



Paul Cadenhead: A Lesson in Public Service

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The year was 1958.¹ Fulton County Solicitor General Paul Webb was consumed in a widening investigation of corruption among state officials in the administration of Georgia Governor Marvin Griffin. Allegations included stolen tax receipts, purchasing payoffs, payments to family members of officials for fake jobs, private use of convict labor, and highway construction fraud. Webb's office could not handle all the work and reached out to the Atlanta Bar Association for help.

Atlanta Bar President Randolph Thrower convened a committee to select a special prosecutor. The job fell to 31-year old Paul Cadenhead, a civil litigator with no experience in prosecution or criminal investigations. The Atlanta Constitution lamented that the selection would result in a "whitewash."

While details of funding were worked out, Paul set up shop in his law office with two former FBI agents. State employees came forward, some seeking to blow the whistle and others seeking to throw the investigation off track. Paul received death threats. He was undeterred.

Paul saw a typewriter sitting in an odd place in the Revenue Department lobby. He asked one witness why it was there and then arranged to have it watched. When someone came to remove it, Paul had the machine impounded and sent to Washington for forensic analysis. The typewriter had been used to prepare fraudulent sales tax returns. Further investigation showed that merchants would come to the office with cash to pay their returns. The merchant and the state officials would use the typewriter to prepare a fraudulent return for a lesser amount, and would split the extra cash right on the spot.

Governor Griffin started feeling the heat. He arranged to appoint his own special prosecutor and invited Paul to share

the details of his investigation with the State's prosecutor. He held a press conference to announce that the two special prosecutors would be working together. Paul realized this was a ruse by the Governor to learn investigation details and to intimidate witnesses. Paul held a press conference to deny that he would be working with the Governor's appointee and to affirm that he would continue to keep witness information confidential.

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¹The information in this article is taken directly from the book by Lea Agnew and Jo Ann Haden-Miller, *Atlanta And Its Lawyers: A Century of Vision: 1888-1988*, Chapter 2, pp. 21-25, published by The Atlanta Bar Association for its 100th Anniversary in 1988.

In order to get the Governor under subpoena, Paul's investigators came up with a plan whereby one would enter the Governor's office from the front and noisily announce his purpose, while the other waited in an adjacent office they figured the Governor would use for his escape. The plan worked perfectly.

Paul devoted nearly two years to the project that was supposed to take only six months. His work resulted in the indictment of 22 people on fraud, theft, and conspiracy

charges. The heads of the sales tax and motor fuel units of the Revenue Department received prison sentences. Paul's work changed the political atmosphere by putting state officials on notice that corruption in state government would no longer be ignored and protected by politics.

There have been many examples of outstanding public service by members of the Atlanta Bar Association, but Paul Cadenhead's work deserves to be remembered and celebrated. At great risk to himself and his practice, he undertook a job that no one else wanted to do and for which he had little preparation. Yet using his wits and his determination, he changed the history of this State for the public good. Paul

later went on to become Atlanta Bar President in 1971, only one of the many achievements of his long and illustrious career.

This is the 125th Anniversary of the founding of the Atlanta Bar Association. We are planning a luncheon to celebrate in February 2014. Details will be announced shortly. We hope you will join us.



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