, fraternal and church activities to an extent seldom seen in public officials. The Judge was an officer and leader in virtually every "joinable" organization including: Kiwanis, Boy Scouts, Florida Free Training School for Girls, Salvation Army, YMCA, Shriners, Knights of Pythias, and the list goes on. Most prominent was his zealous service to First Baptist Church of Tampa. His leadership in organizing the Fellowship (Men's) Bible Class in 1926 there was given special attention in a book by William E. Sherrill commemorating the 125th anniversary of the church entitled, "A Call to Greatness (1859-1984)." There can be no doubt that his religious faith was genuinely important to him - not merely a pose for political capital.

Thirty years after creation of the aforementioned Bible Class in Tampa, he was in Miami and the subject of a feature article in a newspaper there telling about what his religion meant to him. On Sundays, he could be found at Miami's Central Baptist Church

teaching a men's class. Although proudly Protestant, Judge Petteway probably believed in the Jesuit dictum: Pray to God as though everything depended on God, but do as if everything depended upon you.

An ambitious politician today needs what is often referred to as a "fire in the belly." In the less sophisticated times of 1936, probably no greater stimulus than a mild case of indigestion was necessary. At any rate, Judge Petteway was ready to take the quantum leap from the Hillsborough County Courthouse to the Governor's Mansion. In the first primary, competing with 13 other hopefuls, he was the top vote-getter, receiving the endorsement of many newspapers all over the state. The slogan on his political handouts was "All the Way with Petteway," and he made a particular point of telling voters that he was honest and could be trusted. The *Tampa Tribune* supported him wholeheartedly, but its "dignified and fair" coverage of both candidates in the runoff drew the plaudits of the *Miami News* in an editorial. A surge in the second primary carried Fred P. Cone of Lake City into the office by a 55,000 vote margin.

After losing his bid for the governorship, Petteway moved to Miami. He resumed the practice of law, establishing an office in the Congress Building. A decade passed. Then, undaunted by defeat in his first state-wide political venture, Petteway announced in 1946 that he would be a candidate for the Supreme Court of Florida to fill a vacancy created by retirement of Justice Armstead Brown. It turned out to be a case of déjà vu all over again. He finished second to Paul D. Barns of Miami, after building a 20,000 vote lead in the first primary over the ultimate winner. Judge Petteway's experience, in this writer's estimation, echoes somewhat that of J. Tom Watson of Tampa. Watson left office after two terms as Florida's Attorney General, then ran unsuccessfully for congress and the Supreme Court, then returned to legal practice. Special thanks is due Nancy Dobson, Executive Director of Florida Supreme Court Historical Society for graciously providing election results in both statewide races by Judge Petteway

In failing health in late 1964, he sold his home and business property in Miami, returning to his ancestral home state. After his death on Sept. 30, 1964, he was interred in Asheville next to his wife who pre-deceased him by two years.

Petteways, generally speaking, were fruitful. The Judge's marriage to Naomi had been *sine prole*. He left only a lifetime of usefulness and service. Not a bad legacy.

- *Morison Buck*

Afterword:

In this fast-moving world it is easy to lose our way and our ability to see where we are going. No man is so strong or self-sufficient that he can always see or know where he is going or how he will be able to meet the problems and bear the burdens that rise before him as road blocks from day to day. I could not face it with confidence without the security of my faith that God will help me work things out.

- *Judge W. Raleigh Petteway*