

Ken Hechler Interview Transcript, 1985 A&M 1164

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1985



Title Statement

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Abstract

Transcription of an oral history interview by Niel M. Johnson of the Harry S. Truman Library with Ken Hechler. Hechler, born 1914 in Roslyn, NY, received A.B., Swarthmore 1935; M.A., Columbia 1936; Ph.D., Columbia 1940 in Political Science which he later taught at Columbia, Princeton, and Marshall Universities. He served as a U. S. Army combat historian in Europe during World War II. Hechler was a research assistant to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and was special assistant to President Harry S. Truman. He was elected to the U. S. House of Representatives as a Democrat from the Fourth Congressional District of West Virginia, 1958-77. A major part of the interview is about his work for President Truman as a speechwriter in political campaigns dealing with issues of public concern in the immediate post-war years such as the Korean War and political corruption. After completion of his White House duties he relocated to Huntington where as a professor at Marshall he staged a successful campaign for U. S. Congress. He mentions, as a congressman, his independence from his own party's state machine and his promotion of controversial causes such as implementation of civil rights and environmental protection legislation. Hechler is a popular, progressive who used a personal contact "grassroots" approach to campaigning. Eschewing the increasing costs of political campaigns and the heavy dependence of candidates on public relations firms, he was defeated in the late 1970's in his gubernatorial and congressional bids. He was successful, though in making a comeback in the 1984 race for West Virginia Secretary of State. He ends the interview by specifying the duties of this office and his accomplishments in it to date. Significant references are made to Dean Acheson, David Bell, Robert C. Brooks, John Carroll, Clark Clifford, Dwight Eisenhower, George Elsey, Hermann Goering, George Hechler, Lyndon B. Johnson, Max Kampelman, Estes Kefauver, Raymond Moley, Will Neal, George S. Patton, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Samuel I. Rosenman, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Adlai Stevenson, Harry S. Truman, Harry Vaughan.

Creator

Hechler, Ken

Extent

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United States Congressmen - West Virginia.

Elections

Politics and government.

Korean Conflict.

Universities and colleges

World War, 1939-1945

Democratic Party (U.S.)

United States. Army

Moley, Raymond.

Patton, George S. (George Smith), 1885-1945

Göring, Hermann, 1893-1946

Truman, Harry S., 1884-1972

Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945

Acheson, Dean, 1893-1971
Carroll, John.
Vaughan, Harry.
Stevenson, Adlai E. (Adlai Ewing), 1900-1965
Elsey, George M., 1918-2015
Rosenman, Samuel I. (Samuel Irving), 1896-1973
Schlesinger, Arthur M, Jr. (Arthur Meier), 1917-2007
Eisenhower, Dwight D. (Dwight David), 1890-1969
Johnson, Lyndon B. (Lyndon Baines), 1908-1973
Neal, Will.
Johnson, Niel M.
Kefauver, Estes, 1903-1963
Kampelman, Max M., 1920-2013
Clifford, Clark M., 1906-1998
Bell, David.
Brooks, Robert C.
Hechler, George, 1840-1929