

McMurry saw visions come true

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practice.

As county attorney, Mr. McMurry was instrumental in performing the legal work that resulted in formation of most of the county water, sewer and fire districts. The districts have been a major factor in the development of the county outside of the city.

As county judge, Mr. McMurry advocated changes in government, which at the time were considered innovative and radical. However, he proved to be a visionary because most have been implemented.

He felt the state court system needed change to remove judicial duties from county judges. That idea was endorsed in 1975 when voters approved a constitutional amendment.

Mr. McMurry felt sheriffs should be allowed to run for reelection to improve the quality and consistency of law enforcement. Voters in 1983 approved an amendment that allows sheriffs to run for consecutive terms.

He was an early and vocal advocate of reforming bail bonding laws to eliminate corruption that he said was caused by professional bail bondsmen. In 1976, the General Assembly approved laws banning professional bail bonding.

Mr. McMurry also predicted in 1966 that the county would someday be forced to impose a payroll tax to fund county government. Such a tax was imposed in the mid-1980s to pay the rising costs of operating a landfill and a county

jail.

As a judge, he was tough on juveniles. He said he had no qualms about locking a juvenile up for several days as punishment.

Mr. McMurry was also an early advocate of countywide zoning, which he said was needed to ensure orderly development. In a January 1966 speech, he said, "If you don't make a zoning plan, you are going to be disappointed in what you see 25 years from now."

As judge, he tried to pass zoning laws but wasn't able to get the support of the public or other members of the fiscal court. The fiscal court is in the process of approving a county zoning plan that could be implemented later this year.

Mr. McMurry moved to Paducah in 1926 when he was 6 months old. His parents were Lucile Pelham McMurry and William Fletcher McMurry, a prominent Paducah attorney.

The McMurry twins attended Paducah schools and were star football players. In their senior year, their father, a strict disciplinarian who felt his sons needed military-type training to help them meet challenges in life, sent them to the Western Military Academy in Alton, Ill. Both were planning military careers and hoping for appointments to West Point Military Academy.

Six weeks after arriving at the Alton school, Mr. McMurry was stricken with polio. He had to use crutches or a wheelchair for the rest of his life. His quest for a

military career was ended, but his brother went to West Point and became a military officer.

In April 1952, his brother, a bomber pilot, died when his jet was shot down over the Sea of Japan.

Mr. McMurry wanted to be a doctor but changed his mind while attending Paducah Junior College. Instead, he found satisfaction in legal research and decided to become a lawyer. After graduating from PJC, Mr. McMurry went to the University of Mississippi, where he received his law degree.

Mr. McMurry's father died while he was attending law school.

In 1966, Mr. McMurry formed a partnership with Mike Livingston and worked part time while he served as county judge. The firm began in a three-room suite on the ninth floor of the Citizens Bank building. Today, the firm consists of 11 attorneys who occupy the

entire seventh floor and part of the eighth floor.

Mr. McMurry said his crutches did not stop him from doing the things he loved: hunting, fishing, boating and playing golf.

"I did well on those crutches," he said in a 1997 interview. "I could follow a bird dog through a field as well as anyone. I didn't let it bother me or get in the way with anything I wanted to do."

He is survived by his wife of 47 years, Mary Elizabeth McMurry; two sons, Bill McMurry of Louisville and John McMurry of Knoxville, Tenn.; and two daughters, Bonnie McMurry of San Francisco and Sally Byrd McMurry of Portland, Ore.

Services will be at Broadway United Methodist Church in Paducah at 2 p.m. Wednesday. Visitation will be from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday at Roth Funeral Chapel in Paducah and from noon to 2 p.m. Wednesday at the church.

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