

IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

A white tornado named Blodgett

It's hard to imagine a woman so full of energy and spunk not being with us any more. Former Knox County Clerk Sally Blodgett was one of a kind — she moved so fast she made the rest of us look phlegmatic. My association with Sally was through politics and working for her in the County Clerk's office. While she was chief deputy for Yvonne Tabb, I didn't get to know her very well. About the first conversation we ever had, she asked me to be campaign manager for her first run at the job of County Clerk.

In 1994 Yvonne Tabb announced she wouldn't run again and Sally, with the encouragement of her family, decided to be a candidate. She had a brutal primary battle which she won by about 60 votes. If anyone remembers election year 1994, it was the year of the Newt and a disaster for Democrats from top to bottom. Surveying the wreckage, however, was Sally Blodgett, one of the few Democrats left standing, who became Knox County Clerk. (I can't take credit for her win in the General Election. I ran her campaign only through



the Primary.)

People not in politics don't understand how much work it is to win, or lose, an election. Sally's Democratic cohorts in 1994 and 1998 can tell you about her marching from door to door and attending events in

the county, all while working full time, fighting the pain of arthritis and being in her fifties and early sixties. She never showed any physical weakness or discomfort; it wasn't her style. Sally commuted daily over two-lane roads from Yates City to Galesburg for 26 years.

The employees of the County Clerk and other courthouse offices have plenty of "Sally" stories to help them get through the grief of losing their coworker and friend. She was kind to her employees, but a nonsense person. When I worked in her office for awhile, she suspected I was gunning for her job. One day we had a blunt conversation about that, when I made clear to her that I was not. Before her reelection bid in 1998 I quit full time work so my presence in the clerk's office wouldn't be an issue. Often when I or another employee would start to ask her a question she would turn to us with a scowl on her face and bellow, "Oh, WHAT!" Her pretense of impatience was always good for a laugh.

She was compassionate, loved her family and friends and was good to them. I didn't

know her children and other family members well, but it was easy to see she was a strong core of her family. She was a mover and shaker in Yates City, leading the drive for the building of its impressive community center and serving as president of the school board. As late as August she was campaigning at the Abingdon Fall Festival for her son, Randy, who is a candidate for the Knox County Board. She recently traveled to Haiti with her church group and was excited about her trip, both before and after.

But, finally, Sally's physical problems ganged up on her and her legendary fighting spirit and drive weren't enough to pull her through. She is missed by her family, of course, but her co-workers over the years will always remember her with love and laughter. She was a corker. What a void she will leave on this earth.

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