

Legislator Is 22 Carry-out Boy Now Lawmaker

By ROB KERBY
Of the World Staff

CLAREMORE — The carry-out boy at the Humpty supermarket here is going to the next session of the Oklahoma Legislature.

Not as a visitor, but as one of the state's youngest lawmakers.

Stratton Taylor, 22, credits hard-working elementary school kids as one reason he won almost 2-1 over two ranchers also seeking the District 9 House of Representatives post.

THE YOUNG DEMOCRAT won last month's primary by a wide enough margin to avoid a run-off and is unopposed by any Republican in the general election.

Asked what he intends to run for next, the son of nearby Alliwe's former school superintendent says he'll have to settle for his new House of Representative seat at least for the next eight years.

"That's just about how long it'll take before I'm old enough to qualify for anything else."

The Claremore Junior College and University of Tulsa graduate has a state teaching certificate and taught briefly at Claremore High School. But finances forced him back to the grocery store where he worked his way through college:

"I CAN'T AFFORD TO teach school. I can make more money at the store."

Like any good politician, he credits first his wife, Barbara, then his self-sacrificing campaign workers for his recent success at the polls.

But he admits:

"Working at the store may have been one of the big factors."

"Everywhere I went, I knew people — and I knew them from the grocery store or from teaching their kids."

"I think that since people saw



World Staff Photo
Stratton Taylor, legislator and carry-out boy.

me day after day at the grocery store, they figured I know what it means to pay bills and make ends meet."

FROM THE FIRST OF THE campaign, he was taken seriously, say such area politicians as Rogers County sheriff's wife Mrs. Irene Ward, county Democratic Party chairman.

For here was the 1977 Outstanding History and Political Science Student at TU, the former president of the CJC Student Senate — and a young orator who since junior high school had mused aloud of someday launching into politics.

For six months in 1977, he'd dropped out of TU to work in

See He Knew on A-4

He Knew Lots of People

Continued From A-1

Washington, D.C., for U.S. Rep. James R. Jones as a research assistant.

In debates, he downplayed opponent's allusions to his age and told audiences that Oklahoma government needs "a strong dose of common sense."

"I'm preaching a policy of middle class representation, getting tough on crime and criminals and serving retired citizen's needs," he thundered at public gatherings.

"WE NEED TO SEE SOME work done to help the rural retired, those elder citizens who live in the Foyils, the Bushyheads, the Talalas."

Quietly, respectfully, voters two and three times his age watched the easy-going carry-out boy look like a legislator.

"I think you've got it in the

bag," said one bank president after a Claremore Chamber of Commerce debate.

Young U.S. House of Representatives hopeful Mike Synar has his 4-H club network. Taylor had his kids:

"The one group that probably did more for me was my supporters in high school, junior high and even younger — in elementary.

"I TAKE THIS AREA'S KIDS seriously. They're citizens. They know what's going on. They want to be involved.

"We gave them responsibilities just like anybody else — more than any other candidate might would have."

A cadre of grade schoolers was in charge of mass producing and distributing yard signs.

At the grocery, he's a stocker,

a cash-register checker, floor-mopper, and pricer.

He intends to keep on working there whenever he's not involved in legislative responsibilities.

"I hope someday to return to the classroom, but not right now. I plan to maybe go into business for myself or continue my education."

"I'LL JUST HAVE TO SEE what the future holds."

In the last days of the campaign, one opponent plastered Claremore and Nowata newspapers with full-page ads cautioning voters not to "send a boy to do a man's job."

Taylor smiles.

"I guess the voters just cared more about real issues."

"And I think they realized I'm young enough to give them a full lifetime of service."