

Desegregation Spotlights Arlington School Board

By John Lawson Staff Reporter

The Washington Post and Times Herald (1954-1959); Aug 25, 1958;

ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Washington Post

pg. B1

5 Members: Car Dealer, Ex-Teacher, Educator, Liberal, Lawyer

Desegregation Spotlights Arlington School Board

By John Lawson
Staff Reporter

Five Arlington citizens have been thrust into a national spotlight by virtue of their membership on the County School Board.

These people are not unaccustomed to being in the public eye on a local level because school matters have always generated fierce controversy in Arlington. What is moving them into the wider areas are the decisions and actions they must make on school desegregation.

The five-member School Board is sharply split in its approach to educational philosophy. It remains to be seen whether the Board will unite on desegregation problems.

Some clue to the members' position is expected Tuesday when the Board has scheduled a meeting to make public its position on applications of Negro children to enter white schools. Some background and personal characteristics of the members may be helpful in knowing them better.

Peck A Conservative

At the head of the Board is an automobile dealer and former chairman of the County Board, Robert A. Peck. His crew-cut hair and native enthusiasm make him seem even younger than his 44 years. A right-wing conservative, he a

believer in segregation and an announced enemy of the County's liberal element.

The father of two children in Arlington schools, Peck set out early to remake many of the policies set down by the previously liberal-controlled Board.

Since his appointment to the Board a year ago, he often has run into solid opposition but invariably he emerges smiling as dedicated if not as stubborn as before.

A Republican, he represented that ticket on the County Board from 1952 to 1956, and was a vigorous supporter (though not a member) of the Arlington Independent Movement (AIM) before it disbanded in June.

Peck's views are reinforced and even enlarged upon by Helen S. Lane, who was appointed to the Board last December and since then has become unquestionably the Board's most controversial member.

A Segregationist

The 52-year-old Mrs. Lane is a segregationist, an admirer of the Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties (before whom she has spoken) and a vigorous critic of liberal School Board policies.

Mrs. Lane, a former schoolteacher, now a secretary in the



Peck

Joy

Stockard

Mrs. Lane

Bean

... their local actions will have national interest

office of the general counsel of the Treasury, has attempted to remain relatively aloof from the segregation controversy, but she is an outspoken and bitter critic of "modern" educational values.

She is sensitive to criticism, but her attitudes—often defensive—are known and felt by the Board, which numbers her as the more vociferous of its two conservatives.

Oldest member of the Board in term of service is Barnard Joy, 49, holder of a doctorate in education and probably the Board's most active educator.

Joy, who gravely chain-smokes through Board meetings, spends much of his spare time as a forceful member of

the Virginia State School Boards Association and other educational organizations.

The father of two grown girls and two boys, one of whom recently graduated from Washington-Lee High School, Joy is in his tenth year on the Board and his 22d as an Arlington resident. He was the first chairman of the elected School Board in 1948. He is assistant to the administrator of the Agriculture Research Service.

In dress he is casual, in his views liberal, but he is precise in slow, drawing speech—reminiscent more of Texas than his native Florida:

James Stockard, on the other hand, is a genuine Texan.

Though his speech betrays no origin, Stockard has perhaps more southern background than any other Board member.

Descended on both sides of his family from Confederate soldiers (one of whom accompanied Lee to Appomatox), Stockard at 43 feels he is in an unusual position to understand the South's viewpoint.

He has lived in Arlington for 16 years and absorbed the Northerner's liberal views on segregation. But he feels he understands the Southerner's position in the context of a Supreme Court decision that promises to remake the region's social fabric.

Stockard has three children,

all school age, is a meticulous dresser, and a dedicated liberal. He is training director of the General Services Administration.

In the middle of the Board's liberal-conservative division—and liking it—is L. Lee Beam, 42-year-old lawyer, new to the Board and already its controlling force.

Beam found himself virtually at the helm almost as soon as he was appointed last December. Brushing aside pressure to join one of the two factions, he declared his intention as a conservative to "study each problem and vote by convictions," and thereby dashed all hope that he would throw control firmly into conservative hands.

As a result, shots have flown his way from both sides. Yet Beam remains relatively unconcerned. He is quiet spoken, seldom engaging himself in the wrangles that occasionally erupt, and consistently he is unpredictable.

Stricken with polio in 1935, he has twice headed local polio fund drives.

A conservative dresser, he is equally cautious in his public and private remarks. His energy comes through quietly. His obvious power on the Board as the group's anchor man is used diplomatically usually behind the scenes.