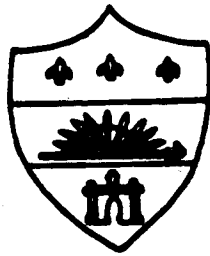


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MIKE SCANLAN: AN IRISH-AMERICAN IN ACADIA PARISH

By Gary Lavergne

During the mid-1920s, in a two-room school at Savoy (a rural Acadia Parish hamlet), Mrs. Francis Bertinot tested her fourth graders' historical knowledge by asking: "Who discovered America?" From the rear of the room a young boy replied: "Mike Scanlan!" (1) The child's answer was simply a manifestation of the respect which Scanlan, a leading Acadia Parish political and businessman, enjoyed among his contemporaries.

Scanlan was the son of Michael Charles Scanlan, who left his native County Clare, Ireland for the United States in 1856. (2) The cause of the elder Scanlan's emigration is unknown, but it can probably be attributed to the economic dislocation produced by the famous Irish potato famine of the late 1840s. (3)

During the winter of 1856, Michael boarded at Liverpool the *Kossuth*, a passenger ship bound for New Orleans. While en route to the United States, he met, and subsequently fell in love with Mary Lynch, whom he married shortly after the

Kossuth's arrival at New Orleans on February 2, 1857. (4)

Michael Charles Scanlan and Mary Lynch resided at New Orleans for nine years; in 1866, however, the Scanlans moved to Opelousas and subsequently settled at Egan, where Michael Charles apparently worked as a farmhand. In the early 1870s, the Scanlans migrated to a 400-acre homestead near Pitreville, (5) where they cultivated Irish potatoes and rice, a crop pioneered in Southwest Louisiana by the Germans of the neighboring Fabacher community. (6)

Because of the great demand for labor on prairieland farms, yeomen farmers usually had large families; the Scanlans were no exception. Eight children were born to Michael Charles and Mary: Dennis, Margarite, John Phillip, Patrick, Mamie, Frank, Rosa Jane, and Michael William "Mike." (7)

Mike, the youngest of the Scanlan brood, was born at the family homestead on October 28, 1883. Five months later, he

1. Mrs. Francis Bertinot, Church Point, Louisiana. Interviewed by the author on March 25, 1976.

2. "Scanlan Family Tree," jointly prepared by the author and members of the Scanlan family. Information incorporated into the above-mentioned genealogy was derived primarily from the baptismal, marriage and death registers of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Church Point, Louisiana. Hereafter cited as "Scanlan Family Tree."

3. Mac Lysaght, *Irish Families* (New York, 1972), pp. 262-263; "Scanlan Family Tree," Ellis Arthur Davis, *A Historical Encyclopedia of Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, n.d.), p. 709.

4. Records of the Port of New Orleans, Passenger List of the *Kossuth*, February 2, 1857. Microfilm copy on deposit at the Jefferson Caffery Louisiana Room, Dupre Library, University of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette, Louisiana.

5. *The Story of Louisiana* (New Orleans, 1960), pp. 346-348; hereafter cited as *Story*, with page numbers. Davis, *Encyclopedia*, p. 709. The reader should note that in 1866, Acadia Parish was part of Imperial St. Landry Parish.

6. *Story*, pp. 346-348; unidentified newspaper clipping in the Rev. C. A. Bienvenue Papers, Sac Heart of Mary Catholic Church, Church Point, Louisiana; hereafter cited as "Bienvenue Clippings."

7. "Scanlan Family Tree."

was baptized by Church Point's first resident Catholic priest, Rev. Augustus Eby; Theogene Daigle and Mary Wilson served as the infant's godparents. (8)

As a youth, Mike was energetic, restless and inquisitive. His childhood, however, was profoundly affected by his father's death in January 1892. Faced with the responsibility of assisting his mother in the management of the family farm, Scanlan was compelled to drop out of school. (9) This development dramatically influenced Mike's life, for, lacking a formal education, he had only one avenue for advancement-politics.

Scanlan entered the political arena in 1916, when he campaigned for, and subsequently won, a seat on the Acadia Parish Police Jury. (10) Mike's April 18 electoral victory marked the beginning of his forty-four-year career in the parish legislature which witnessed the farmer-politician's rise to a position of statewide prominence.

Mike Scanlan never took lightly his responsibilities on the police jury. This is clearly demonstrated by the hardships which he endured while travelling from his Pitreville home to Crowley, Acadia Parish's seat of government. For example, a typical journey involved an arduous trek over dusty or muddy roads to Eunice, a subsequent trainride to Mermentau, and, still later, a second jaunt by rail on the Mermentau-to-Crowley section of the Southern Pacific Railroad. The trip took well over twenty-four hours. (11)

This determination to serve his constituents was also reflected in Scanlan's

efforts to assist Acadia Parish farmers in maintaining the productivity of their lands. Of paramount importance to the parish's agricultural well-being was the improvement of the region's primitive drainage system. Acadia Parish is flat and thus easily flooded by persistent rainfall. The area's many small bayous and gullies are the only means of drainage; however, over the years, the capacity of these rivulets to drain the parish was greatly reduced by silt deposits. In addition, the meandering of the small bayous frequently hampered water flow. Finally, the problem was usually compounded by the small trees which bordered, and occasionally fell into, the region's innumerable gullies.

In order to alleviate the drainage problem, Scanlan proposed a resolution to the police jury, creating the Bayou Plaquemine and Wikoff Drainage District. On May 24, 1919, the parish legislature approved Mike's proposal and established a five-member board to supervise the clearing operations. Scanlan served on the board throughout his police jury career. (12)

Scanlan's persistent support of projects, such as the Bayou Plaquemine and Wikoff Drainage District, benefitting most of the parish expanded his base of popular support and resulted in his election as police jury president on June 12, 1928. (13) Mike, who was obviously pleased by the election, celebrated during the following week by giving an enormous barbecue, to which "old, new and present" members of the police jury, as well as numerous friends, were invited. The guests met "at the Mayer Hotel in Eunice at 10:30 a.m., and from

8. *Ibid.*; Baptismal Certificate for Michael William Scanlan, March 2, 1884; certified copy in the author's possession.

9. *Story*, pp. 346-348; *Crowley Daily Signal*, April 12, 1952; *Church Point News*, December 12, 1960.

10. Ward Three was noted for its skillful politicians. See Gary Lavergne, "Homer Barousse: Portrait of an Acadia Parish Politician," *Attakapas Gazette*, XI (Summer, 1976), 52-65.

11. M. W. Scanlan, Jr., Church Point, Louisiana. Interviewed by the author on April 17, 1976. *Church Point News*, December 13, 1960.

12. Minutes of the Acadia Parish Police Jury, September 12, 1916 session, Acadia Parish Police Jury Office, Acadia Parish Courthouse, Crowley, Louisiana; hereafter cited as Police Jury Minutes, with the date of the session.

13. Police Jury Minutes, June 12, 1928.

that place proceed[ed] to the barbecue grounds in the woods about three miles from Eunice across the line in Acadia Parish. Tables were filled with every imaginable delicacy." (14)

The people of Acadia Parish warmly accepted Scanlan as president of the police jury. Moreover, the press praised the parish legislature for selecting Mike as their executive officer. (15)

Thus generally recognized as a leading local politician, Scanlan became embroiled in Acadia Parish's political tug-of-war between pro-Long and anti-Long politicians during Huey Long's 1929 impeachment trial. Although a pro-Long politician, Scanlan was bombarded with requests by the Kingfish's opponents to pressure Acadia Parish's state senator, Homer Barousse (whose stand on the controversy was apparently in doubt) into opposing Long during the impeachment trial. (16)

Apparently because of the ineffectiveness of their local counterparts, several anti-Long spokesmen from Baton Rouge paid a call on Scanlan and attempted to convert him to their cause; however, once their identity became known, Mike ordered the men to depart immediately. (17)

The roots of Scanlan's loyalty to Long can be traced to the former's avid support of the latter's road building program. Through Mike's influence, the Acadia Parish Police Jury endorsed a state gasoline tax proposal as a means of encouraging the growth and improvement of the region's primitive road system. Shortly before the police jury's action, Long and O. K. Allen had assured Scanlan that the "Old Spanish

Trail" (present-day U. S. Highway 90) would be "one of the first, if not the first highway to be paved." (18) The Kingfish subsequently agreed to create an advisory board for the highway commission to supervise the awarding of state contracts. This "blue ribbon" panel consisted of seven elected state officials, a representative selected by the state's police juries, and eleven citizens appointed by the governor.

Mike Scanlan was appointed to the board because of his influence in the Louisiana Police Jury Association. During the association's 1930 convention, the state's police jurymen voted to support Huey Long's road-building program by a decisive majority. (19) The convention's decision was due in no small measure to Scanlan's campaigning on the program's behalf.

Although quite influential in the Louisiana Police Jury Association, Mike Scanlan did not hold an office in that organization until 1940, when he was elected first vice president and chairman of the association's powerful Resolutions Committee. (20) One year later, the president's illness compelled Mike to preside over the association's annual convention, and he supervised the conclave "to the satisfaction of everyone." Obviously pleased with his performance at the 1941 meeting, delegates to the 1942 Police Jury Association Convention elected Scanlan to fill the organization's highest office. (21)

Scanlan could not have been elected to the association's presidency at a more inopportune time, for he had to lobby the

14. Scanlan Family Scrapbook.

15. Local editorials applauded Scanlan's election as police jury president, stating that "Acadia's outlook for business administration [was] bright." *Ibid.*,

16. Lavergne, "Homer Barousse," 62-64; M. W. Scanlan, Jr.

17. M. W. Scanlan, Jr.

18. Scanlan Family Scrapbook.

19. T. Harry Williams, *Huey Long* (New York, 1969), pp. 445, 487.

20. "We Pay Homage to Our Founder and Our Past Presidents," *Louisiana Police Jury Review*, XI (April, 1947), 19.

21. L. F. Clawson, "Memories of the Monroe Meeting," *Louisiana Police Jury Review*, VI (April, 1942),

local government's interests before a state legislature torn by factional strife between the pro-and anti-Longites. Through astute diplomacy, however, he was able to secure state appropriations for parochial road improvements. (22)

The political factionalism within the state legislature was merely symptomatic of the political hostility that permeated all aspects of Louisiana's political life during the 1940s, including the Police Jury Association. These cleavages were never deeper than during the aftermath of the vicious 1944 gubernatorial election, when Scanlan issued an appeal for harmony among the Association's then feuding members. (23) His efforts, however, were only partially successful.

Factional politics were overshadowed by the exigencies of war. Like every American, Mike was much affected by American involvement in World War II. Under his leadership, the Acadia Parish Police Jury devoted many of their resources to the American war effort. Scanlan, however, was strongly opposed to the jury's largest, local, wartime project--maintenance of the Le Gros Memorial Airport.

Though the Le Gros airfield had no military importance, many Acadia Parish residents, victims of the war scare, insisted that the airport be handed over to the military. Scanlan strongly opposed such a move before the Acadia Parish Police Jury on the grounds that it was unnecessary.

Despite Mike's objections, the parish legislature, on April 14, 1942, adopted a resolution "constituting agreement with the United States, relative to the operation and maintenance of the Le Gros Memorial Airport." (24) The resolution further stated that the parish would operate and maintain the airport as an exclusively military field. The vocal proponents of the resolution, however, soon discovered that Scanlan's words were prophetic, and the parish lost money.

Following the war's conclusion, the Acadia Parish legislature, which had funneled a substantial portion of its revenues into such wartime projects as the maintenance of the Le Gros Airport, was faced with the problem of repairing public buildings which had been neglected during the wartime years. Of primary concern to the Acadia Parish Police Jury was the deterioration of the 1905 courthouse. In September 1948, Scanlan advocated that the parish legislature appropriate funds for the construction of a new court building. The police jury subsequently acted upon his recommendations, authorizing construction of a new structure at a cost of \$764,288. (25)

When not engaged in police jury politics, Scanlan's time and interest were devoted to his family and business affairs. On November 29, 1922, Michael Scanlan had married Lela Andrus, a twenty-five-year-old Maxie resident; two children--Michael William, Jr. and Carl Dean--were born of this union. (26)

As indicated above, Scanlan's home life

22. M. W. Scanlan, Jr.

23. The following is an excerpt of Scanlan's appeal for unity.

"We have just gone through a political campaign and the voters have elected parish and state officials for another four years. I would like to appeal to everyone attending and taking part in the discussions that we put aside our political differences and join together for a greater, more prosperous Louisiana."

"President Scanlan's Message to the Police Jury Association of Louisiana," *Louisiana Police Jury Review*, VIII (April, 1944), 3.

24. Police Jury Minutes, April 14, 1942.

25. *The New Orleans Times-Picayune*, September 14, 1948; Carl A. Brasseaux, Glenn R. Conrad, R. Warren Robison, *The Courthouses of Louisiana* (Lafayette, La., 1977), pp. 29-31.

26. Lela Andrus, a native of Maxie, Louisiana, was the daughter of Jessie Andrus and Jane Young. Born on June 12, 1897, Lela was a devout Methodist and was active in church and community affairs, including the Home Demonstration Club. She was a graduate of the Southwestern Louisiana Industrial Institute at Lafayette (present-day U. S. L.).

Andrus and Scanlan were married by Judge Denis T. Canan of Crowley. Their marriage was sub-

was greatly curtailed by the demands of his political and business pursuits. The most significant of his many business interests was the Southwest Louisiana Electric Membership Corporation (SLEMCO), a rural electrical cooperative founded by Scanlan, Claude Brewer, A. K. Smith, and Sidney Bowles on June 11, 1937. (27) When anticipated government loans authorized by the Rural Electrification Administration failed to immediately materialize, Mike Scanlan signed a personal mortgage to cover operational expenditures for SLEMCO's first year of existence. (30) As a result of his efforts to sustain the co-op, Scanlan was elected SLEMCO's first president and served in that capacity for the remainder of his life.

On May 20, 1938, Mike Scanlan threw the switch that brought electricity to rural Acadiana. The new SLEMCO electrical system then included 256 member-owners and was one of the smallest utility companies in the United States. (29)

Scanlan always referred to SLEMCO as the "co-op." In fact, he used the two words synonymously. This lexical relationship gave rise to hostility by the local news media during the Red Scare of the McCarthy era, when cooperatives were mistakenly viewed as communistic. Following numerous verbal barrages by local newspapers, Scanlan held a nocturnal news conference in mid-April 1952 at the Slemco office building. The meeting was well attended, and, when most of the guests had arrived, Mike ordered his subordinates to douse the lights. He then dramatically entered the room with a kerosene lamp. As

the audience stood in silence, Scanlan delivered a brief address: "Gentlemen, this is what it was like to live on a farm before the co-op came along. Now try to take notes to write your story." Mike's dramatics produced the desired effect, and local newspapers headlined laudatory accounts of the assembly with the statement: "Mike Lights the Way." (30)

Nevertheless, Scanlan was not satisfied with the publicity generated by the news conference. He therefore entered SLEMCO in the Southwest-Louisiana Mid-Winter Fair Association exhibition and presented those in attendance with modern, electrical kitchen appliances. As a result of SLEMCO's participation, the Southwest Louisiana Mid-Winter Fair (31) enjoyed its most successful season. (32)



"MIKE LIGHTS THE WAY"

sequently recognized by the Catholic and Methodist churches.

Story, pp. 346-348; Mrs. Ruth Arceneaux, Church Point, Louisiana. Interviewed by the author on March 17, 1976. Mrs. Lionie Thibodeaux, Church Point, Louisiana. Interviewed by the author on March 25, 1976. Mrs. Edith Daigle, Church Point, Louisiana. Interviewed by the author on April 7, 1976.

27. Rural Power, February 1961; Howard K. Hurwitz, *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of American History* (New York, 1974); *The Lafayette Daily Advertiser*, January 30, 1959; SLEMCO Power, May 1976.

28. Rural Power, May 1976; Scanlan Family Scrapbook.

29. SLEMCO Power, May 1976.

30. Scanlan Family Scrapbook; Rural Power, February 1961.

31. In the early 1950s, the fair was known as the Tri-Parish Fair.

32. Scanlan Family Scrapbook.

Under Scanlan's leadership SLEMCO borrowed over \$8,000,000 from the United States government over a twenty-one-year period; the cooperative subsequently repaid half of its debt as well as approximately \$830,000 in interest. Through these loans, SLEMCO dramatically increased its operations; indeed, by 1960, it had become the world's largest rural electric company. (33)

Scanlan applied his experience in business management to banking. Mike Scanlan, Edward Daigle and several Church Point merchants established the Bank of Commerce in Crowley. The bank's assets were subsequently purchased by Crowley businessmen; the Church Point branch, however, became autonomous on January 1, 1944 and assumed the name of Farmer's State Bank. (34) Mike served on the bank's board of directors until his death, and, in addition, assumed the duties of executive vice president following Edward Daigle's death on October 29, 1954. (35)

As a banker, Scanlan naturally had a vested interest in promoting the area's commercial development. As a means to that end, he helped organize the Louisiana Sweet Potato Association in 1938. Scanlan presided over the organization during the first nine years of its existence. (36)

Known and marketed nationally as "yams," Louisiana's sweet potatoes are currently in great demand. In the 1930s, however, this product, which had been cultivated in southwestern St. Landry Parish and northeastern Acadia Parish for decades, lacked national exposure, and thus

its sales were largely confined to Louisiana. In an effort to expand this product's market, the Association sought to upgrade the quality of Louisiana yams and sponsored a nationwide advertising campaign.

Many of the early executive sessions of the Louisiana Sweet Potato Association were held at Sunset, a St. Landry Parish community and self-proclaimed yam capital of the world. Apparently during one of these executive sessions, the Association decided to sponsor an annual festival, entitled the "Yambilee," as a means of promoting Louisiana yams. The first Yambilee was held at Opelousas in 1946, during Mike Scanlan's presidency. (37)

As a token of appreciation for his efforts to promote yams in the late 1930s and 1940s, Scanlan was elected "King Yam" of the 1956 Yambilee by the Louisiana Sweet Potato Advertising Commission. Mike's election was a magnified honor because he was not a St. Landry Parish resident. (38)

The 1956 Yambilee was held on October 5 and 6, but the festivities began on the night of the fourth, when a brilliant reception was given in Scanlan's honor. Midway through the festival--at noon on October 6--a special guest arrived, thirty-nine-year-old U. S. Senator John F. Kennedy. Upon greeting the Massachusetts solon, Scanlan presented him with a \$125 crate of choice yams. (39)

In addition to commercial organizations, such as the Louisiana Sweet Potato Association, Scanlan belonged to the Louisiana Warehouse Commission and the Louisiana Soil Conservation Commission. In addition, he was responsible for the

33. As of December 1975, *slemco* was composed of 43,504 member-owners, and the cooperative owned 5,743 miles of electrical lines. *Advertiser*, January 30, 1950; *SLEMCO Power*, May 1976.

34. Minutes of the Board of Directors Meetings, December 29, 1943, Farmers State Bank, Church Point, Louisiana. Since the bulk of said meetings were devoted to personal loans, the author was not permitted to examine the bank's minute books. Relevant information from this source was provided by Mrs. Julie Arceneaux, a Farmer's State Bank employee.

35. *Ibid.*, October 29, 1954.

36. After stepping down as president in 1947, Scanlan became first vice president of the Louisiana Sweet Potato Association. *Rural Power*, February 1961; Scanlan Family Scrapbook.

37. *Rural Power*, n.d.; clipping from Mrs. Edith Daigle's personal library.

38. Mrs. Francis Bertinot; *The Opelousas Daily World*, October 4-7, 1956.

39. Scanlan Family Scrapbook; *Church Point News*, December 16, 1960.

creation of the Acadia Soil Conservation Commission in 1946.

In the early 1950s, Scanlan applied his administrative expertise gleaned from years of service on the above-mentioned boards to a fund-raising drive for Sacred Heart of Mary Catholic Church in Church Point.

The church then serving Sacred Heart Parish had been constructed in 1884, damaged by a hurricane in 1909, and subsequently repaired and enlarged. (40) By 1951, however, the building suffered from several major structural weaknesses in its walls, dictating the need for a new church. The ecclesiastical parish, however, lacked the necessary building funds. Therefore, on October 16, 1951, the parish pastor, Msgr. C. A. Bienvenue, organized a fund-raising drive and selected Mike Scanlan as chairman of the drive committee. (41)

Under Scanlan's leadership, the committee divided the ecclesiastical parish into 100 districts, each of which was supervised by a solicitor who was required to contact every parish resident for donations. The first drive was held during the week of November 4-11, 1951, and netted \$70,000. Several subsequent fund drives generated additional revenues. Scanlan, who instructed the solicitors on the use of account sheets and receipt books, played a major role in organizing these massive community efforts.

Six months after the initial fund-raising drive, a meeting was held for the purpose of selecting a building committee. This committee subsequently elected Edward Daigle as general chairman and Mike Scanlan as executive chairman. In addition, the committee commissioned Owen Southwell, a New Iberia architect, to design the parish church.

Once the plans were approved and building materials were selected, the committee advertised for bids by contractors. On July 7, 1952, a general contract totalling \$246,622 was awarded to Robert Angelle of Breaux Bridge. (42)

Building the present Sacred Heart of Mary Catholic Church required three years of cooperation by hundreds of local solicitors and businessmen. Scanlan's labors as executive chairman of the parish's two major committees were rewarded on November 25, 1954, when the new church was dedicated. (43)

Scanlan's public and commercial endeavors gained the Irishman statewide notoriety by the early 1950s. For example, in 1950, the Louisiana press proclaimed Scanlan "Dean of Louisiana's 640 Police Jurors" and "the backbone of what we fondly think of as local government." (44) In recognition of Mike Scanlan's position as Louisiana's most prominent local politician, Robert F. Kennon asked the Acadia Parish Police Jury President to become his running mate in the 1952 election. (45) Scanlan refused the invitation for two reasons: First, the electioneering incumbent upon a statewide campaign would have forced him to drastically curtail the amount of time which he devoted to his family and business interests; second, Scanlan refused to betray his Longite sympathies by joining Kennon's anti-Longite camp. (46).

Following his rejection of Kennon's generous offer, Mike Scanlan became an increasingly staunch supporter of Earl Long, the pro-Long faction's champion in the 1950s. Long acknowledged Scanlan's

40. The construction of twin chapels expanded the church's seating capacity to 1,450, making it the largest wooden church in Louisiana. C. A. Bienvenue, *Dedication of the New Church of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart* (Abbeville, 1954), pp. 63-86. Hereafter cited as "Dedication Booklet."

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 28-31.

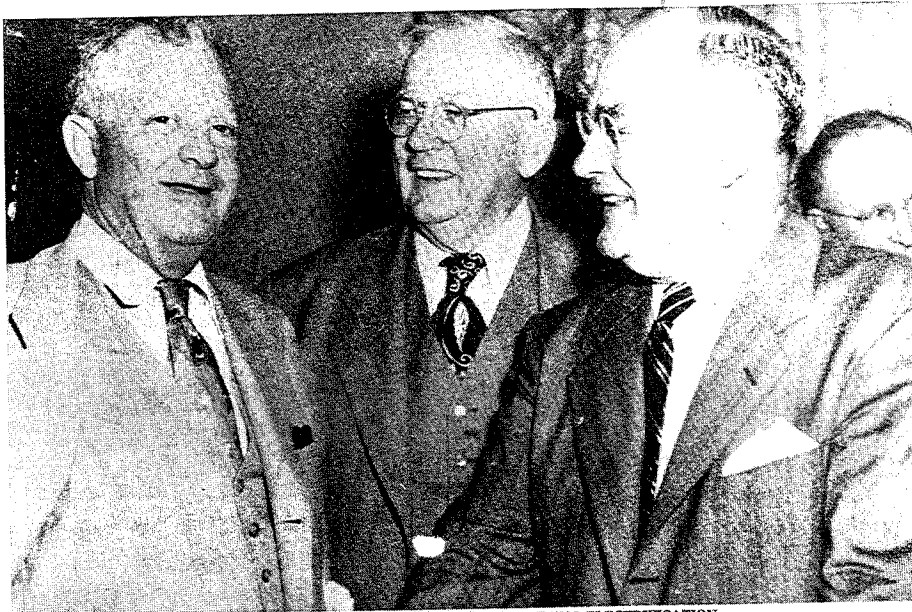
42. *Ibid.*

43. Rev. Michael Bakowski, Church Point, Louisiana. Interviewed by the author on March 19, 1976.

44. Scanlan Family Scrapbook.

45. Kennon's invitation was extended during a meeting with Scanlan at Swords sometime before the outset of the 1952 gubernatorial primaries. M. W. Scanlan, Jr.; Myrta Fair Craig; M. E. Kirk; T. Roosevelt Daigle; Mrs. Edith Daigle.

46. *Ibid.*



NATIONAL STATE AND LOCAL LEADERS AGREE ON FARM ELECTRIFICATION

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support in 1957, when he sent state Senator J. W. Cleveland to commission the Acadia Parish Police Jury President a colonel on Long's staff. In conferring the commission, Cleveland expressed his regret at "having to demote a king to a colonel." (47)

Because of his loyalty to "Uncle Earl," Scanlan was intensely interested in the 1960 Louisiana gubernatorial election in which the former campaigned for the office of lieutenant governor. The central issue in the campaign was Earl Long's sanity, for the former governor's wife had recently committed him to a mental institution. During the height of the controversy, Long announced that he would address the people of Church Point.

As anticipated, "Uncle Earl's" speech drew a sizable crowd, including Mike Scanlan and his eldest son, Mickey. The Scanlans, however, hid behind a car near the speaker's platform in order to objectively assess Long's mental condition. The address was a typical "Uncle Earl"

speech, sharply critical of his opponents and replete with plaudits for his own governmental record. After delineating his political accomplishments, Long thundered: "And if you don't believe me, ask Mike Scanlan; he'll tell you." Convulsing with laughter Scanlan turned to his son and said: "There's nothing wrong with that son-of-a-bitch." (48) The Acadia Parish Police Jury President remained firmly entrenched in the Long camp for the remainder of Earl's ultimately unsuccessful campaign.

Scanlan's continuing allegiance to the Democratic party, as well as his experience on numerous Louisiana soil conservation boards were acknowledged through his appointment, in 1960 to the National Resources Advisory Committee by President-elect John F. Kennedy. When his appointment was made public, Scanlan, who had previously discussed water and conservation problems with Kennedy aides, issued the following statement:

47. Lethar Frazar to M. W. Scanlan, September 27, 1957. Scanlan Family Scrapbook.
48. M. W. Scanlan, Jr.

I am convinced that real progress can be made toward the solution of these problems under Kennedy's Administration through sound investment of our natural resources. (49)

Scanlan never served on the above-mentioned board, however, for, in mid-November 1960, his health suddenly deteriorated. (50) His family and friends often urged Scanlan to consult a physician, but their efforts were frequently futile. At six p.m. on December 22, Mickey Scanlan admitted his father, who had become gravely ill, to Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital

at Lafayette. In addition, he summoned a priest to administer the last rites to his father. When the priest arrived at 4 a.m. on the morning of the twenty-third, Mike Scanlan looked up and said, "That bad, uh?" and died in the presence of his wife and son. (51)

Mike Scanlan held on to life as long as possible, and although his heart stopped beating, his legend lives on. Only six days after his death, the *Progressive Farmer* named him "Man of the Year" for 1960, (52) an honor customarily bestowed upon agricultural college presidents and state agricultural commissioners. "A Champion is Dead" read an obituary, (53) and indeed Acadia Parish had lost its first citizen.

49. *Church Point News*, November 18, 1960.

50. Scanlan had a remarkable constitution. He missed one session during his forty-four-year police jury career. *Church Point News*, December 13, 1960.

51. M. W. Scanlan, Jr.

52. *Progressive Farmer*, January 1961.

53. Scanlan Family Scrapbook; *Church Point News*, November 8, 1960; December 13, 1960.