

## HOW I GOT INTO POLITICS

The depression was still on in the summer of 1934. Business, though improving for Volney and I was still light. It was hardly enough for both of us and not enough for a reasonable living for one.

One day in August while on a trip up town to the bank to deposit our small deposit, I was stopped at 24th and Keisel by LeRoy Malin. He said, "Arias you are a delegate to the Democratic County Convention are you not?" I assured him that I was. He handed me a card with the picture and name on it for Lawrence M. Malan for County Clerk and Auditor, asking me to support Lawrence. I said, "No I don't think I could". LeRoy said, "You know him well don't you". I told him that I did. He said "Lawrence is a good man and you know that don't you". "Yes he is a good man", I said. "Then why can't you support him", said LeRoy. Here I thought to have a little fun so I said, "Lawrence is a very good man but that's the job I've been thinking about". "Oh no", said LeRoy, "you can't do that". Why don't you seek one of the other offices then you and Lawrence can combine your delegate strength and you both can get an office". We discussed this at length. "That's an idea I said, "but I think I'll stay with my choice", and walked on to the bank.

I had hardly returned from the bank when Frank ~~Huband~~, a strong and influential Democratic worker, came into the office and said he had met LeRoy Malin, who told him that I was thinking of running for a County office. Still just to carry on the joke a little further I said, "I've been thinking about it". Frank said, "But Arias you can't be serious about running for County clerk. I would like to see you run for County Treasurer." The present County Treasurer had held office for 16 years; elected in years when he was the only Democrat elected. I thought this was too hard to get even if I were serious. Frank said, "Arias this will be the easiest office to knock over this year". So we talked and he strongly urged me to get into politics.

His visit was soon joined by H.H. Goddard and others, so the talk was out on the streets. At first this was all a jest but then Volney and I talked about it and I began thinking about it seriously. Business was an uphill affair; the depression was still on. I was having trouble paying off my home loan; the mortgage company was pressing me. The prospect of a regular salary was tempting.

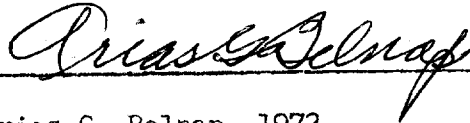
What started as a joke was now worth looking into. I went to some of the big party wigs and asked them what they thought. One after another said to file for some other office not County Treasurer we've pledged him our support. So I went to others not so party solid. One said, "Not County Treasurer go for an administrative post but I'll support you whatever you choose". Another said, "Pick out an office held by one of the Republicans" or "why not go for County Assessor you are well qualified". A prominent party member and office holder (but not one of the officers) said, "Good for you, we need a change in the office". One said, "I know the incumbent has promised not to seek the office again but he has asked me to nominate him at the convention and I've accepted, but if you make it I'll support you gladly". An elderly gentleman said, "I've been a delegate for many years and I've never promised to support anyone prior to the convention but I'll tell you we need a change there and I'll support you". So on and so on it went. The more favorable it got.

As I remember the County convention was in September. I was nominated and before the roll call was finished I had 3/4 of the total votes of the convention. My opponent conceded and moved for a unanimous vote which was accepted. This was the election of November, 1934, a clean county Democratic sweep. (I was elected six consecutive terms.) I became active in taxation laws, sponsoring many changes which became law such as: no work after 1 o'clock on Saturday; later no work on Saturday; the use of abbreviations in newspaper advertising; major change in assessing and collection laws; specification of forms needed; uniform 5 year forms of assessor and treasurer tax rolls; retirement programs and several others.

I became a member of the County officials organization legislation committee. I was chairman the last ten years of my service; Vice-President in

1947 and President in 1948 ~~of the State Retirement Board~~. Because of the prospect of county and state retirement programs I stayed term after term to meet the change in law from 1947 to 1961 when I served as the chairman of the state committee that proposed a law then passed by the legislature in 1961.

With two years remaining in my elected term to the end of January 1958 I resigned as County Treasurer to accept an appointment by Governor George Clyde to become a member of the Utah State Tax Commission, a position I held for two terms from March 23, 1957 to April 15, 1965; age 71. So what started as a joke became a life time of public service.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Arias G. Belnap", written over a horizontal line.

Arias G. Belnap, 1972