

Political Sage Creekmore Fath Dies

Creekmore Fath, a longtime Democratic warrior who served under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, died June 25 at his home in West Austin. A memorial service takes place at 11am, Thursday, July 9, at Weed-Corley-Fish Funeral Home, 3125 N. Lamar.

Fath, 93, was of the liberal wing of Austin's old guard – the wing that in the Fifties and Sixties supported the likes of candidates **Ralph Yarborough** and **Sissy Farenthold** over opponents who hailed from the “establishment” wing of the Democratic Party. “He was just a superb brother-in-law,” said Austin activist **Shudde Fath**, who was married to Creekmore's older brother, the late Conrad Fath. The two brothers, Shudde said, “were very compatible and very supportive of each other.”

A lawyer, Creekmore Fath seemed to lead a storybook political life. After obtaining his law degree from the University of Texas in 1939, he opened a law practice with **Bob Eckhardt**, who went on to serve in the U.S. Congress, and **Mace Thurman**, who ultimately became one of Austin's most notable district court judges. Just one year after hanging out his shingle, Fath was summoned to Washington to serve as counsel to a House Select Committee investigating the “Interstate Migration of Destitute Citizens,” meaning the millions of migrant farm families who had left Oklahoma and other Plains states to try to find work in California. Fath is credited with keeping the spotlight on the committee by convincing Chair John Tolan to invite Eleanor Roosevelt to testify before the committee, given her interests in socioeconomic issues of the day. Tolan thought he was joking, Shudde Fath said of her brother-in-law's novel idea; no first lady had ever testified before a congressional committee. Fath served in a number of other capacities in Washington, and while there he, as Shudde put it, “met and courted and fell in love” with **Adele Hay Byrne**, a granddaughter of John Hay, who served as President Lincoln's personal secretary and later as U.S. secretary of state from 1898 to 1905.

The couple married in April 1947, and four months later Creekmore returned to Austin with his new bride. He restarted his law practice in the Littlefield Building and immediately dove into the

heady splendor of Texas politics. Creekmore and Adele, who died in 2007, kept an active social calendar. Collectors both, they built an impressive inventory of art and books. The philanthropic pair owned the most extensive private collection of lithographs by American artist **Thomas Hart Benton**, which was exhibited at several museums and galleries. “They had a house full of treasures,” said Shudde Fath of her in-laws, who were regular donors to philanthropic endeavors and political campaigns.

In addition to Shudde, Creekmore is survived by his stepdaughter, Moyra Byrne, of Washington, D.C. Memorial contributions may be made to the **Creekmore and Adele Fath Charitable Foundation**, 502 W. 13th, Austin 78701.

– Amy Smith



Creekmore Fath

COURTESY OF SHUDDE FATH

LYCEUM POLL: TEXANS FULL OF SURPRISES

Rick Perry outpolls **Kay Bailey Hutchison**, Texans support **voter ID**, Republicans support **gay unions**, Democrats lack a ... wait, whoa, back up, what?!

Yes, buried among all sorts of opinion data on the economy and political candidates in the latest edition of the **Texas Lyceum Poll's** executive summary, that gay unions thing certainly jumped out and made our jaws drop. And if the poll's numbers (taken from interviews with 860 Texas adults) are accurate, not only are 57% of Texans OK with some form of gay union, but a slim majority (51%) who identify with the party that has bashed on homosexuals the most say they favor either civil unions or same-sex marriage.

Sure, the GOP still has stronger anti-gay trends than independents or Democrats – 43% oppose any sort of legal gay union, and those willing to allow them are two and a half times more likely to go for civil unions than outright marriage. Still ... a majority? Really? Could this possibly signal an end to this controversy as a wedge issue?

That was only one question among many prompted by the poll. As for the current state of the 2010 political horse races, the only thing that really can be gleaned is: It's early yet. While 33% of respondents intending to vote in the Republican primary favor incumbent Gov. Perry vs. 21% who lean toward presumed challenger Sen. Hutchison, the more important number is the 45% who remain undecided.

The Democratic primary is even more wide open: While entertainer **Kinky Friedman** leads gubernatorial options, his support stands at a paltry 10%, trailed by former Bush administration ambassador **Tom Schieffer** at 6% and state Sen. **Leticia Van de Putte** of San Antonio at 3%. (Van de Putte said last week that

she's not interested in the race and tried to convince Austin state Sen. **Kirk Watson** to run; Watson was noncommittal.) A whopping 81% were undecided.

Among all Texans, 57% said they approve of Perry's job performance, while 65% approve of Hutchison.

If Hutchison resigns to challenge Perry, that would necessitate a special election to replace her; 71% didn't register a preference among the six Republicans and two Democrats currently saying they might be interested in moving to Washington; of those who have, Democratic Houston Mayor **Bill White** leads at a mere 9%, ahead of Attorney General **Greg Abbott**, Lt. Gov. **David Dewhurst**, Railroad Commissioner **Elizabeth Ames Jones**, former Texas Secretary of State **Roger Williams**, state Sen. **Florence Shapiro**, former Comptroller **John Sharp** (the other Dem), and Railroad Commissioner **Michael Williams**.

One issue that could loom large in 2010: While Dem legislators fought tooth-and-nail to derail bills this session that would have required citizens to present a photo ID to vote, Lyceum's data shows solid support across the board for it, even among Democrats and minorities, groups that would supposedly be hurt by such a requirement. Expect Republicans to hammer on this in the general election.

Also worth noting: 68% of Texans approve of President Obama's job performance; 46% identified as independents vs. 25% as Republicans and 28% as Democrats; 46% said they were conservative, while 35% claimed to be moderate and 19% liberal.

Almost half (49%) said they usually vote; 24% said they haven't voted in an election “over the last two or three years.” – Lee Nichols

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