

April 12, 1935

MONDAY-AFTERNOON.

Dear Dad:

I was glad to have your letter today as I had planned to write you tonight about a couple of things that were on my mind. After a trip to Sheffield and Florence today other things have occurred to me which I can also cover.

First, I believe I mentioned to you some weeks ago that Baker had rather casually commented to me that Roulhac might be a good man for one of the Muscle Shoals three commissioners. As the time for the bill's passage drew nearer I thought more of this and wondered if it would not be a good idea if you would start a quiet boom for Roulhac to get one of these important posts. It would repay him for his interest in your political fortunes and I imagine that, 10-minute egg that he is, he would inwardly appreciate your putting him in nomination. So I thought I would suggest that you write ~~xxxxx~~ something editorially in the Democrat this week telling what a fine choice he'd be. I wanted to see Baker and---without tipping my hand---get some more dope from him about R's possible ambitions along this line but he was tied up with some visitors when I dropped in at his office today. I

I did, however, see R. and had a short talk with him. He was no more communicative than usual but courteous and interesting as always. He must be on top of the heap here now from all I can gather. He also said he had been in touch with Judson King recently and from his remarks about the new commission to be named I am pretty sure he would like to be on it. If you think it wise you might spring the idea in your paper Thursday, get Hubert and Jimmy Mills to hop on it Friday or Saturday and get the ball to rolling swiftly. If the bill is passed this week I imagine the commission will be named in a few weeks.

I stopped in today and met Tom Westmoreland and we hit it off fine. He says his father is still in a sanitarium but may get back (but not for any work) later in the spring. Tom told me that he had the whole Bailey subdivision sold about March 1st to three New Jersey-ites but that the bank closing killed the deal. Seems their checks bounced back and that deal is off. Said that he had wanted to see me as these people wanted to buy back all of the nine or ten lots that Westmoreland had sold and ~~re-subdivide~~ re-subdivide---in other words, cut up more lots and give less to park land. The sale price they agreed on was \$100 an acre for the 400 acres in Bailey--\$40,000. I told Tom that I had hoped you would be able to help them with the development, that we were most partial to the location, etc. And he said he wished you would sell it for him as he wanted to get his old man out of debt.

I only wish I had that listed and could peddle it around New York and Jersey. I believe I could get \$200 an acre easier than \$100; in other words, make about \$40,000 myself. Well, in any event, there's an angle for us to discuss later.

Accidentally met O.U. Redd (queer name) while buying some asphalt to pitch the seams of my boat. He said the boom was already developing for them but that they were short of working capital. He was most courteous and said you had a fine piece of property on the corner diagonally across from his Florence Lumber Co. Is that yours, Jack's and Luther's? I thought your stuff was on the same side of the street as the lumber company and a good deal farther out from town.

There is considerable surface activity in and around both Sheffield and Florence now---cleaning up, repairing, landscaping, etc. Everybody is pepped up and even Roulhac thinks the development of the Shoals is in the bag. People have been fooled so long, however, that they scarcely can believe the good news. Plenty of good acreage, close in, can be had for \$250 to \$400 and you know what that represents when subdivided: a grand opportunity for profit. If it were not for the fact that the bank closing put the clamps on everyone's cash we would have a real boom underway already. Just as soon as the legislature is over I wish you would come over and stay a few days and look over the field carefully. It is my honest conviction that you, with your ability and contacts, could make a fortune here in the ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ next year or two. By all means give this possibility earnest thought---~~xxxxxx~~ it means much more to you than politics and might enable you financially to do much more politically than you ever dreamed.

Thanks for thinking of me in connection with seeing Fitts. I have a selfish angle in promoting Roulhac for a commissioner, of course. I figure then that I might have the job of publicity man for the project. Saliba talks of starting up the chamber of commerce but he, Fowler and Will McFarland went to Washington Sunday to see about getting a permit for a local radio station. Really, so much is going on that I must see you soon and talk it over with you. I also want to discuss with you the possibilities of Decatur real estate which I think are enormous.

What I want to put you on to, among other things, is this: most of these so-called developers around here are a bunch of dumb clucks and, worse yet, they are all broke---hardly have living expenses and their property is generally tied up in tax sales and redemptions. You could get in on the ground floor here with as good chance as any of them to make a killing. I'm awfully sorry you-all didn't drive over yesterday---we rather expected you---but I quite understand.

As to the boat: I melted asphalt and filled in the seams today and will be ready to launch her about Wednesday. She is really more seaworthy than I made out but I am not boasting of it because you can never tell how a boat will act in the water.

You didn't enclose Willingham's letter so I don't know what to advise but, offhand, I should say don't push yourself too hard. Not right now, anyway. If the Shoals district papers give you any publicity at all it will be so grudging as to be worthless. Let's talk it over first. There may be other ways of achieving the same effect. Notably by planting the story in a different way. I had thought of you for one of the Shoals commissionerships but under the

old Norris bill, and I suppose the new one too, the job pays only \$7,500 the first year and \$5,000 annually thereafter. You can beat that, I know.

Please tell Fletcher how much I admire his guts and sportsmanship in voting with you while owning \$20,000 APCo. pfd. He's a real guy, no mistake about it. I told Roulhac about his unselfishness today.

Just a second~~ary~~ flash on ~~the~~ publicity along the Willingham line: why don't you ~~gar~~ and Charlie Carmichael get some of your friends to sponsor a resolution of thanks to be passed by the city councils of Florence, Sheff., and Tuscumbia. It's due you and if it's put up in this official form the papers would have to carry it if nicely asked--also by some of your friends over here. Believe me, it was one swell piece of work. But, for God's sake, let's do something like ~~fin~~ that for our own selfish selves! The peepul? Phoocey. They never retain.

By the way, Tom Westmoreland asked me to find out if you had assessed his father's property in Limestone as is your custom. Said he couldn't pay the taxes right now and wanted to wait a while.

I have gotten Fortune's check, run it thru all right, and notified them that I can't give 100% satisfaction on the answers so just won't try for the extra \$50. Am now awaiting the explosion. I can assure you that very few rural correspondents have ever enjoyed my privilege of chastening that bunch of Time-Fortune wise guys.

Won't bore you further as you must have a million ginks to see---including the s.o.b. from Macon, the Hon P. Wink Powell. Gesundheit, pal, and come over soon and get that 3-lb. bass I'm saving for you ---and a ducking in the Vestris.

Devotedly,

Bill

P.S. Am saving all your news clippings, etc. for non-existent posterity. B.