

BILL BURSON

Director

State Department of Family and Children Services

Reporter, war correspondent, press secretary, State and Federal official — Bill Burson has been all these and more.

A 1945 honor graduate of R. E. Lee Institute in his hometown of Thomaston, Georgia, Bill Burson compressed a four-year journalism course at the University of Georgia into less than three, graduating magna cum laude in 1948 with membership in Phi Beta Kappa, Spinx and other honor societies.

While still in high school, he was a reporter and columnist for the Thomaston Times; and, at the University of Georgia, he successively served as staff writer, assistant director and director of the University's news bureau. In the latter capacity he received national attention as the nation's youngest publicity director of a major college or university.

After graduation he went with United Press. In six years with that news agency, he covered the Georgia political scene from Atlanta, managed the bureaus at Birmingham, Alabama and Jackson, Mississippi, and was the youngest accredited American correspondent to cover the Korean War. He was cited for "reporting under fire" by the 17th (Yalu River) Regiment of the U. S. Seventh Infantry Division.

In 1953 Governor Herman Talmadge made him his Executive Aide and Press Secretary. Except for several short interludes Burson remained with Talmadge for a decade. When Talmadge was elected United State Senator, Burson accompanied him to Washington and stayed with him through his first term.

During the interludes Burson directed publicity for Fred Hand in his gubernatorial campaign, was Executive Secretary to Attorney General Eugene Cook and managed public information services for Associated Industries of Georgia.

Burson returned to Georgia in late 1962 to assist James L. Bentley in reorganizing the Office of the Comptroller General and then to serve Governor Carl Sanders as principal speechwriter.

On November 15, 1963, Governor Sanders appointed him Director of the State Board of Probation where he reorganized and revitalized that agency. He held the post until August 4, 1965, when Postmaster General John A. Gronouski named him Assistant to the Director of the Atlanta Region of the Post Office Department.

In May of 1967 Governor Lester Maddox announced he was appointing him to become Director of the State Department of Family and Children Services and member and chairman of the State Board for Children and Youth. He assumed his duties on July 1 of that year.

He is married to the former LaVerne Womble of Warthen, Georgia, and they have three living children -- Forrest, Leigh and Lu. His widowed mother, Mrs. Mildred P. Burson, still resides in Thomaston.

SUGGESTED INTRODUCTION OF BILL BURSON

Our speaker today is a native of Thomaston, Georgia, 40 years old, married and the father of three children, including a teen-age son who is taller than he is.

He brought to his present job a background of extensive experience in journalism, government and politics.

He worked his way through the University of Georgia and graduated in less than three years in 1948 with a magna cum laude journalism degree and membership in Phi Beta Kappa and Sphinx.

He spent the next six years with United Press -- as a political writer in Georgia, as a Bureau Manager in Birmingham, Alabama, and Jackson, Mississippi, and as the youngest accredited American war correspondent in Korea. In the latter capacity he received a special citation for "reporting under fire" from the 17th (Yalu River) Regiment of the U. S. Seventh Infantry Division.

In 1953 he joined his long-time friend, Herman Talmadge, who was then Governor of Georgia, as Press Secretary. And he served him in that role through his first term as United States Senator.

In 1963 he became principal speechwriter for his college classmate, Governor Carl Sanders. And in November of that year Governor Sanders appointed him Director of the State Board of Probation where he reorganized, streamlined and revitalized that agency.

In 1964 then Postmaster General John A. Gronouski appointed him Assistant to the Director of the Atlanta Region of the Post Office Department and on June 29, 1967, he was sworn in by Governor Lester Maddox to be Director of the State Department of Family and Children Services and Chairman of the State Board for Children and Youth.

It is in those capacities that he is with us today.

I present to you Bill Burson.

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