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GOVERNOR
1979-1987



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My father came from Syria at the turn of the century and years later I became the first Governor of Arabic background ever elected in America. Because of that the media wanted to know if I had ever felt discrimination. My first response was "no" and then after a little hesitation I said "yes"----I had been discriminated against because I was a Republican (actually the real truth). It probably could be that is why I kept the enclosed article "The Mystery of the Rebel Vote" which I thoroughly enjoy so many, many years ago. Maybe your readers will get a smile from this delightful story which I send to you as an RD Classic.

My best toyou all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Victor Atiyeh", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Victor Atiyeh

Condensed from
"My Life and The Times"

The Mystery of the Rebel Vote

A great relief came over our entire community when we laid Mr. Eubank to rest. We thought we were pure again!

TURNER CATLEDGE

THE LONE Republican in my home town in Mississippi was Mr. Eustace Eubank. Mr. Eubank was an odd individual in many ways. For one thing, he always attended strictly to his own business, which quickly set him apart in our community. But the oddest thing about this old man was his being a Republican. He never admitted being a Republican, but every four years one Republican vote would turn up in the local ballot box and we never doubted who had cast it.

Mr. Eubank lived over west of

the railroad tracks in a little unpainted house with his second wife and three daughters. One of his daughters was in school with me. She was very smart and I'm certain she won most of the literary contests we had at school. But she never got the prize, because the teachers didn't think it would be right to give prizes to a Republican's daughter. Eubank's only work was his gardening, and he grew the biggest tomatoes in town. They would slice out as big as saucers. My Uncle Homer used to sell those tomatoes in his grocery store, but he never told customers who'd grown them; as he figured no one would want to eat a Republican tomato. Eubank walked with a limp which, the town legend said, was because he had a wooden leg. The story went that Eubank had been a Union soldier at the battle of Shiloh and had his leg shot off. His fellow Yankees—as we told the story—had run off and left him, but he had been so fortunate as to survive and make his way to our compassionate little community. And yet he'd repaid us by casting that lone Republican vote every four years!

Such was the situation one hot summer in the early 1900s, when Eustace Eubank's saga came to a close. That summer my uncles Homer and Joe had bought a Ford car and converted it into a truck, and I was having a wonderful time delivering groceries in it. One hot

July day, about noon, I was out in front of the grocery, polishing the Ford, when my Uncle Joe said that he wanted to see me. I went inside the store and found a gathering of the local power structure: the town marshal, the county sheriff, the owner of the furniture store, a livery-stable keeper, our leading physician, and my Uncle Joe.

Uncle Joe put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Turner, Mr. Eubank was found dead in his bed this morning, and I want you to take the truck, go over to his house, get the remains and take them out to the cemetery."

Suddenly the reason for this assembly became clear. The town elders wanted to ensure that our lone Republican was properly laid to rest. I felt proud to be part of this ceremony, which combined civic, political and religious significance. A younger boy, Clifford Sanford, was to assist me, but I was in charge. Clifford and I jumped into the Ford, went by Mr. Spivey's furniture store for a coffin, and then I drove us out to the Eubank house. His family led me into a little front room, where a body was lying on a bed under a heavy quilt. I lifted the quilt and there he was, our lone Republican, stiff and cold. I had been born and bred a Democrat, and I couldn't suppress a moment of triumph at the sight.

After we got Mr. Eubank and the coffin out to the Ford truck, I

faced a problem. The Eubank family would be coming to the cemetery in a wagon drawn by mules. Should I drive the Ford slowly, so the mules could keep up in a funeral procession; or should I hurry on to the cemetery and let the family follow as best it could? It was our town's first motorized funeral, so I had no precedent to follow.

I decided to respect tradition and have a funeral procession. So I drove very slowly, wondering what sort of religious ceremony would be held. Mr. Eubank had never been seen in church, and we assumed that, being a Republican, he was bound to be an atheist too. I wondered if Mr. Eubank would be laid to rest in the respectable part of the graveyard or across a little gravel road in the Potter's Field. When our procession arrived, I was pleased to find mourners waiting around a newly dug grave in the respectable part of the cemetery, although only three feet from the gravel road.

Standing at the head of the grave was Brother Arnett, the Presbyterian preacher. He led us in a hymn, and read from the Psalms, and then read Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar." Then we lowered the coffin into the grave and everyone present helped shovel dirt onto the coffin. It was a sort of community project.

When I drove the Ford back to the grocery store, a lot of people came around to congratulate me on a job well done. A great sense of relief came over the entire community. The Lord had taken away our Republican, and we were pure again.

Thus things stood until November of that year, when the balloting was held in the Presidential election.

I was standing in front of my uncles' grocery when I noticed a commotion in the courthouse yard where the balloting was being held.

In those days, when you heard shouting at the courthouse on election day, you waited for the shooting to begin. Then, suddenly, I saw the chancery clerk break out of the crowd, race across the courthouse yard, jump over the fence, and come running into the store, waving his arms and shouting.

"My God, my God," he cried, "that Republican vote has showed up again!"

We had buried the wrong man.