

= Louie B. Nunn =

Louie Broady Nunn (March 8 , 1924 ? January 29 , 2004) was the 52nd governor of Kentucky . His election in 1967 made him the first Republican to hold that office since the end of Simeon Willis ' term in 1947 , and the last to hold the position until the election of Ernie Fletcher in 2003 .

After rendering noncombat service in World War II and graduating from law school , Nunn entered local politics , becoming the first Republican county judge in the history of Barren County , Kentucky . He worked on the campaigns of Republican candidates for national office , including John Sherman Cooper , Thruston Morton , and Dwight D. Eisenhower . He was the Republican nominee for governor in 1963 , but ultimately lost a close election to Democrat Ned Breathitt . An executive order signed by Governor Bert T. Combs that desegregated Kentucky 's public services became a major issue in the campaign . Nunn vowed to repeal the order if elected , while Breathitt promised to continue it .

In 1967 , Nunn again ran for governor . After defeating Marlow Cook in the Republican gubernatorial primary , he eked out a victory over Democrat Henry Ward . The state offices were split between Democrats and Republicans , and Nunn was saddled with a Democratic lieutenant governor , Wendell H. Ford . Despite a Democratic majority in the General Assembly , Nunn was able to enact most of his priorities , including tax increases that funded improvements to the state park system and the construction of a statewide network of mental health centers . He oversaw the transition of Northern Kentucky University from a community college to a senior institution and brought the University of Louisville into the state university system . The later years of his administration were marred by race riots in Louisville and a violent protest against the Vietnam War at the University of Kentucky . Following his term as governor , he unsuccessfully challenged Walter " Dee " Huddleston in the 1972 senatorial election and John Y. Brown , Jr. in the 1979 gubernatorial contest . In his later years , he supported the political ambitions of his son , Steve , and advocated for the legalization of industrial hemp in Kentucky . He died of a heart attack on January 29 , 2004 .

= = Early life = =

Louie Broady Nunn was born in Park , Kentucky ? a small community on the border of Barren and Metcalfe counties ? on March 8 , 1924 . His given name , Louie , honored a deceased friend of his father 's ; his middle name , Broady , was a surname in his mother 's family . Louie was the youngest of the four sons born to Waller Harrison and Mary (Roberts) Nunn ; their youngest child , Virginia , was their only daughter . The Nunns were farmers and operated a general store , though Waller suffered from a congenital heart condition and severe arthritis and was limited to light chores . The eldest brother , Lee Roy , became an influential campaigner and fundraiser for the Republican Party .

Nunn obtained the first eight years of his education in a one @-@ room , one @-@ teacher schoolhouse in Park . During his teenage years , he gave himself a hernia while lifting a heavy piece of farm equipment . This , combined with his father 's health history , may have contributed to back pain issues that plagued him for most of his life . In 1938 , he matriculated to Hiseville High School . He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree at Bowling Green Business University .

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7 , 1941 , Nunn departed for Cincinnati , Ohio , to take flying lessons in hopes of becoming a B @-@ 17 pilot . By the time he finished his flight training , however , the Army had discontinued its air cadet program . On June 2 , 1943 , he enlisted in the Army and received his recruit training at Fort Wolters near Fort Worth , Texas . He was transferred numerous times . First , he was stationed at Sheppard Air Force Base near Wichita Falls , Texas . Next , he was assigned to the 97th Infantry Division , then received additional training at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri . Finally , he transferred to the Army Medical Corps , but his back injury flared up , and he received a medical discharge on September 13 , 1945 . He held the rank of corporal at the time of his discharge .

Following his military duty , Nunn pursued a pre @-@ law degree at the University of Cincinnati . Three years later , he matriculated to the University of Louisville School of Law where he was a

classmate of future congressman Marlow Cook . Nunn earned his Bachelor of Laws degree in 1950 . He opened his legal practice in Glasgow , Kentucky , in September 1950 .

On October 12 , 1950 , Nunn married Beula Cornelius Aspley , a divorcee from Bond , Kentucky . The couple had two children ? Jennie Lou , born in 1951 , and Steve , born in 1952 . Aspley also had three children from her first marriage . Nunn left the Methodist denomination in which he had been raised after marrying Aspley , joining her as a member of the Christian Church .

= = Political career = =

On June 17 , 1953 , Nunn declared as a Republican candidate for county judge and was ultimately the only Republican to declare . In the Democratic primary , one of the challengers charged that the incumbent had used his office for personal gain . In the wake of the investigation , a group of disgruntled Democrats formed an organization to elect Nunn , who defeated his Democratic challenger by a vote of 5 @, @ 171 to 4 @, @ 378 , becoming the first Republican elected county judge in the history of the heavily Democratic county .

In 1956 , Nunn served as statewide campaign manager for Dwight D. Eisenhower 's presidential bid , as well as the senatorial campaigns of John Sherman Cooper and Thruston Morton . The Kentucky Junior Chamber of Commerce named him " Young Man of the Year " in 1956 . He was not a candidate for re @-@ election as county judge in 1957 , but was appointed as city attorney for the city of Glasgow in 1958 . He considered running for governor in 1959 , but became convinced it would be a bad year for Republicans and did not make the race . He managed successful re @-@ election campaigns for Senator Cooper in 1960 and Senator Morton in 1962 . He also managed the state campaign of presidential candidate Richard Nixon in 1960 . Although John F. Kennedy won the election , Nixon carried Kentucky 54 % to 46 % .

Nunn was the Republican nominee for governor of Kentucky in 1963 . During the campaign , he attacked an executive order issued by sitting Democratic governor Bert T. Combs that desegregated public accommodations in the state . Calling the order " a dictatorial edict of questionable constitutionality " , Nunn charged that it had been dictated by U.S. Attorney General Robert Kennedy . In a television appearance , Nunn displayed a copy of the order and declared " My first act will be to abolish this . " The New Republic accused him of conducting " the first outright segregationist campaign in Kentucky " . He lost the election to Democrat Ned Breathitt by a margin of just over 13 @, @ 000 votes .

= = = Governor of Kentucky = = =

In 1967 , Nunn faced his old classmate , Jefferson County judge Marlow Cook , in Kentucky 's first Republican gubernatorial primary in many years . Nunn attacked Cook as a " liberal , former New Yorker " , and some of his supporters made reference to Cook 's " Jewish backers " . The injection of antisemitism into the campaign drew criticism from Senator John Sherman Cooper , who threw his support to Cook . Nunn also attacked Cook for his Catholic faith , a tactic that proved particularly effective with the state 's Protestant voters . In a close vote , Nunn defeated Cook to secure the nomination .

Nunn then faced Democrat Henry Ward in the general election . During the campaign , Nunn charged that Democrats wanted to raise taxes to pay for administrative inefficiencies . He also played up divisions within the Democratic party , and was endorsed by two @-@ time former Democratic Governor A. B. " Happy " Chandler . Nunn allied himself closely with the national Republican campaign against Lyndon B. Johnson , bringing several prominent Republicans to the state to speak for him . He won the election by a vote of 454 @, @ 123 to 425 @, @ 674 , despite the fact that half of the other state offices went to Democrats , including the lieutenant governorship , won by Wendell H. Ford .

The General Assembly was controlled by Democrats , but Nunn was able to pass most of his agenda . Despite a campaign promise not to raise taxes , when the outgoing Breathitt administration projected a shortfall of \$ 24 million in the state budget , Nunn convinced the General Assembly to

pass an increase in the motor vehicle license fee from \$ 5 @. @ 00 to \$ 12 @. @ 50 and raise the state sales tax from three percent to five percent . Nunn 's budget focused on increased funding for education , mental health , and economic development . In the 1970 legislative session , the General Assembly enacted Nunn 's proposals to eliminate taxes on prescription drugs and the use fee charged on vehicles transferred within families , but rejected his plans to reduce the income tax for low @- @ income families and increase tax credits for the blind and the elderly .

Nunn oversaw the entry of the University of Louisville into the state 's public university system . Fulfilling a campaign promise , he helped transform Northern Kentucky Community College into Northern Kentucky State College (which later became Northern Kentucky University) , a four @- @ year institution and member of the state university system . Historian Lowell H. Harrison argued that these actions diluted state support to existing higher education institutions . Nunn also supported the newly created Kentucky Educational Television .

Nunn doubled the accommodations in the state park system . Barren River Lake State Resort Park was completed during his tenure , and three other parks were planned and funded during his administration . He also greatly improved the state mental health system . Under his leadership , a statewide network of 22 mental health centers was completed , and all four state psychiatric hospitals were accredited for the first time . Nunn called the revamping of the state mental health system his proudest accomplishment as governor . There was not total agreement between Nunn and the legislature , however . The governor vetoed one @- @ quarter of the bills passed in the 1968 legislative session and 14 percent of those passed in the 1970 session . An open housing bill became law without Nunn 's signature , and he also refused to sign the 1970 state budget as a form of protest . (Unsigned bills become law after ten days under the Kentucky Constitution , in contrast to the pocket veto provision in the federal constitution .)

A supporter of President Nixon 's law @- @ and @- @ order philosophies , Nunn called out the National Guard to break up violent protests in the state . In May 1968 , he sent the Guard to Louisville to break up race @- @ related protests that followed peaceful civil rights marches . This action was criticized by civil rights leaders across the state . In May 1970 , Nunn again dispatched the Guard to quell protests against the Vietnam War at the University of Kentucky , and imposed a curfew that interfered with final examinations . The latter protest culminated in the burning of one of the university 's ROTC buildings .

From 1968 to 1969 , Nunn served on the Executive Committee of the National Governors ' Conference and , in 1971 , chaired the Republican Governors Association . The Louisville Courier @- @ Journal said of Nunn 's administration " On the whole , his management of the state 's finances has been sound [H] e took a general fund facing a deficit , restored it to solvency , and kept it healthy . No scandals have marred the Nunn record . He chose able men to direct his revenue and finance departments , and their efficiency saved the state millions of dollars . " Historian Thomas D. Clark called Nunn the strongest of Kentucky 's eight Republican governors .

= = Later career = =

Following his term as governor , Nunn opened a law practice in Lexington . He campaigned for a seat in the U.S. Senate in 1972 , losing to Democrat Walter " Dee " Huddleston . His loss came despite a landslide victory for Richard Nixon in the state and was generally blamed on his support for an increased sales tax during his gubernatorial administration . He continued working on behalf of Republican candidates , and backed Ronald Reagan 's primary challenge to incumbent Gerald Ford in 1975 . His last run for office came in 1979 when he was again the Republican nominee for governor against Democrat John Y. Brown , Jr . He decried the excessive spending , expanding government , and increased state employment that had occurred under Democratic administrations . He also attacked Brown for his playboy image (he was married to former Miss America Phyllis George) and his refusal to release his tax returns , as well as his inexperience in government . Despite these attacks , Nunn lost by a vote of 558 @, @ 008 to 381 @, @ 278 and returned to his legal practice .

In the 1980s , Nunn served on the boards of regents of Morehead State University and Kentucky

State University . He served as a lecturer at Western Kentucky University , and received the Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Louisville in 1999 . During the late 1980s , he criticized Senator Mitch McConnell , one of the emerging leaders of the state 's Republican party , for not doing more to support other Republicans in their bids for office ; McConnell maintained that he had to focus on his own reelection campaign in 1990 . In 1988 , Nunn unsuccessfully challenged Congressman Jim Bunning in his bid to retain his position as Kentucky 's Republican national committeeman .

In 1994 , Nunn 's wife Beula filed for divorce from a hospital bed where she lay dying of cancer . She claimed she was trying to preserve some of her estate for her children . A Metcalfe County judge granted the divorce , but Nunn challenged the ruling , and it was later set aside . Some property issues were still pending at the time of Beula 's death in 1995 . During the divorce proceedings , Nunn 's son Steve sided with his mother , causing a rift between him and his father . A 1994 letter from the elder Nunn alleged that Steve Nunn physically and verbally abused Louie Nunn and other members of his family . The letter was discovered in 2009 when Steve Nunn was charged with the murder of his former fiancée , Amanda Ross .

In 1999 , Nunn again considered a bid for governor , precluding a potential bid by his son , Steve . He cited personal and health issues for not making the race . In 2000 , he backed the presidential campaign of Senator John McCain . Nunn was reconciled to his son Steve , and when Steve ran for governor in 2003 , Louie supported him . After Steve Nunn ran third in a four @-@ way primary , the elder Nunn supported the Republican nominee , Ernie Fletcher , hosting a fundraiser for him .

Nunn also became an advocate of legalizing industrial hemp in Kentucky , writing , " Frankly , I was opposed to the legalization of hemp for years because I had been of the opinion hemp was marijuana . I was short @-@ sighted in my thinking , and I was wrong . " In 2000 , Nunn secured an acquittal for actor Woody Harrelson , who came to Lee County , Kentucky , and planted hemp seeds in open defiance of Kentucky 's law forbidding the cultivation of hemp . Later , he traveled to South Dakota where , at the base of Mount Rushmore , he publicly presented an Oglala Lakota leader with bales of hemp after the tribe 's crop was confiscated by officers from the federal Drug Enforcement Administration .

Louie B. Nunn died of a heart attack at his home in Versailles , Kentucky , on January 29 , 2004 , hours after hosting a luncheon with labor leaders seeking help in dealing with the newly elected Fletcher administration . He was buried at the Cosby Methodist Church cemetery in Hart County , Kentucky . The Cumberland Parkway was renamed the Louie B. Nunn Cumberland Parkway in 2000 , and the main lodge at the Barren River Lake State Resort Park is also named in Nunn 's honor .