

From a Noble Movement Came a Great Judge

MY GREATEST EXPERIENCE



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MY LIFE HAS HAD MANY wonderful experiences. But to me the most wonderful was my election as judge of the Court of Common Pleas in the first election when women voted in Ohio, November 6, 1920, the first election after the United States Constitution had been amended to enfranchise women. This was the first time in history that a woman was elected to judicial office.

For a number of years I had worked actively in the woman suffrage movement and had been attorney for the Cleveland Woman Suffrage Party in the East Cleveland municipal woman suffrage case. "If we get the vote," I sometimes thought, "I'll run for the legislature." But until the ratification of the Suffrage Amendment women did not have the vote. In the summer of 1920 ratification by just one state was still required. The Amendment was before the Tennessee Legisla-

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ture but the outcome was uncertain. When Tennessee finally ratified in August of 1920, the measure passed by a change of one vote.

As the Tennessee decision drew near, friends in the Woman Suffrage Party asked me to run for a common pleas judgeship. It was too late in the year to enter the party primary; in Ohio it is quite usual for judges, because of the nonpartisan character of the office, to secure nomination by petition. To accomplish this a large number of names were required on a petition to secure a judicial nomination. "If I run," I said, will you help me with the petitions?" They said they would.

Announced Candidacy

When Tennessee ratified the amendment women could not only vote, but could become candidates for public office. So, about August 18, 1920, I announced my candidacy for the Court of Common Pleas.

As Assistant Prosecutor I was in charge of the grand jury of Cuyahoga County. That was a big task, for in one term the grand jury might return as high as 800 indictments, which I had

to draw. If I resigned I could not support myself during the campaign. I must campaign and at the same time carry on my work.

The petitions, which had loomed as such a task, in this case proved to be simple. Joe Monck, veteran printer, printed my petitions without charge. Later I learned that Tom Johnson, the great mayor of Cleveland, had said to Joe Monck, "When I am gone take care of the women." Joe Monck certainly took care of my campaign.

Charming, Tactful Women

The next problem was to get persons to circulate the petitions and secure signatures. This was made easy for me because the Woman Suffrage Party carried the petitions. Many of these charming, tactful women got men to carry petitions. Mrs. C. W. Stage, herself beloved, and the wife of Cleveland's beloved Billy Stage, and Mrs. John Stockwell, granddaughter of Rufus Ranney, Ohio's great jurist, took my petitions throughout the city, getting men and women to circulate and sign them. They visited every police station and made friends with the police. In the little diary which covers those days I find a note saying "Detectives Ruff and Francke took petitions." These were two of the finest detectives on the force.

Then I began to think about organization. I consulted Elizabeth Hauser, of Girard, Ohio, one of the truly great leaders of the woman suffrage movement. She said, "Don't have an organization." We went ahead on that basis. Miss Zara DuPont handled innumerable details but we had no manager.

Then followed an incredibly busy

time. I would work at the grand jury, frame my indictments, handle arraignments in court, and then go out in the late afternoon. I began to speak all over the county. On a typical day, after I left the grand jury, I visited a meeting of Mather College girls, the Pythian Temple, the women lawyers, the Ad. Club, Mt. Pleasant School, Watterson School, and the Business Women's Club. Other people covered many meetings. I had been a Democrat but had resigned a Democratic committee position because I believed the judgeship should be completely nonpartisan. In this campaign, Burr Gongwer, chairman of the county Democratic committee, spoke in my favor. Meanwhile I had powerful Republican friends. Rose Moriarty, later a member of the Ohio Industrial Commission, and Ohio member of the national Republican committee, planned the campaign. Ben Karr of the Cleveland *News* wrote an editorial endorsing me.

I Told My Age

Judge Willis Vickery of the Court of Appeals of Ohio gave me an out-and-out endorsement. Walter Flory and Herman Nord, lawyers of standing, spoke for me in meetings. The street car union had previously selected me as an arbitrator. They knew me and liked it that I told my age when I was heckled in open meeting on whether I was old enough to be a judge. The Union backed me throughout. The Business and Professional Women's Club and most women's organizations endorsed me. *The Farm Journal* ran fine stories. The churches let women hold meetings advocating my election.

Every Cleveland paper, *The Plain Dealer*, *The News* and *The Press*, gave

me repeated and outspoken backing both in the news and in editorials. No woman could have won such high office without the friendship of the press.

All of this sounds personal and yet it was not personal. I was the beneficiary of the entire woman movement. Susan B. Anthony and her generation, Harriet Taylor Upton and Elizabeth Hauser of Ohio, gave me not only the right to vote but the right to run for office. They had also achieved one other amazing thing. Two decades of newspaper editors in Ohio had been educated to the justice of the woman suffrage cause. So when Tennessee ratified and I ran for judge, fairminded men were in the editor's chair. Erie Hopwood, Victor Morgan and Ben Karr supported me, not for myself personally, but because of the justice of having women actively participate in government.

Led the Field

Thanks to all these forces, without

organization, without money, without experience, I led the field of ten judicial candidates in Cuyahoga County in 1920. You can understand why I think it was wonderful.

In two years a vacancy appeared on the Supreme Court of Ohio. Again it was suggested that I run for this, the highest judicial office in the state. Some of my friends thought I was too young. I called Erie Hopwood, managing editor of *The Plain Dealer*, whose integrity and judgment made him a leader in the state. I asked him whether I should run for the Supreme Court of Ohio. Erie Hopwood said, "Why not?" I also thought, "Why not?"

What I have told of my entrance into judicial office seems to be my most wonderful experience. For it, as well as my later judicial experiences, I thank the men and women of the entire state.