

# H-Net Reviews

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Tracy Campbell. *Short of the Glory: The Fall and Redemption of Edward F. Prichard Jr.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998. x + 334 pp. \$27.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8131-2073-7.

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Professor Tracy Campbell of Mars Hill College in North Carolina has written a fine new political biography that weaves the public political career and the private life of one of Kentucky's precocious sons, Edward F. Prichard Jr., with balance and an eye for details. Campbell tells an important story on the rise, fall and redemption of a New Deal Democrat in a conservative to moderate Democratic state, Kentucky, from the 1930s to 1984, the year Prichard died.

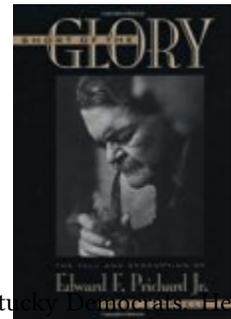
Edward Fretwell Prichard Jr. was born on January 21, 1915 in Paris, Kentucky in Bourbon County to an entrepreneurial father, Big Ed, who was involved in a variety of businesses, including raising thoroughbred horses. His father was also involved in Bourbon County politics as a Democratic party activist and precinct captain. In 1937, he was elected to the Kentucky General Assembly. He frequently took his son with him to the County Courthouse and exposed him to its political leaders and the corrupt methods of winning elections by fraud and ballot box stuffing. Edward Prichard, Jr. was fascinated by county politics and often went to the courthouse after school on his own volition to listen to stories and observe and absorb practical politics first hand. He became fascinated by these politicians and courthouse politics.

Bourbon County was one of the more wealthy counties, with excellent public schools. Ed Prichard Jr. graduated and attended Princeton University and then Harvard Law School and served on its law journal editorial board. Prichard had a photographic memory and earned high grades without much effort. He was politically active at both Princeton and Harvard and campaigned for Democratic party candidates, and even got to sit on a platform with Newton D. Baker in the in 1932 election in Trenton, New Jersey. He campaigned for Franklin D. Roosevelt

as well as for New Jersey and Kentucky. Prichard often became one of the key student leaders in campus political affairs. He continued his political campaigns in presidential and Kentucky gubernatorial politics and became well known and a reliable Democratic party activist during his years as a student.

Prichard graduated magna cum laude with his LL. B. from Harvard Law School in June 1938. He was a student of Felix Frankfurter at Harvard University and had an offer to stay another year as research fellow. In the summer of 1938 he worked with Senator Robert LaFollette's Committee investigating abuses of civil liberties. In 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt selected Felix Frankfurter to the United States Supreme Court, and Prichard soon became his law clerk and began his bureaucratic career in Washington moving from one high level position to another. He was a staunch New Deal Democrat and often wrote very thoughtfully and effective policy positions based on a wide knowledge of political and economic affairs. Prichard soon displayed his penchant for gossip, well-timed news leaks, inside maneuvering to maximize individual freedom in court deliberations and bureaucratic policy making.

In 1940, he worked at the Immigration Division in the Justice Department under Attorney General Robert L. Jackson. Prichard's liberal convictions and memberships in the Washington Committee for Democratic Action and the Washington Peace Mobilization came to the attention of the FBI who began to spy on him after it stole the group's membership lists. In 1941, Prichard moved to the Office of Emergency Management as senior attorney for three months and then went to work for Sidney Hillman as an assistant general counsel in the Office of Production Management and supported the "new union-



ism” views of his boss. He served under James F. Byrnes, then Fred Vinson of Kentucky, in the powerful Office of Economic Stabilization. He wrote effective memos bearing on important policy positions and impacted a variety of New Deal agencies during Roosevelt’s and Harry Truman’s administrations. Prichard operated among the best and brightest of the New Dealers. He would soon be banished from the nation’s capital because of a political crime he committed at his Bourbon County courthouse in a 1948 general election.

Edward Prichard came under surveillance by the FBI by order of President Truman soon after Roosevelt’s death in April 1945. Truman deeply distrusted the New Dealers unfriendly to him, suspicious of leaks to the press. Roosevelt’s administration had already known that Prichard was a major source of news leaks from government agencies to the press and especially leaks to Drew Pearson. Prichard’s telephone was wiretapped by order of Truman to gauge the loyalty of the White House staff. Prichard’s activities were judged apprehensible, although no substantive issues emerged. In fact, Prichard was simply too liberal, supporting civil rights for African-Americans, and he leaked information to the press in order to influence government policy, a common art form practiced by some government bureaucrats.

Prichard returned to Bourbon County, Kentucky, in 1945 to start his law practice and to continue his Democratic party activism as a precinct captain in 1946. In the 1948 general election in Kentucky, Ed Prichard stuffed 254 ballots; they were discovered and an investigation ensued.

Bourbon County, like some other Kentucky counties, had a tradition of election trickery and fraud not totally stamped out. In short, Prichard asked Judge William B. Ardery for advice as a friend and lawyer and confessed his crime. Also, Judge Ardery’s son, Philip, an attorney, became privy to the crime. As events unfolded, Philip, fearing illegal entanglement in what might be considered a cover-up plot, told an FBI agent investigating the ballot fraud what he knew. J. Edgar Hoover followed the case personally because he recalled Prichard’s activities in Washington and had him under electronic surveillance; he now had an opportunity to investigate and charge Prichard with a crime and destroyed a New Deal libertarian thought to be suspect by both President Truman and Hoover. Prichard was convicted and sent to a federal prison in Ashland, Kentucky, where he served 160 days out of a two-year sentence. President Truman issued an order of clemency before leaving office.

Prichard’s career as a lawyer quickly collapsed, his marriage fell apart, his tax liabilities rose to more than \$700,000, and he was unable to pay it off. Bourbon County divided into sympathetic and hostile camps over Prichard’s ballot fraud, his conviction, and the reputation it gave the community, and some friends felt betrayed by his actions. Prichard was unable to work as a lawyer, and he was plagued by huge unpaid taxes, as well as a distraught wife and children whom he could not support. Prichard’s first love remained politics, especially campaigns of Kentucky governors whom he advised behind the scenes, and without pay or any official capacity because of his notoriety. In the two decades that Prichard was in the wilderness, Kentucky’s politicians aspiring to be governor or in the governor’s office sought his political advice because he had amassed a store of information he could recall at will before reducing it to a clear analysis, which he could then translate into effective policy decisions. In addition, he had vast contacts in Kentucky counties that proved useful.

Robert T. Garrett, in his book review in the *Louisville Courier-Journal* on November 15, 1998, noted that Campbell failed to discuss that Edward Prichard framed key issues in Kentucky for forty years and that he played a seminal role in state civil rights laws, in controlling strip-mining, and in leading the stateside effort to reform public education. He led a state committee for educational reform whose name became the Prichard Committee. Thus, Campbell’s biography is a good one but understates the full impact of Prichard’s efforts in several key areas. Campbell more than adequately covered the rise and fall of Prichard, but his resurrection, recovery, and profound impact was large. That story needs more recognition and detail to fit the reality of Prichard’s life and contributions to Kentucky.

Campbell researched widely and used a variety of sources, including interviews, although Prichard’s own oral history was closed by his wife who suffered greatly from embarrassment and financial privation as a result of Prichard’s conviction. Campbell interviewed Prichard’s brother, Henry, and consulted letters Prichard had sent to friends over the years, as well as news stories in the press, court records, Federal Bureau of Investigation surveillance files, manuscripts, and records of Prichard’s activities in Kentucky; he also examines Bourbon County records in Paris, Kentucky, and records on Prichard’s activities in Washington, D.C.’s federal bureaucracies where he worked as a New Deal Democrat. Many of these records and interviews would have also revealed Prichard’s central role in Kentucky’s rise to modernity in

the past forty years. All in all, Campbell has produced a noteworthy and fascinating biography.

This review was commissioned for H-Pol by Lex Renda <renlex@uwm.edu>

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