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SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL SHEET

This Honor's thesis entitled

"The Governorship of Bob Riley"

written by

Brian Stanford Miller

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requirements for completion of the

Carl Goodson Honors Program

meets the criteria for acceptance

and has been approved by the undersigned readers

Thesis Director

Second Reader

Third Reader

Director of the Carl Goodson Honors Program

May 7, 1993

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THE GOVERNORSHIP OF BOB RILEY

Brian Stanford Miller

Senior Honors Thesis

May 7, 1993

Without a backward glance Bob Riley, his wife, Claudia, and their daughter, Megan negotiated the Capitol stairway to the bottom floor, while above them in the House chamber legislators waited for the arrival of the 39th governor of Arkansas. At the bottom of the steps Vaughn Webb, an aide in the Secretary of State's office, presented Riley with an Arkansas state flag that had flown that morning of January 14, 1975, while several admirers applauded from the second floor railing above. Riley then left for Arkadelphia, where he would resume his role as head of the Political Science department at Ouachita Baptist University in time for spring registration.¹ So ended both the governorship and the political career of Dr. Bob Riley. The previous year's heralding of destruction during the 11 1/2-day tenure of Riley had come to naught, and a small piece of Arkansas history had come to an end.

This unique state of affairs had its origin in the state Democratic primary of May, 1974. In that election, David Pryor defeated both Riley and former Arkansas governor Orval Faubus for the Democratic nomination for governor. Also in that primary Dale Bumpers, the seated governor, defeated J. William Fulbright, a senator with 30 years of experience.² While both were technically only primary victories, in the overwhelmingly Democratic Arkansas of 1974 this had the effect of a general election win.

¹"Riley Leaves Interim Office With Praises for Legislature," Arkansas Gazette, 15 January 1975, sec. 4A, col. 1.

²Carol Griffiee, "Bumpers to Resign January 3; Riley to Serve 11 1/2 Days," Arkansas Gazette, 28 December 1974, sec 1A, col. 8.

Bumpers now had a problem. The Constitution of the United States declares that U.S. Senators must take the oath of office on the third of January. Arkansas governors do not take the oath of office until the fourteenth of January. The problem arises from the Arkansas Constitution, which prevents any governor or lieutenant governor from holding that office and being a U.S. senator at the same time.

Bumpers' problem had two possible solutions: either he could resign effective at noon on January 3, 1975; or he could wait until his term as governor expired on January 14 and proceed to Washington to take the oath of office. Which solution to take revolved around the issue of seniority. Although he was against the U.S. Senate's seniority system, Bumpers would rank forth among freshmen senators if he took the oath of office on the third of January.³ If he waited until the fourteenth, he would be ranked number 100.⁴

This situation was apparent to others also. Riley, a professor of Political Science, knew that a victorious Bumpers would have to take the oath of office on January 3. David Pryor knew this as well.⁵ However, the problem remained

³The seniority ranking of freshmen senators is determined in this order: former senators, former vice presidents, former House members, former cabinet members, former governors, state population; when these do not apply seniority is alphabetically determined.

⁴Carol Griffie, "Bumpers' Aim is Smoothness," Arkansas Gazette, 9 November 1974, sec. 1A, col. 4.

⁵Dr. Bob Riley, Claudia Riley, and Jim McDougal; interview by author, tape recording, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, 29 October 1990.

underground until after the general election in November, 1974. David Pryor became the Governor-elect of Arkansas, while Dale Bumpers easily defeated Republican candidate John Harris Jones for the Senate seat with 84% of the vote.⁶ It was then that the press became aware of Bumpers' Senate-Governor complications.

The Arkansas Gazette's signed articles concerning Bumpers' resignation were written by "that little lady that ran around the Capitol all the time,"⁷ Carol Griffee. Described as "pretty abrasive,"⁸ even unsigned articles on the matter had Griffee's flavor. Her first article on the possibility of Riley becoming Governor made the front page of the November 8 issue of the Arkansas Gazette. It dealt mostly with Capitol gossip to the effect that Riley's office had ordered stationary in anticipation of Riley's elevation to governor, that a portrait of Riley had been commissioned, and that Riley was preparing to make key appointments if he indeed became Governor. Other questions had to do with the fate of Bumpers' staff and the number of people Riley would bring with him to the Governor's office.⁹

⁶Carol Griffee "Bumpers to Resign January 3; Riley to Serve 11 1/2 Days," Arkansas Gazette, 28 December 1974, sec. 1A, col. 8.

⁷Dr. Bob Riley, Claudia Riley, and Jim McDougal; interview by the author, tape recording, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, 29 October 1990.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Carol Griffee, "Riley Likely to Complete Term of Bumpers; Capitol Buzzing," Arkansas Gazette, 8 November 1974, sec. 1A, col. 2. see also Carol Griffee, "Bumpers to Resign January 3; Riley to Serve 11 1/2 Days," Arkansas Gazette, 28 December 1974, sec. 1A, col. 8.

It is Riley's contention that the debate over his possible actions as Governor were totally manufactured by the press. Jim McDougal, a close Riley associate, cited as the problem a staff member of Riley's "who had a tendency to be prone to be [sic] crisis oriented." This person would sometimes make belligerent statements to the press, who would use such statements to augment press releases.¹⁰ In any case, Riley disagreed with much of what the press wrote.

The first point of contention revolved around the ordering of stationery. Five thousand sheets of stationery with accompanying envelopes with Riley named as governor were ordered at a state expense of \$860.^{11 12} Griffiee alleged that Linda Newkirk, Riley's administrative assistant in the Lieutenant Governor's office, had sent such a requisition to Bumpers' office. Newkirk said that she did not sign such a requisition because such authority was reserved for the Governor's staff.¹³ Riley commented that he and Newkirk had nothing to do with the stationery, saying instead

¹⁰Dr. Bob Riley, Claudia Riley, and Jim McDougal; interview by author, tape recording, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, 29 October 1990.

¹¹Carol Griffiee, "Bumpers to Resign January 3; Riley to Serve 11 1/2 Days," Arkansas Gazette, 28 December 1974, sec. 1A, col. 8.

¹²It was computed that a letter would have to be produced every 1 1/2 minutes during the 11 1/2 days of Riley's tenure to use up all the available stationery.

¹³Carol Griffiee, "Riley Likely to Complete Term of Bumpers; Capitol Buzzing," Arkansas Gazette, 8 November 1974, sec. 1A, col. 2.

that a friend on Bumpers' staff took the initiative to place the order, noting that "you'd have to have some stationery for a sitting governor."¹⁴

Stationery was not all that was ordered. Secretary of State Kelly Bryant also placed an order for one hundred miscellaneous forms for gubernatorial appointments and one thousand notary forms with Riley's name on them.¹⁵ After the story broke on November 8, Bryant visited Bumpers and was believed to have assured Bumpers that he had no role in Riley's plans and that the forms were printed solely to facilitate the continuing operation of government if Riley became governor.¹⁶

Griffiee also reported that Riley had already completed two sittings for a portrait by Mrs. Betty Dortch Russell. Everyone supposed that if Riley were to become governor, this portrait would hang in the Governor's Conference Room in the place of the outgoing governor's portrait. Secretary of State Kelly Bryant, the legal guardian of the Capitol, said that any request to hang a portrait would have to be approved by him. As of November 9, no such request had been made.

Riley, in Arkadelphia teaching, claimed to have little knowledge of efforts in Little Rock on his behalf. In a newspaper interview, Riley said Kelly Bryant had

¹⁴Dr. Bob Riley, Claudia Riley, and Jim McDougal; interview by author, tape recording, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, 29 October 1990.

¹⁵Carol Griffiee, "Riley Likely to Complete Term of Bumpers; Capitol Buzzing," Arkansas Gazette, 8 November 1974, sec 1A, col. 2.

¹⁶Carol Griffiee, "Bumpers' Aim is Smoothness," Arkansas Gazette, 9 November 1974, sec. 1A, col. 4.

contacted Mrs. Russell, saying "he [Bryant] takes care of things like that." This charge Kelly flatly denied, saying, "I have not talked to any artist whatsoever." Mrs. Russell, however, said Bryant had talked with her at an art exhibit concerning Riley's portrait. Bryant, however, did say that he knew about the portrait, noting that Riley had said something about it in a discussion three weeks prior.^{17 18}

In later weeks the notion that Bumpers' portrait would hang in the outgoing governor's spot for only 11 1/2 days while Riley's would hang there throughout Pryor's administration incensed many newspaper editors, as well as members of the vocal opposition. Riley went on record, stating:

I'm not so megalomaniacal that I care where the darn thing is hung--they can hang it anywhere they want. The only reason the portrait is being done in the first place is because it's a historical first--it may never happen again for all we know.^{19 20}

Claudia Riley, seeing the controversy that the portrait caused, prepared to buy it herself, but subsequent actions by the Arkansas Legislature made this unnecessary.²¹

¹⁷Carol Griffiee, "Riley Likely to Complete Term of Bumpers; Capitol Buzzing," *Arkansas Gazette*, 8 November 1974, sec 1A, col. 2.

¹⁸The gubernatorial picture is usually paid for by the Governor or his friends.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰The conditions created by Bumpers' election to the U.S. Senate were duplicated much sooner than anyone might have suspected. In 1978 Lieutenant Governor Joe Purcell became Governor when David Pryor became a U.S. Senator.

²¹Dr. Bob Riley, Claudia Riley, and Jim McDougal; interview by the author, tape recording, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, 29 October 1990.

The third major controversy generated by Carol Griffée's Arkansas Gazette articles dealt with the subject of appointments, specifically those which Riley would have had the opportunity to make while in office. Using the anonymity of "Bumpers administration sources," Griffée revealed that Riley's office asked for, and received, a list of all the appointments that would expire in the first half of January 1975. Of the 63 vacancies that would occur, many were important: these included openings on the Highway Commission, the Alcohol Beverage Control Board, the Transportation Commission, and the Board of Corrections. Riley's administrative assistant, Linda Newkirk, denied this, noting that the Lieutenant Governor's office received a monthly list of such appointments, and also had a book containing the names and terms of all appointees. As she commented, "...why would we need a special list?"²²

Earlier in that week Riley had been quoted by the AP as saying he would not fill any of the several vacancies on major boards and commissions that would occur.²³ Riley said he knew nothing of the request for a list of vacancies, but reportedly replied evasively when asked if he would make any appointments while governor.²⁴

²²Carol Griffée, "Riley Likely to Complete Term of Bumpers; Capitol Buzzing," Arkansas Gazette, 8 November 1974, sec. 1A, col. 2.

²³Carol Griffée, "Bumpers Aim is Smoothness," Arkansas Gazette, 9 November 1974, sec. 1A, col. 4.

²⁴Carol Griffée, "Riley Likely to Complete Term of Bumpers; Capitol Buzzing," Arkansas Gazette, 8 November 1974, sec 1A, col. 2.

The newspapers also reported on a rumor circulating through the Capitol building that Bumpers' staff had to be out of the Governor's office by the second of January. Newkirk again defended Riley, saying that he would put in a few of his own people, but not many. There was never any mention by either Newkirk or Riley of expelling Bumpers' staff. In response to skepticism that few people would want to work for such a short period of time, Newkirk said "more people than we could employ want to work for him - yes, just for ten days [sic]- he has many friends, you know." Newkirk said she imagined she would be chief of staff.²⁵

The question of whether Riley would be using the Governor's mansion during his tenure also received attention. Linda Newkirk said, "I'm sure he will be in Little Rock, and I can't think of any other place he'd be staying." However, Riley said "moving in" was "too severe" a word to use. He "might spend a night there" or entertain dignitaries from out of state at the mansions, but otherwise he and his wife would stay at their Little Rock apartment.²⁶

Due to extensive diction in most of Griffie's articles on Bumpers' resignation, these major controversies gradually crept into the editorial page. From there, people throughout Arkansas, including rival newspaper columnists, had their often negative say on the matter.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

While Bob Riley did not read Griffiee's articles, he did take action to forestall any uneasiness on the part of Governor-elect David Pryor. After the story broke in the Arkansas Gazette, Riley immediately went to Pryor's headquarters on Center Street in Little Rock to give him assurances that he would protect Pryor's interests during his brief tenure. Riley's goal all along was to ease the transition between the administrations of Bumpers and Pryor.²⁷

Concurrently, Governor Dale Bumpers was apparently mulling over his option of resigning. Following the publication of Carol Griffiee's first article, Senator-elect Bumpers issued a statement saying that he would not resign until he was assured that there would be a smooth transition. Appearances indicate that Bumpers was unduly influenced by Griffiee's articles, when a simple call to Riley might have ended the matter. At any rate, Bumpers grew concerned about appointments and staffing (a concern that would follow him up until his decision to resign) and wanted to discuss the matter with Riley.²⁸

Bumpers said he would not give up a smooth transition to gain seniority in the Senate. "As I've said before, seniority doesn't mean much to me, and it still doesn't, though I don't think Arkansas should be deprived of anything it's entitled to."²⁹

²⁷Dr. Bob Riley, Claudia Riley, and Jim McDougal; interview by the author, tape recording, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, 29 October 1990.

²⁸Carol Griffiee, "Bumpers' Aim is Smoothness," Arkansas Gazette, 9 November 1975, sec. 1A, col. 4.

²⁹Ibid.

Concerning his staff, Bumpers stated that there had been no order for them to leave by January 2, 1975, as current Capitol gossip said. Employees were only told to use accumulated leave time or risk losing it. Bumpers also remarked that Pryor should have the opportunity to make all appointments after January 1. He added that any vacancies on the governor's staff between November 8 (the date of Griffiee's first article) and January 14 should be filled by people of Pryor's choosing, so that they would be able "to hit the ground running" when Pryor took office.³⁰

David Pryor was of the opinion that Bumpers should resign early rather than risk a loss of seniority. The newspapers quoted Pryor as saying, "I assume Governor Riley will not try to make any appointments and I hope that he would not, but that is an assumption." Riley had, of course, gone on record as saying that he would not make any major appointments, but Pryor said his feelings extended to any appointments whatsoever.³¹

Pryor recalled that he talked with Riley in June when "it had been determined that...Riley would be Governor for eleven and a half days." They discussed that transition and said it would be smooth. In November, Pryor said that he wanted to talk with Riley and Bumpers about the transition. "I believe we can work satisfactorily with him [Riley].... At the proper time, we can sit down and talk it

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Carol Griffiee, "Resign Early, Bumpers Urged by His Successor," Arkansas Gazette, 12 November 1974, sec. 1B, col. 7.

out." Pryor did not at the time have an appointment to talk with Riley or Bumpers, while neither Bumpers nor Pryor had contacted Riley to get his feelings on the matter.³²

On Monday, November 18, Riley wrote Bumpers in an effort to assure him that Riley "would not upset the orderly transition in administrations." In the letter Riley noted that he had not abused Bumpers' agenda during Bumpers' trips out of state.³³ Riley also admitted to ordering stationery and forms in hopes of appointing justices of the peace and other such minor officials. On the question of the portrait, Riley deferred to Secretary of State Kelly Bryant. He did not mention the question of staffing.³⁴

As November wore on, Bumpers wavered between resigning early and staying in office. He stated on November 22 that he would gain no advantage by swearing in on the third of January, but he would do so to get his staff's feet on the ground.

³²Ibid; Dr. Bob Riley, Claudia Riley, and Jim McDougal; interviewed by author, tape recording, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, 29 October 1990.

³³This is not quite true. Riley did, in 1972, refuse to sign a commission mandated by Bumpers making A. B. Hervey Jr. acting director of the state Finance and Administration Department. Riley said Hervey had worked in campaigns for Winthrop Rockefeller, a charge which Hervey denied.

³⁴Carol Griffiee, "Riley Pledges No Disruption During Tenure," Arkansas Gazette, 19 November, 1974, sec. 1A, col 5.

Members of Bumper's staff said that he had discovered that seniority would have little effect on his choice of committee assignments in the Senate.^{35 36}

Bumpers wanted to be in the Senate from the third until the fourteenth of January because quite a bit of legislation would go through in that time. A late arrival would put him and his staff behind. Bumpers admitted he had many calls pressuring him not to resign. Many suggested that he would break faith with them by criticizing the seniority system and then working in that system.³⁷

The U.S. Senate managed to add another complication. On November 24 the Senate voted to convene the 93rd Congress at noon on the fourteenth of January, 1975. The House of Representatives soon followed the Senate's lead. This action gave legislators a longer Christmas break, since they would not adjourn until the twentieth of December. An aide to Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield said "This has nothing to do with Bumpers. The senators wanted a longer break. If it suits him, it's totally accidental. But you can tell him we did it for him." Now all

³⁵"No Advantages to Resigning, Bumpers Says," Arkansas Gazette, 23 November 1974, sec. 13A, col. 1.

³⁶Apparently Bumpers had several erroneous notions about Senate seniority. He said that he understood that seniority depended in part on the order in which the state had come into the Union. He also thought that seniority among former governors depended upon whose gubernatorial term had been longest.

³⁷Carol Griffiee, "Bumpers' Aim is Smoothness," Arkansas Gazette, 9 November 1974, sec. 1A, col. 4.

new Senators would be sworn in on January 14, but terms, staffing, and salaries would be retroactive to January 3.³⁸

Bumpers quickly reacted to this new situation, saying that he would write a letter of resignation effective at 11:00 p.m. on January 14. At that same moment, which would be noon Washington-time, he would be in the U.S. Senate taking his oath of office. In this scenario, Riley would be governor for only one hour, on the morning of January 14.³⁹

Bumpers' plan contained one major flaw, which was soon pointed out to him. Arkansas law forbids one to be governor and senator at the same time. This also applies retroactively, so that no matter when the actual oath-taking occurred, Bumpers would have been, in the eyes of the law, both governor and senator for 11 1/2 days. Also, if Bumpers did not resign, his staff would have had no permanent office, nor would they be put on the government payroll until January 14, also in accordance with Arkansas law. The Gazette reported that as an added incentive a retroactive swearing in would put Bumpers in line for a committee assignment of his choice. This after a report that Bumpers had decided seniority would not make much

³⁸"Senate Idea Fits Plan of Bumpers," Arkansas Gazette, 27 November 1974, sec. 1A, col. 4.

³⁹*Ibid.*

difference in this situation!⁴⁰ During all of this, Riley, who, as a professor of political science knew what was implied by the situation, kept quiet to both Bumpers and the press.⁴¹

On Tuesday, December 10, the Arkansas Gazette reported that Bumpers would make a decision early in the next week. Bumpers said his decision would follow a meeting for new senators with the Secretary of the Senate on Monday, December 16.⁴²

By December 19 Bumpers still had not made a decision. A source close to Bumpers said a retroactive swearing-in would not result in a loss of seniority and would not affect committee assignments, while staff payment was still a consideration. The rest, the source reported, was "pretty much a case of weighing intangibles, like how much [Bumpers] would lose by not being present and knowing firsthand what was going on."⁴³

⁴⁰"Decision Set Next Week On Resignation," Arkansas Gazette, 10 December 1974, sec. 7A, col. 3. see also Dr. Bob Riley, Claudia Riley, and Jim McDougal; interview by author, Tape recording, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, 29 October 1990.

⁴¹Dr. Bob Riley, Claudia Riley, and Jim McDougal; interview by author, tape recording, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, 29 October 1990.

⁴²"Decision Set Next Week on Resignation," Arkansas Gazette, 10 December 1974, sec 7A, col. 3.

⁴³"Governor Insists No Decision Made on Early Resignation," Arkansas Gazette, 19 December, 1974, sec. 1A, col. 3.

Bumpers delayed making his decision until the very end of December. On December 26 the Arkansas Gazette quoted Lieutenant Governor Riley as saying:

He's [Bumpers] cast a very suspicious shadow on my personal character and integrity. I have no further political ambition. It's just the idea I resent more than anything else. We've been very close personally in the past and I'm really at a loss to explain why he's acting this way.... There just has to be some reasons why he's acting the way he is. It's just that I don't know what the reasons are and I'm not going to let it bother me.... I have had nothing to do with creating this hostile predicament...and it never occurred to me before all this would even come up. It shouldn't have created such a stir.... There were times when I could have dealt him some blows...but I've never given him any reason to think I'd do any of the things that he's implying I would do.

Riley also noted that in 1974 Bumpers had been out of the state more than he had been in the state, implying history showed groundless any fears of leaving the state in Riley's hands.⁴⁴

On Friday, December 27, the Gazette reported that on Thursday afternoon Bumpers and Riley had met for 45 minutes at the Governor's Mansion, although neither commented on the meeting.⁴⁵ The next day, the newspapers reported that Bumpers had decided to resign "in the best interests of the people." Both men pledged that the transition would be smooth.⁴⁶

⁴⁴"Riley Expresses Surprise at Attitude of the Governor," Arkansas Gazette, 26 December 1974, sec A, col. 7.

⁴⁵Carol Griffiee, "Fulbright Resigns From Senate; Gains Pension Increase," Arkansas Gazette, 27 December 1974, sec. 1A, col. 8.

⁴⁶Carol Griffiee, "Bumpers to Resign January 3; Riley to Serve 11 1/2 Days," Arkansas Gazette, 28 December 1974, sec. 1A, col. 8.

Also on that Thursday, Riley's stationery arrived at the Capitol. A secretary in Bumpers' office called Linda Newkirk, Riley's administrative assistant, who replied "Do whatever you want to with it. I don't care." Ultimately the stationery found a place in an obscure corner in the hallway.⁴⁷ On Friday, Riley said in a statement that he did not order stationery in anticipation of becoming governor. He commented that that responsibility existed only in the office of the governor. Riley also commented that no portrait of him was being prepared for display in the Capitol.⁴⁸

Commenting on his decision to resign, Bumpers said that serving out his term as governor could cast legal doubts on any official actions during those 11 1/2 days. Bumpers did firmly establish that not resigning early would have no effect on seniority. Rather, the decision in question in part related to Bumpers' desire to acquaint himself with Senate procedures. Bumpers said the decision was delayed for technical rather than subjective reasons.⁴⁹

On January 3, 1975, Dale Bumpers stood before his office door in the Capitol and handed Secretary of State Kelly Bryant the keys to the governor's office (which had to be borrowed for the ceremony from Bryant, who normally kept them). Most of his morning had been spent talking with reporters and well-wishers. Bryant then

⁴⁷Carol Griffiee, "Fulbright Resigns From Senate; Gains Pension Increase," Arkansas Gazette, 27 December 1974, sec 1A, col. 8.

⁴⁸Carol Griffiee, "Bumpers to Resign January 3,; Riley to Serve 11 1/2 Days," Arkansas Gazette, 28 December 1974, sec. 1A, col. 8.

⁴⁹Ibid.

presented Bumpers with an Arkansas state flag that had flown over the Capitol earlier that morning. After saying a few words to the 75 people gathered there, Bumpers left the Capitol, tracing the same steps which Riley would follow 11 1/2 days later.

At that same moment, in the House of Representatives, the ceremony to make Bob Riley the Governor of Arkansas was under way. Senior Senator Max Howell of Jacksonville, a long-time friend of Riley's, assumed the role of Master of Ceremonies. A Marine Corps color guard presented colors, and the National Anthem and Marine Hymn were played. At 11:16 a.m. Chief Justice Carlton Harris of the Arkansas Supreme Court administered the oath of office.

During a ten minute speech Riley reiterated his goal of facilitating Pryor's assumption to power later that month, vowing to serve "in all decency and honor." He also announced, "I do not plan ever to run for political office again." With that remark, the ceremony was over.⁵⁰

With the question of the succession aside, much of the media attention on Riley disappeared. The article on Bumpers' resignation became Carol Griffie's last article dealing with Riley. Only two items worthy of note occurred during Riley's tenure. He proclaimed Leland DuVall Day in honor of the Gazette's farm-business economist, and named Ouachita Baptist University's composer-in-residence and music professor

⁵⁰Ernest Dumas, "Riley Takes Office With Vow to Serve 'In All Decency'," Arkansas Gazette, 4 January 1975, sec 1A, col. 8.

Dr. W. Francis McBeth composer-laureate of the state. This was the first such appointment in the United States.⁵¹

The controversy surrounding the governor's office staff dissipated. Linda Newkirk remained in the Lieutenant Governor's office, having been retained by the incoming Joe Purcell. Riley's only additions to the Governor's staff were his wife Claudia ("to do the donkey-work") and Jim McDougal, formerly of Senator Fulbright's staff. The remainder of the staff consisted of Bumpers' old personnel and several of Pryor's new people. The salaries of Riley, his wife, and McDougal during this period were donated to Ouachita Baptist University. According to Claudia Riley, "We had some good lunches and nice camaraderie."⁵²

On January 10 several of Riley's friends in the Marine Corps had a party for Riley at the Little Rock Air Force Base. Brigadier General P. X. Kelly, later commandant of the Marine Corps, was the invited speaker.⁵³

Since Bumpers was still an outgoing governor, by tradition he should address the Arkansas Legislature before the new governor was sworn in. In this case, it was decided that Bumpers should make his address before Pryor's inauguration, not

⁵¹ "Hang Bob Riley's Portrait!" *Arkansas Gazette*, 14 January 1975, sec. 6A, col. 1; "Widely Performed Composer Named State Laureate in Recognition of Work," *Arkansas Gazette*, 11 January 1975, sec. 3A, col. 3.

⁵²Dr. Bob Riley, Claudia Riley, and Jim McDougal; interview by the author, tape recording, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, 29 October 1990.

⁵³Ibid.

Riley's. Accordingly, Cecil L. Alexander, the new Speaker of the House, invited Bumpers to return and address the Arkansas Legislature before Pryor became governor. The speech was made on January 13, the day the Arkansas legislature came into session.⁵⁴

On January 14, 1975, Bob Riley appeared before the Arkansas Legislature to give his farewell speech. Riley extemporized briefly, praising the legislature, and saying that his term had been important to him, having given him "a new capacity for love and understanding."⁵⁵

As Riley's sight was too bad to allow him to read⁵⁶, he asked Jim McDougal to read a speech for him "since I can never memorize."

So, as I drift away into that old mist which envelops old warriors and old politicians, I would say this final word to you. I have heard the roar of great ordnance in the field. I did not flinch before its bombardment. However, I am unashamed to say that I tremble before the dignity of your two houses and before the majesty of the people of Arkansas.

As I go from this place, I bear upon my body the massive disfigurement of war, but my soul is unscarred and filled only with affection for you, for the constitution, and for the people of Arkansas. God bless you. God bless the people. God bless David Pryor.

⁵⁴Ernest Dumas, "Riley Takes Office With Vow to Serve 'In All Decency'," Arkansas Gazette, 4 January 1975, sec. 1A, col. 8.

⁵⁵"Riley Leaves Interim Office With Praises for Legislature," Arkansas Gazette, 15 January 1975, sec. 4A, col. 1.

⁵⁶Riley suffers from glaucoma in his right eye and lost his left eye as a result of injuries sustained at Guam during World War II. He is considered by the Veteran's Administration at 100% disabled.

To a standing ovation, a number of delegates led Riley out of the House Chamber, down the first flight of stairs to the landing, where they wished him well.⁵⁷

Only one last thing remained of Riley's governorship, that of the portrait. In an effort to end discussion on the matter, Riley had firmly stated that he would not allow the portrait to be hung in the Capitol, and so it was displayed off of Capitol grounds.⁵⁸ However, friends in the Arkansas Legislature became determined to see the portrait hung in the Capitol. Before the legislative session opened, Senator George E. Locke of Hamburg announced his intent to introduce joint legislation calling on Secretary of State Kelly Bryant to hang Riley's portrait in the Governor's Conference Room beside the portraits of the other governors.⁵⁹ Following the lead of the Senate, on Tuesday, January 28, 1975, the House adopted House Resolution Six, also urging Secretary of State Bryant to hang the portrait of Riley.⁶⁰ Riley's colleagues from the Legislature paid for the portrait.⁶¹ It hangs there today, between the

⁵⁷"Riley Leaves Interim Office With Praises for Legislature," Arkansas Gazette, 15 January 1975, sec. 4A, col. 1.

⁵⁸"Some Kind Words for Bob Riley," Arkansas Gazette, 19 January, 1975, sec. 6A, col. 5; "Hang Bob Riley's Portrait!" Arkansas Gazette, 14 January 1975, sec. 6a, col. 1.

⁵⁹"Proposal Set for Portrait of Riley," Arkansas Gazette, 13 January, 1975, sec. 3A, col. 1.

⁶⁰"House Approves Riley Resolution," Arkansas Gazette, 28 January 1975, sec. 4A, col. 6.

⁶¹Dr. Bob Riley, Claudia Riley, and Jim McDougal; interviewed by author, tape recording, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, 29 October 1990.

portraits of Dale Bumpers and David Pryor, as a testimony to the man who simplified the transition between one administration and another.

Several points of interest arise with reflection upon the events surrounding the governorship of Bob Riley. The overarching observation, made by Riley himself, is that the entire dilemma was the result of the media.⁶²

Until Carol Griffie's first article on November 9, 1974, no one seemed to know, beyond those involved, that Bumpers would have to resign to obtain his Senate seat. Griffie's first article had its basis in nothing more than Capitol gossip. Even so, it seemed to catch everybody off-guard. Bumpers, Pryor, Bryant, and Riley were forced to respond to situations that became larger than the reality. It is no wonder that there was a great deal of confusion, accusing, and mishandling of situations.

Comparing the information in the various articles and in discussions with Riley, several bits of conflicting information come to the surface. For example, no one is quite sure who ordered stationery with Riley's name as governor. Even if Linda Newkirk had sent such a request to the Governor's office, it had to be implemented from there. So, the blame for that must lie in the Office of the Governor. Riley's confusing and wavering comments as to whether he sanctioned ordering the stationery could have been caused by two conditions. The first condition was Riley's frequent

⁶²Dr. Bob Riley, Claudia Riley, and Jim McDougal; interview by the author, tape recording, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, 20 October, 1990.

absence from the Lieutenant Governor's office due to his teaching obligations. Effectively, that put him out of the information loop; stationery could have been ordered by Newkirk without Riley's knowledge. The second condition was Riley's desire to protect Linda Newkirk if the situation went bad. Still, in an interview sixteen years after the fact Riley maintained that neither he nor Newkirk had any hand in ordering stationery.⁶³ It would seem that the stationery episode exemplified a case of several people acting on similar impulses at the same time, without any clear directive from any one person.

A similar situation arose with Riley's portrait. No one seems to know who exactly contacted Betty Russell to do the portrait, but most fingers point to Kelly Bryant. Russell did say that Bryant talked to her about it, so that could conceivably have been contact enough for her. Bryant, who already had backpedaled on ordering government forms with Riley's name as governor, claimed innocence. It seems most likely that Riley decided to have the portrait made in hopes of being governor, but never with a planned push to have it hung. Riley never made a big issue of the entire affair, so it is entirely possible that as the controversy mounted Riley could have wanted the portrait for himself.⁶⁴ It was only at the insistence of the Arkansas Legislature that the portrait was hung. Again, it was a case of several people having the same idea of having a portrait made, but no one taking a clear lead.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid.

The most curious figure in the governorship of Bob Riley is Dale Bumpers. Bumpers gave all the appearances of putting too much credence in the press and Capitol gossip. A simple talk with Riley and Pryor in early November could have conceivably solved the entire problem. However, Bumpers vacillated until late December, ostensibly hanging over the question of Washington staffing and Arkansas appointments.

A larger problem, perhaps, for Bumpers was mentioned only in passing by the press. This was Bumper's stand on the seniority system. His opposition to Senate seniority became one of the selling points of his campaign for the Senate. After the election, that stand put Bumpers in a political quandary. To start becoming a force in the Senate, he would have to work with the seniority system, no matter how much he disliked it. On the other hand, to operate in the system would be to go against a position that had helped him get elected. Bumpers probably spent more time in November and December of 1974 worrying about the political ramifications of his resignation than about Riley's potential action's in the governor's chair. This type of political decision is not something to be laundered in the media, so Bumpers used staffing and appointments as scapegoats to buy himself time and space to think. If this was, indeed, the case, Bumpers' worry over the seniority issue came to naught, as did worry over Riley's possible actions as governor.

To be sure, Riley's elevation to the office of governor set a precedent to be followed when David Pryor resigned to become a U.S. Senator. However, was Riley

correct in saying that a lieutenant governor had never been made governor before?

The answer is no, and yes.

Bob Riley was not the first lieutenant governor to become governor because of a resignation. The first lieutenant governor, Harvey Parnell, became governor on March 14, 1928 when John E. Martineau was elevated to a federal judgeship. Parnell served out the remainder of Martineau's term, and won the seat in his own right in 1930. Even so, Bob Riley was the first to become governor for such a short time due to a conflict of elected offices, and that action did set a precedent for Joe Purcell in 1978. So, Riley's contention on the uniqueness of his situation depends on one's point of view of history.

A final question, one raised by history, concerns the status of Riley during the 11 1/2 days. Was he actually governor, or merely the acting governor? The evidence clearly supports the contention that Riley was the actual governor of Arkansas. The evidence includes several key points: Bumpers did not just leave the state, he actually resigned his position; Riley actually took the oath of office; it was considered worthy by the Arkansas Legislature to have his portrait hung with those of the other governors. It should be added to this that Riley himself believes that he was actually governor.⁶⁵

⁶⁵Ibid.

The only evidence against Riley's legitimacy is found in the Historical Report of the Secretary of State. It is listed in this book that Bob Riley *served* as governor, while Harvey Parnell is listed as having *succeeded* John E. Martinueau.⁶⁶ There is an important distinction between the two. The phrasing in The Historical Report implies that Riley merely acted in the sitting governor's absence, while Parnell is obviously considered as actually having been governor. This is corroborated in the historical roster of governors, where Riley fails to make the list.⁶⁷ In a telephone call to the Secretary of State's office it was acknowledged that Riley was considered as only an acting governor during the 11 1/2 days. It is unclear what the technical difference is between Parnell's ascension and Riley's ascension.

Still, one would say it is only 11 1/2 days, and that it does not really matter. Riley did nothing; indeed, Bumpers would probably have not resigned had not Riley pledged to do nothing.⁶⁸ Still, for 11 1/2 days a man had a life-long ambition fulfilled, regardless of legal niceties. It was a good time for the Rileys, for their friends, and, in the end, Arkansas can look upon this episode as a lighter moment in the often grim politics of the time.

⁶⁶Winston Byrant, Historical Report of the Secretary of State, ed. Janice Wegener (Little Rock, Arkansas: Secretary of State's Office, 1978), pg. 230-231.

⁶⁷W. J. McCuen, Historical Report of the Secretary of State, ed. Steve Faris (Little Rock, Arkansas: Secretary of State's Office, 1986), pg. 313-314.

⁶⁸Doug Smith, "The 'I Shall Depart' Speech of Gov. Riley," Arkansas Gazette, 19 January 1975, sec. 3E, col. 5.

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