

"Power Meant Nothing: But Love Meant Everything"

By LISA JOHNSON
Clay City News

There are women whose presence quietly commands admiration, not by the sound of their voice but by the strength of their spirit, and Sara Walter Combs is one of them.

Born in Louisville, Kentucky, on August 24, 1948, she seemed destined to carve her path long before she ever met the man whose name she would one day carry with fierce love and unwavering devotion.

Sara's brilliance shone early. She was valedictorian of Sacred Heart Academy, then again at the University of Louisville, where she earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees in French with a perfect 4.0 GPA. Her pursuit of excellence didn't stop there—she went on to law school at the University of Louisville, graduating second in her class and setting the stage for a life of purpose, service, and quiet power.

It was in 1979 that her path crossed with former Governor Bert T. Combs when she joined the law firm of Wyatt, Tarrant & Combs. The connection between them was not instant fireworks but a slow, respectful unfolding—a shared intellect, a deep admiration, and eventually, an extraordinary love.

Despite a 29-year age difference and lives already complicated by prior commitments, Sara and Bert would come together in a bond that would define her life and leave an indelible mark on Kentucky's history. She once said that whenever she spoke about Bert, she would cry—and not out of sorrow, but out of the depth of feeling that never dimmed.

In 1988, they married at Fern Hill, a log house nestled in Powell County that Sara had helped design and build herself. She named it after Dylan Thomas's poem, and it became not just a home but a place of purpose.

Here, she and Bert raised animals, grew gardens, and laid the foundation for his final and perhaps most important contribution to public life: the constitutional challenge that led to the landmark *Rose v. Council for Better Education* case, which transformed Kentucky's public school funding forever.

Sara was there every step of the way—not just as a partner in love, but as a partner in vision.

After Bert's tragic death in 1991, when his car was swept away in a flash flood, Sara could have pulled away from public life. But instead, she continued the work they had both believed in.

In 1993, Governor Brereton Jones ap-

pointed her to the Kentucky Supreme Court, making her the first woman ever to serve on the state's highest bench. Less than a year later, she became a judge on the Kentucky Court of Appeals and made history again by serving as its Chief Judge from 2004 to 2010—the first woman and the first person from her district to hold that position.

In a field still too often dominated by men, Sara Combs carved out not just space, but respect. Re-elected multiple times, she served with integrity, clarity, and humility. Her accolades include the Kentucky Bar Association's Outstanding Judge of the Year and a Lifetime Achievement Award from Kentucky Women in Law Enforcement, but what truly defines her legacy is not what she earned—it's what she gave.

She honored Bert's memory not only through her work but through her words, publishing a memoir titled *Bert Combs: The Fern Hill Years* in 2021. In it, she poured her soul into recounting their life together, capturing the way he touched Kentucky and how she, in turn, has carried that torch.

What makes Sara Combs unforgettable isn't just her intellect, her firsts, or even her flawless memory—it's her heart. The way she speaks of Bert with a trembling voice and wet eyes, the way she carried his dreams forward even as she built her own, the way she stood for something when no one expected her to stand at all. Sara Combs is, without a doubt, a self-made woman—but she's also a keeper of legacies, a builder of dreams, and a living reminder that love and purpose can coexist, and together, they can shape the world.

This is more than a story about a governor and his wife—it is a true love story, built on mutual respect, a shared purpose, and a commitment to serving others. Governor Bert Combs and his wife, Sara Combs, were more than just political figures — they were pillars of compassion and vision, choosing not to live in the spotlight but instead to shine it on others. Despite the opportunities they had to settle elsewhere, they remained rooted in Powell County, Kentucky, where Sara continues to this day to pour her heart into making the community stronger.

Their love wasn't just for each other; it was for the people of this state. Sara has never cared about your life, your party, or your popularity—she cares about your humanity. As she often lives by: it's not the power you hold, it's the person you choose to be. Because sometimes,

power doesn't make the man — it takes the man out of them. And in Sara's eyes, what matters most is not who you are on paper, but who you are when someone needs help. This was one of the best mornings I've ever spent, sitting with someone so full of knowledge, her words flowing not just from memory, but from the heart. What a fairy

tale. What a blessed romance.

Some love stories never truly end; they continue to inspire and endure. If love could leave a legacy, this is undoubtedly it. Their story is woven into the soul and love for Kentucky. Sara has stayed here.

Sara is our own treasure here in Powell County.

Thank you.



Sara Walter Combs

Classifieds

Buy, Sell, Trade or Giveaway, Call (606) 723-5012

Public Notice of Master Commissioner Sale

COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY
ESTILL CIRCUIT COURT
CIVIL ACTION NO. 23-CI-00174

LAND HOME FINANCIAL SERVICES, INC.

PLAINTIFFS

VS.

JONATHAN T. LANE, ET AL.

DEFENDANTS

NOTICE OF SALE

Pursuant to and in compliance with the Judgment and Order of Sale of the Estill Circuit Court, the Master Commissioner will offer for Sale at public outcry the following described property located in Estill County, Kentucky:

Property Address: 4088 Barnes Mountain Road, Irvine, Kentucky 40336
PVA Parcel No: 095-00-00-020.00

Said sale shall take place on the following date and at the following location:

FRIDAY, AUGUST 15, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.
AT THE FRONT DOOR OF THE ESTILL COUNTY COURTHOUSE
130 MAIN STREET, IRVINE, KENTUCKY

Said property shall be sold to raise the amounts hereinafter set forth, together with interest and the costs of the action, and the following terms and conditions:

1. At the time of the sale, the successful bidder shall either pay cash or make a deposit of at least ten (10%) percent of the purchase price with the balance on credit for thirty (30) days. In the event of default by the purchaser the ten percent (10%) deposit made by the purchaser shall be applied to any costs and/or expenses of this action. In the event the successful bidder elects to credit the balance, he or she will be required to post bond and furnish an acceptable surety or sureties thereon. Said bond shall be for the unpaid purchase price and bear the interest rate of 3.75% per annum from the date of sale until paid. Any purchaser or purchasers shall have the privilege of paying said bond before maturity by paying the principal together with all accrued interest. The bond shall have the force and effect of a judgment in order to secure the payment of the balance of the purchase price and said bond shall constitute a prior and superior lien on the property until paid. No bond or earnest money shall be required if the Plaintiffs are the purchasers and the bid is less than their adjudged lien.

2. All delinquent property taxes shall be paid from the proceeds of the sale. The purchaser shall be required to assume and pay all ad valorem taxes assessed by the county of Estill and State of Kentucky for the current year and all subsequent years. The property shall further be sold subject to any delinquent State, County and/or city real estate taxes sold pursuant to the provisions of KRS Chapter 134 to any private purchaser during the pendency of this action.

3. The property shall otherwise be sold free and clear of any right, title, and interest of all parties to the action and of their liens and encumbrances thereon, and all existing liens recorded after the recording of the Plaintiff's Lis Pendens Notice, excepting and subject to, however, easements, restrictions, stipulations and covenants of record in the Estill County Clerk's office, any facts which an inspection and accurate survey of the property may disclose and any assessments for public improvements levied against the properties.

4. The risk of loss and the right of possession of the real estate and any improvements thereon shall pass to the purchaser upon confirmation of sale by the Estill Circuit Court.

FURTHER INFORMATION REGARDING THE PROPERTIES AND/OR SALES THEREOF CAN BE FOUND IN THE ESTILL CIRCUIT COURT CLERK'S OFFICE BY THE FILE NAME AND NUMBER FOR EACH SALE, THE ESTILL COUNTY PROPERTY VALUATION ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE, AND THE ESTILL COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE. PROSPECTIVE BIDDERS ARE ADVISED AND ENCOURAGED TO REVIEW ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE AT THESE LOCATIONS FOR MORE DETAILS OF THE PROPERTIES OR SALE, AS THE MASTER COMMISSIONER HAS NO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND DOES NOT WARRANT TITLE TO THE PROPERTY TO BE SOLD. THE PROPERTY SALES, IF MORE THAN ONE IS SCHEDULED FOR A PARTICULAR DAY, WILL OCCUR SEQUENTIALLY AT THE APPOINTED HOUR.

This the 4th day of August, 2025.

/s/ Patrick E. O'Neill
PATRICK E. O'NEILL
MASTER COMMISSIONER