Sanford, Terry (from Research Branch, NC OA&H) [1]

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TERRY SANFORD

Governor: 1961-1965

by Michael Hill
Research Branch, NC Office of Archives and History, 2007.
https://www.ncdcr.gov/about/history/division-historical-resources/nc-highway-historical-marker-program [2]

See Also: Margaret Sanford [3]

Terry Sanford, portrait　　　　Terry Sanford (1917-1998), the youngest governor sinceCharles B. Aycock [4] and the first born in the twentieth century, heralded a "New Day" for the state in his inaugural address. He was elected the same day that John F. Kennedy was elected president and, like his fellow Democrat [5], launched a host of progressive programs, notably a series of education initiatives. Born in Laurinburg on August 20, 1917, Terry Sanford was the son of Cecil Sanford, a merchant and realtor, and the former Elizabeth Martin, a teacher. A 1941 graduate of the University of North Carolina [6], Sanford served briefly as a special agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation before joining the U.S. Army. Trained as a paratrooper, Lieutenant Sanford saw action in Italy, France, Belgium, and Germany during World War II. After the war he returned to Chapel Hill where he completed a law degree in 1946 and served as assistant director of the Institute of Government for two years. In 1942 he married a college classmate, Margaret Rose Knight [3] of Hopkinsville, Kentucky; they would have two children.

With the establishment of a law practice inFayetteville [7], Sanford remained active in theNational Guard [8] through 1960. A Methodist, he was the first trustee chairman of Methodist College. Governor Kerr Scott [9] appointed him to the State Ports Authority in 1950. In 1952 he was elected to a single term in the State Senate. In 1954 Sanford managed Kerr Scott's successful campaign for the U.S. Senate. Scott died in 1958; Sanford had the support of his organization in the bid for governor in 1960. The field of four candidates for the Democratic nomination was reduced to two after the first primary. I. Beverly Lake, the remaining contender and a former assistant attorney general, campaigned largely on a segregationist platform. Sanford defeated Lake in the runoff and Republican Robert L. Gavin in the fall.

In the campaign Sanford advocated increased spending on education and, days after his inauguration, outlined what he termed his "Quality Education Program." He urged the legislature to support $100 million in improvements for public schools and, in his most controversial action, proposed financing by removing sales tax exemptions, including that on food. Sanford stumped the state on behalf of the proposals and the 1961 General Assembly approved the measures. Two years later the legislature endorsed Sanford's proposals for education beyond high school, including the creation of senior public colleges in Wilmington [10], Charlotte [11], and Asheville [12], and a community college system. Specialized education initiatives included the Governor's School, for gifted and talented high school students; the School of the Arts, a high school for study of the performing arts; Operation Second Chance, for retraining of dropouts; the Advancement School [13], for underachieving students; and the Learning Institute, for research on education.

Sanford in 1963 created the North Carolina Fund, with Ford Foundation and other private money, to combat poverty. He established the Center for the Study of Mental Retardation and the State Board of Science and Technology. During his term the legislature underwent reapportionment and the court system was reformed. Sanford advocated "first-class citizenship" for all races and established the biracial Good Neighbor Council to deal with race relation issues. He promoted food processing industries as a way to boost agriculture.

After his term as governor Sanford led a two-year study, based at Duke University, into the role of state governments. From 1969 to 1985 he served as president of Duke University, there gaining among the students the nickname "Uncle Terry." In 1972 and 1976 he was a candidate for the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party. In 1986 Sanford defeated James T. Broyhill in a race for the U.S. Senate; six years later Lauch Faircloth defeated Sanford in his bid to retain the seat. Sanford returned to the practice of law. In his last years he spearheaded an effort to construct a performing arts center in the Triangle. Sanford died on April 18, 1998 and was buried in Duke Chapel on the university campus.

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