A Personal Politician

Even the best of politicians hesitate sometimes. In silence they sat behind the perfectly built turkey blind, as they patiently awaited the sight of a turkey. "Shag" Grossnickle was in charge of the calling of turkeys and W. O. Mackie had the honor of holding the shotgun. "Shag" first sighted the seven turkeys and then nudged Mackie. W. O. turning with the shotgun sat in awe—losing all thought of triggering the shotgun. When he recovered from the first impact of the sight of the beautiful birds, he fired but did not hit his target. Senator W. O. Mackie did not, however, hesitate when it came to the welfare of his people.

William Oren Mackie was born on April 3, 1898, in Mt. Ayer, Iowa. He was born the son of Ella Mae Mackie and W. O. Mackie. Until the age of 4, he lived in Mt. Ayer, Iowa. His family then moved to the town of Mt. Moriah in Harrison County. He moved to Kirksville in the fall of 1914 after completing grade school and one year of high school in Mt. Moriah. W. O. then attended Northeast Missouri State University, which was then known as the Normal School, during the terms of 1914 and 1915. In the following year, W. O. taught at the Stinson School, west of Kirksville. He then enrolled in the Kirksville Senior High School, graduating with the class of 1918. On June 20, 1920, William Orin Mackie married Mabel Harlan from Chariton County, in Missouri.

In 1920 W. O. opened a clothing store in Keytesville, Missouri, and operated it for five years. After returning to Kirksville in 1925, Mackie traveled for three years for a wholesale grocery company. In 1928 he joined with the Missouri Stores Company, which was starting a chain of grocery stores in northern Missouri.

W. O. bought the assets of the Missouri Stores Company in 1933. At this time, the company had 23 stores in operation. Some of the stores were known as Mackie's Markets later changed to Mackie and William's. For 40 years he operated stores in northern Missouri and southern Iowa.

"I don't know anybody 84 years old who has a more vital interest in government, politics, money or people than W. O. Mackie. He started poor—he manages his resources well. His judgment is sound and reliable, his sense of humor is unmatched by any person within my acquaintance," stated Russell Roberts.

In 1956 William Oren Mackie was elected to the office of
state representative of Adair County. After serving one two-year term as a state representative, he decided to run for the state senate. In 1958 he was elected to the state senate where he served two four-year terms. When asked why he ran for the offices, W. O. off-handedly replied, "Some of my Democratic friends talked me into it."

"Shag" Grossnickle comments, "I was always particularly impressed with W. O. Mackie's desire to help people while he was in the legislature, both as a Representative and as a senator. He was always eager to go out of his way and do what he could for people when they needed assistance. He drew no line. He would help people, especially the ones less fortunate, with eagerness."

W. O. built and was half-owner of the Highway Lumber Company, which is now operated as the McFarland and Jones Lumber Company. He also built and was half-owner of the Northtown Shopping Center. Mackie was president of Chamber of the Commerce, the Rotary Club, Shrine Club, and the Northeast Missouri Fair Association.

Mackie has always been active in many civic projects in Kirksville. He was chairman of the drive to sell the stock for the Kirksville Industrial Developmental Corporation (KIDC) and helped to promote the passage of a $575,000 bond to buy the land and build the dam on Forest Lake at Thousand Hills State Park.

W. O. downplayed his part in the project saying, "Without the help of Governor Smith and the kindness of the heirs of Dr. George Laughlin's estate, we would not have had a state park."

Photos above: Mr. Mackie, the fisherman. At one of his favorite fishing spots, Lake Ontario, he shows off his prize catches.

However, business and holding office never caused him to give up the opportunity to go hunting. He has always fished on the Chariton River, in different lakes around the area, and in Canada. He hunts quail, turkeys, and ducks. Senator Mackie worked with with several people in the 1960's to restock wild turkeys in Adair County. Alan Brohn, who was the biologist for the state of Missouri at the time, did not think that the turkeys would do well in our area. The reason for this being that we do not have enough timberline for the birds to survive. The turkeys did exceptionally well due to the fact that there is an abundance of corn and beans in the northeast Missouri area. They started with 14 hens and 9 toms and as a result, all of northeast Missouri now has an abundance of the birds.

Although W. O. is now retired, he has had many accomplishments. He succeeded in business, he was a senator and a representative, and has a family. W. O. has two children, Maxine Farrar of Braymer and William E. Mackie of Austin, Texas. He presently has five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. W. O. Mackie is a contributor to the northeast Missouri area, and will continue to play a key role in community life.

By Lorinda Scott
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