INTERVIEW WITH

Robert E. Smylie

by

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Oral Historian

on

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for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

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This interview is being conducted with Governor Robert E. Smylie in Governor Smylie's office in Boise, Idaho on August 18, 1975. Present for the interview, Governor Smylie and Dr. Burg of the Eisenhower Library staff.

DR. BURG: May I begin by asking you when and where were you born?

GOV. SMYLIE: I was born in Marcus, Iowa, a town in Cherokee county, on Halloween night, October 31, 1914.

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DR. BURG: And were ribbed for that, I suppose.

GOV. SMYLIE: All my life, yes. And had to give away thousands of bars of candy when I was governor because it got to be quite a game to come trick or treat the governor on his birthday.

DR. BURG: Oh! Indeed! Indeed, I suppose it would. Now were you educated in the state of Iowa--high school, for example?

GOV. SMYLIE: I went to grade school and high school at various schools in Iowa. Dad was a school superintendent and moved from time to time. I graduated from high school at Cresco, Iowa.

DR. BURG: And then from there I assume that you did your university work in another spot.

SMYLIE: I drove a bakery truck for about two years and worked in a filling station because 1932 was a reasonably inauspicious year to graduate from high school.

BURG: Indeed it was.

SMYLIE: And then I came out to Idaho to the College of Idaho at Caldwell and took my baccalaureate degree there.

BURG: What drew you out to Idaho, governor.

SMYLIE: I had an aunt in Caldwell who said I could live in the basement.

BURG: I see. And in those days would out of state tuition have been a problem for you?

SMYLIE: No, not particularly. Tuition at the college in those days was not enough that you couldn't manage to scrape it together one way or another with part-time jobs and I had a, for a while, an NYA job while I was in college--that's National Youth Administration. Then I clerked in a hardware store and swept it out and told them I knew how to do advertising and learned it after I got the job. But a series of employments at college;

I think I ended up owing them about a hundred and seventy-five bucks or something like that. And got that paid off in time to get my transcript a semester later for George Washington University's law school.

BURG: Were you able to do the four year course at Caldwell in four years?

SMYLIE: Yes.

BURG: Because I know that many of your generation had to stretch it out.

SMYLIE: No, I managed four consecutive years. I didn't have any charge for room and board which is one big leg up. I was washing dishes and being general handyman around my aunt and uncle's house in recompense for that. And then got a job as a capitol policeman in Washington--

BURG: Let me ask you first, Governor, the four year course, what did you specialize in during the four years?

SMYLIE: History was my major; it was an English minor, mostly

in literature, composition.

BURG: Out of that history work that you did, thinking back on it now, does any particular course, any particular instructor stay in your mind as being pretty impressive or having had quite an impact on you?

SMYLIE: Not particularly. I had always been a kind of a history buff. My father was a history teacher, and he used to get all the text books that anybody ever published any place and had quite a library of them, and I read them because there wasn't anything else around to read. I suppose by the time I was through the eighth grade, I'd read [John C.] Ridpath through. He was the, you know, it was an old standard text in those days.

BURG: Of course. And still seen on the old bookstore shelves, surprisingly.

SMYLIE: And then I think that probably the course that had as much impact on me as any in undergraduate school was a course on the history of the Renaissance and Reformation, and in those days the classic text was one by Dr. Hulme who had

once been a professor or an associate professor at the University of Idaho and he actually wrote the text up there, but when it was published he was head of the department at Stanford. It was a pretty definitive book--I still have it as a matter of fact, some place.

BURG: And that course caught your attention as much because of the book--

SMYLIE: Well the book and the subject matter. That's a pretty glittering period of history.

BURG: Pretty heady stuff, for an undergraduate.

SMYLIE: He didn't ascribe it to anybody--I don't know where it came from--but on the fly leaf of the book was something that stuck with me all these years. It was a simple statement--"The oil of commerce lighted the lamps of culture," which says a lot about a lot of things, including the Renaissance.

BURG: Hulme had put that into the fly leaf.

SMYLIE: Hulme had put it in the fly leaf of his book and it

sort of epitomizes the whole era.

BURG: Yes, it does.

SMYLIE: And I used the quote more than a few times. As a matter of fact I used it when I dedicated the university library as probably one of the better things that had ever been written on that campus.

BURG: Interesting. Very interesting. But you went to George Washington and into law. You were not drawn to teaching, teaching history?

SMYLIE: No, no. I'd been planning to be a lawyer ever since I knew a guy named Frank McGill in a town called Rock Valley, Iowa. He was just a country lawyer there--it's a town of about fifteen hundred--but I admired him very much. I had had an interest in public life, but law's a pretty good fallback position.

BURG: What drew you to Mr. McGill, quality of mind, do you think, or overall traits of a human being, or maybe to you as a youngster, the glamour of the profession he was in?

SMYLIE: No, I don't think I ever saw him work. It wasn't a county seat town. But he was just a nice guy and seemed somehow to manage to get it all put pretty well together. I suspect that if I'd gone on driving a truck, why I would never have gone to law school, but happily I got bailed out of that.

BURG: What drew you to George Washington?

SMYLIE: Well in those days George Washington was one of the few places that you could hold down a full-time job and carry a full load in law school, too. They had an afternoon course that met from 5:00 to 7:00 five days a week, and we also had a summer session that was a single course, six weeks duration, that got you a semester's credit. I could have graduated, I think, in three and a half years from G.W. but I actually used up four.

BURG: Now were you there about 1938? Would that be about when you--

SMYLIE: '39, in February, through '42; June of '42 I got my degree. But I was admitted to the District of Columbia Bar in 1941.

BURG: One has to admire your timing. You were out of high school just in time for the Great Depression and out of law school just in time for World War II.

SMYLIE: Yes. I kept "out-sitting" the draft board because I thought if I could get that damned degree behind me, why more better.

BURG: And you did get it finished.

SMYLIE: Yes. I got my degree in June of '42 and joined the services in August of that year.

BURG: Now you'd mentioned that you worked for the capitol police; that was your job while pursuing your law studies.

SMYLIE: Well I worked as a capitol policeman for about a year I guess. And then this sounds like a lack of humility, but in those days Covington-Burling used to give what they called, rather grandiosely, a law clerk's job to the top two guys in the G.W. freshman class. I was one of them, and they offered me a job for a hundred dollars a month and so I took it and worked for them from, it would be the fall of 1940 till I left for the

service in August of '42.

BURG: And the firm name was Covington and Burling?

SMYLIE: Covington, Burling, Rublee, Acheson and Shorb at that time. It was Dean Acheson's old law firm. It's the "ivory tower" of 16th Street, Washington. It's the biggest law firm in Washington.

BURG: I see.

SMYLIE: It now has something like 175 or 180 lawyers; there were about 40 in those days.

BURG: So you had that assistance and a hundred dollars a month at that time for that kind of position, sort of a junior law clerk.

SMYLIE: Yes. You ran all the errands, but the opportunity presented itself very early on to do some research, and because the war was on, their people were leaving and you got pushed into responsibility very quickly simply because you were present and a warm body, with a little capability.

BURG: If I can ask this, did it complicate your life at the law school, because I would assume that you are being pushed into things while you're also taking the theories--make it tougher for you to study, or did it?

SMYLIE: Well, it was a kind of a monastic existence. You went to work at 8:30 in the morning and got off in time to catch the street car at 15th and Pennsylvania and ride the six to eight blocks to the law school and you get through there at 7:15 and by the time you'd had dinner and hit the books a little while, why there wasn't much time, much of the day left.

BURG: Yes, that's right. So it'd be quite a grind, and you were not married at the time.

SMYLIE: No, no.

BURG: Now when you entered service, what branch did you--

SMYLIE: I was in the Coast Guard.

BURG: In the legal branch of the Coast Guard, or just--

SMYLIE: No, I was trained as a general deck officer, but after about

six weeks or eight with eighty-three foot anti-sub patrol vessels out of Cape May, New Jersey, they got me into the legal business and I was there all the rest of the war, in Philadelphia and in the Philippines, in Tacloban, and New Guinea.

BURG: But before that you had a little taste in the North Atlantic in a fairly small size vessel.

SMYLIE: Yes, an eighty-three foot Wheeler Boat*, wooden vessel with a three foot bottom on it, but it had about eight or nine depth charges on deck and a twenty millimeter Oerlikon gun aft and a machine gun forward.

BURG: And I suppose you all prayed that there would be no surface action.

SMYLIE: Yes, that's right. Well if anyone ever surfaced at you, the standard orders were to ram. That was the only way home.

BURG: I would imagine so. With a three foot draft, I assume she rolled her guts out.

*Wheeler boats were so called because they were built at the Wheeler Shipyard, Brooklyn, NY.

SMYLIE: Oh, God! You know, I was off Montauk Light one night in December of '42, and there were fourteen people on that boat, and I was the only guy that was on his feet. It was blowing a gale out of the northwest and--

BURG: I can imagine. And you got there just in time, Governor, to be part of that period when the tankers were going up all around.

SMYLIE: Yes, when Barnegat Inlet on the Jersey coast was a real submarine alley. You'd come to the point there where you were, even with as much black-out as they'd done, you had the combination of the lights of Trenton and Philadelphia and Atlantic City almost entrain and they couldn't dark the country up enough to not have a glow against the sky of, you know, just visible.

BURG: So you're always silhouetted.

SMYLIE: Yes, and they got a lot of tankers at Barnegat.

BURG: Indeed, they did. Now that must have been a very rugged kind of duty. Then you moved more into legal work, first in

Philadelphia and then later on in the war out to the Philippines.

SMYLIE: Yes, well we had a crew put together in Philadelphia and then the Coast Guard had started running a freight supply service for the Navy, really for the Army, in support of the operations up the New Guinea coast, and it had just grown without any semblance of a table of organization or anything else and finally got to the place that I think there were seventy, close to seventy-five percent of the total manpower of the Coast Guard committed out there. So they finally devised the idea that before they were going to start the operations against Japan they ought to have a table of organization that could get people tried by court martial and paid, fed, and supplied. It was located at what came to be known as Navy Nine Twenty, which was a sort of a portable headquarters under a man named Captain Kenner. He had as his legal officer, a man named John Crean, who was a judge in New Jersey later, and he came to Kenner's service and then he started recruiting people. He grabbed up all of the guys that he'd known in Philadelphia and we got class two orders to get to Tacloban and went out there. We put the plan together and it got initialled in [Lt. Gen. R.K.]

Sutherland's headquarters the day before it was all over. So we never found out whether it would work.

BURG: Really, it took that long to process it through.

SMYLIE: It would have been all right. We started implementing the thing, but we never got it all paper worked and things were running a lot smoother but they were still about six weeks away from Coronet, which was the big one on the south island.

BURG: The November invasion. May I ask, Judge Crean, how did he spell his last name?

SMYLIE: C-r-e-a-n.

BURG: Fine, thank you. You remember his first name?

SMYLIE: John.

BURG: John, okay.

SMYLIE: Joseph. [John Joseph Crean]

BURG: So everything came to a grinding halt. May I ask what rank you had reached?

SMYLIE: Full lieutenant. I had enlisted as an apprentice seaman but that was for the purpose of going to the academy at New London. They had a "ninety-day wonder" course up there that got you commissioned as an ensign.

BURG: You headed off Montauk, if you were lucky, in an eighty-three footer. Now when the war was over, they brought you back I assume then to the west coast--

SMYLIE: Yes, San Francisco.

BURG: --and you were separated then from the service?

SMYLIE: In San Francisco.

BURG: What was your next course of action?

SMYLIE: Well, my wife had been in--I'd married in '43 in Philadelphia--

BURG: I see.

SMYLIE: --and Mrs. Smylie had been in Rio, working in the embassy down there and she came back November of '43, and we

were married in December. While I was in the Philippines she spent most of her time in Los Angeles either with her brother, who was, from time to time, there, although he lived in Houston, or working. She had a variety of jobs. And she met me in San Francisco and then we came up here to Idaho to visit and then stopped to see her mother in Tulsa and went back to Washington largely for the reason we had an apartment there, that had been sublet through the years. We had a place we could live. And I went back to Covingtons for about two months and decided it was not my dish and practiced law out of a telephone booth for another six or eight months. The fellow who was elected attorney general out here in Idaho in 1946 called up and offered me a job as an assistant and I thought about it for about five days and decided to take it and came home.

BURG: Now, may I ask you, why did you now find Covington unsatisfactory to you? Was it because you're a cog in a very large--

SMYLIE: Well, it was that plus the fact that there were a whole bunch of these fellows who had been senior in rank in the firm came back from the war and you were going to get caught in

behind and short of getting a good break like a great big client or something like that, it didn't seem to me like it was going to be all that enthralling.

BURG: Yes, I see. And private practice, I suppose at that time with hundreds of lawyers returning from the war, the competition must have--

SMYLIE: There was a glut on the market and they would righteously neglect to admit it, but all those big firms in the East have a snobbish regard for degrees from Harvard and Yale and Princeton and places like that. It was pretty easy to get treated as a second class citizen if you were from George Washington.

BURG: I can believe that.

SMYLIE: I decided by then I was going to have fun with my life instead of be a drudge.

BURG: So this opportunity here in Idaho looked pretty good to you.

SMYLIE: Yes.

BURG: Now did your wife know much about the state?

SMYLIE: No, she'd been here once and she came out here and sometime, along about a year and a half later, why there was an opportunity to--oh, a couple hearings that were sort of back to back, one the end of one week and the other the end of the next week. So I took her back to Washington with me and she had about two weeks back there and she was glad enough to come home.

BURG: That's always good. So evidently she has never regretted the life and career built here.

SMYLIE: No, I don't believe so. No.

BURG: Now may I ask you, what kind of duties did you then have as assistant to the attorney general here?

SMYLIE: Well, this is a funny story. This was in January of '47, and Mr. [Robert] Ailshie was then ill, but I don't think anybody really realized how bad off he was, and his father, [James F. Ailshie], who was a justice of the supreme court, died in May of '47, and his mother died in October of '47, and he died a week later. For the last four or five months he'd hardly

been in the office and he'd told the governor to rely on me if he wasn't there, and the governor did. And, when the man died, why the governor filled the position by appointment and I was appointed attorney general about ten months and fifteen days after I was admitted to the Idaho Bar.

BURG: Oh, for heaven's sakes. An elected position. Was the name Ailshie?

SMYLIE: Ailshie. A-i-l-s-h-i-e.

BURG: How much longer of his term had to run?

SMYLIE: It was a four-year term and this was a three years and a month and a half appointment.

BURG: Oh, so really, you filled the bulk of his term.

SMYLIE: Yes. And then I ran for re-election in 1950, largely because I got mad at somebody. The job only paid $5,000 a year.

BURG: As a Republican, of course.

SMYLIE: Yes. And then shortly after that, why it became apparent

that I was going to have to make a decision about whether I was going to run for governor and did actually make the decision sometime early in 1953, but didn't ever move out on it until the spring of '54.

BURG: Now you say that you ran for attorney general because you had gotten mad at somebody. Can you tell me who it was that had irked you?

SMYLIE: Well it was a guy who'd overpressed on a criminal prosecution that decided he was going to run against me. And I decided he needed to learn a lesson, so he did. I'd just as soon forget the name.

BURG: It ticked you off and you decided you'd stand up and let him see what he could do.

SMYLIE: Yes, that's right.

BURG: You would take your best hold, he would take his, and see which way it went.

SMYLIE: And he finally didn't even run.

BURG: Oh. So that gave you another four year term.

SMYLIE: Yes, another four year term, and this took me to 1954.

BURG: Now in those four years, Governor, is it safe to say that you became much more active in your own party?

SMYLIE: Yes. I'd been a chairman of the Ada County Young Republicans, and the 1946 Republican party in Idaho had been composed pretty generally of older gentlemen who had been running things when nobody younger was around. They elected Dr. [C. A.] Robins governor, and then 1948 happened. So the stage was kind of ready set for some sort of a revolution, and in 1950 we took over the Ada County central committee, that's Boise, this is the big red apple.

BURG: The younger men.

SMYLIE: Yes. And elected our own state committeeman and committeewoman and the county chairman.

BURG: May I ask the names of those three individuals?

SMYLIE: One was A.B. Jonnasson--

BURG: J-o-n-a--

SMYLIE: J-o-n-n-a-s-s-o-n, was the committeeman. And let's see, fellow named Charles Link was the county chairman. And I can't recall the name of the gal now, but it was a young woman and that had a major effect on the party state-wide as we started moving up to 1952.

BURG: It did? In what way? Did it attract more youth to the Idaho Republican Party?

SMYLIE: Well the example here, it began to produce the same thing elsewhere in the state, and, oh, we'd put on a kind of an abortive thing for [Harold] Stassen in 1948. Matter of fact, we lost by six votes or we'd have had the Idaho delegation for Stassen instead of for [Thomas E.] Dewey in Philadelphia. But by that time we decided that there wasn't any point in spinning our wheels about who was going to be President of the United States; what we wanted was the governor's office. And we hadn't made up our minds who it was yet. But 1952, the convention,

without much fuss except over the election of a national committeeman, we managed to shoot down the guy that had been there for about twenty years. But we didn't bother with getting involved in the Eisenhower-Taft fight at a March convention, which was even before the General had said he was going to be a candidate. And the delegation was, some sort of resolution, was honor-bound to support Senator [Robert A.] Taft. Wasn't really an instructed delegation, but as close to it as you could get without--and we chose not to make a stand on that one. Although I think that if Senator [Len] Jordan had polled his delegation in Chicago, it'd have gone the other way. I think there were enough votes to take the delegation into Eisenhower's camp if they needed it.

BURG: The older Republicans here in Idaho, in the party structure, were largely pro-Taft in '52?

SMYLIE: Well, this convention took place in, it was either March or April, before the convention in Chicago in August, as you'll recall. And Taft to all intents and purposes was the only viable force in the field and he'd been here two or

three times and was held in very deep affection by many of the older party leaders and many of the younger ones as well. But I think always there was that lingering feeling that it would have been most difficult to elect him.

BURG: And looking back in time, was that your opinion at the time?

SMYLIE: Yes.

BURG: I've heard it said that he simply lacked the kind of personality but had a splendid intellect and a very fine mind and--

SMYLIE: I took him into the coffee shop at the Hotel Boise one time, and this is a kind of a, oh, it's a lawyer's round-table sort of thing, and he was just as uncomfortable as he could be. That's the best way you could say it. He just didn't have that--

BURG: Even with men of similar background, governor?

SMYLIE: Yes. He was reticient and didn't he didn't joke well. The light, airy conversation was not for Robert Taft.

BURG: So it just didn't look as though he could be elected. But here in the state, you, your group, chose not to make an issue out of that. You did get the national committeeman. And this would be one of your younger people.

SMYLIE: He was not as young as we were, but he was a guy who was playing our ballgame and was a man named Ezra Hinshaw, who was then in the retail furniture business here in Boise and a man of reasonably independent means, so he could afford to do some of the things that the job called for. And he's now in California, runs, can't remember--there's one in, retail stores, in Arcadia and Ontario I think the other one is.

BURG: So he's still active in--

SMYLIE: Yes. Well I think he's rather desperately ill now, it's arthritis or something like that. But he would be in his eighties now.

BURG: Then the delegation went to Chicago, honor-bound as you put it for Robert Taft. Nothing was done there. The votes, the Idaho delegation were cast for--

SMYLIE: Well, Senator Jordan cast the vote, matter of fact he seconded Senator Taft's nomination and then cast the delegation's vote for Taft on the first ballot, but it never got to the second one.

BURG: So with Eisenhower then as the candidate, did you personally, let's start with that, did you personally then help to organize the campaign here in Idaho in his behalf?

SMYLIE: Well, I had expressed to Ewing Kerr who is now a district judge in Wyoming, federal judge in Wyoming--

BURG: K-e-r-r?

SMYLIE: Right. --the desire to meet the General. I didn't go to Chicago. And Ewing was attorney general of Wyoming at the time and a man named Ed [Edward J.] Bermingham was, I think he was a trustee of Columbia--

[Interruption]

BURG: If you'll just repeat that last bit we missed.

SMYLIE: Bermingham was national committeeman from Wyoming and a very great friend of Ralph Cake's, who was at the same time national committeeman from Oregon, and both of them had been active in the pre-convention maneuvering for the General, and had been closely associated with Bob [Robert P.] Burroughs who was then national committeeman from New Hampshire who had had a hand in organizing the primary caper there. Bermingham called me up and said that he'd like me to come down to Denver, and I went down to Denver to see Bermingham--and this was very shortly after the General returned to Denver from Chicago--and saw he and Fred Seaton and, I think Howard Pyle was there, and met the General. Got back up here and at about that point in time they were cranking on what really was the effective opening of the General's campaign, which was a meeting of the ten western Republican governors and Hugo Aronson who was about to be elected governor of Montana. I can't remember who it was, somebody in Denver called me up and asked me if I'd come down and work out some liaison arrangements about taking care of this thing. And they were scared to death at that point--they didn't want to have a public meeting or a public appearance because they'd

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just gotten out of that VFW fiasco in Los Angeles and a great big stadium that didn't fill. We did this thing, did it all in the capitol building. The meeting of the governors took place in the governor's office. In order to make it easy, I turned my office into a banquet hall and we had lunch for them in my office across the hall.

BURG: Here in town?

SMYLIE: Yes. And some place there's a picture of Ike and Earl Warren sitting next to each other with me leaning over the General handing him a bag of Idaho potatoes. This was the one that hit the wire service, you know, typical Idaho gizzmo.

BURG: Right.

SMYLIE: And at four o'clock we had this very brief talk by the General on the capitol steps, and there must have been twenty-seven to thirty thousand people in the plaza.

BURG: Good Lord!

SMYLIE: It filled it from rim to rim. Standing up on the

stairs, you couldn't see any vacant space in any of the periphral directions.

BURG: What brought out that kind of a crowd, governor? Was it because you--

SMYLIE: Oh, there was a bunch of drumfire, but this was, well, first off everybody knew that it was going to be the only time they were going to get a chance to see the guy in Idaho. You can't waste that much horsepower on--and--

BURG: There would be no campaign trip--

SMYLIE: There would be no other appearance here and so, well, they came in from all over the state. It was a real famous success.

BURG: They must have been very pleased, very gratified.

SMYLIE: I think they were, yes. And then sometime, this was like the 19th or the 20th of August. It's almost exactly this same day. It was in this same time frame. And about the 1st of September I'd gone up to Priest Lake--that's way up in North

Idaho on a horse ride that took me up to the Canadian border--and someplace up in the woods, why, I got a message from, that they wanted me to call the Commodore in New York. Well I finally got back down the Priest River and it was Bermingham and he wanted to know how soon I could get to New York. That Commodore staff had kind of sorted out the country and had put Bermingham in charge of everything in the West except California. And so he wanted somebody to work with him; wanted to know if I would. And this was a kind of an eyes-and-ears liaison job that I didn't get anything out of except expense money, but I did a lot of running around, places like Albuquerque and Denver and Phoenix. Had a very interesting meeting down there.

Bud Kelland [Clarence Budington Kelland] had some money that belonged to the national committee and he wouldn't disgorge it, he was the national committeeman from Arizona at the time. Howard Pyle was governor. And Bermingham and I went down there to try and shake that money loose, and we had dinner with he and Maggie Rockwell up in his suite in the Hotel Adams, because we wanted to kill two birds with one stone. I wanted to get Pyle there and, if we could, get the candidate for the Senate, who was Barry Goldwater. Well it was all right for Pyle to come,

but Goldwater was too dangerously liberal, for Kelland.

BURG: Really!

SMYLIE: Yes. [Laughter]

BURG: Oh, Governor, that's incredible!

SMYLIE: Yes, this is true.

BURG: Honest to Pete. That must have cracked you up something terrible.

SMYLIE: Yes. Well, of course I didn't know who Goldwater was in those days, but in retrospect it cracks me up. And the, Steve Shaddegg who'd been running, he'd run [Ernest W.] McFarland's campaign, he was a professional campaign organizer, and probably the best in the business in Arizona and Goldwater hired him. But this was what apparently browned Kelland off as the--

BURG: How much money was there, Governor, do you remember?

SMYLIE: About five grand. The whole problem was that--well we

got it solved very easily. The General was then moving south from Seattle in a train through Oregon to San Francisco and--

BURG: That would have been October '52.

SMYLIE: Yes. And so finally he told us, well we hadn't, "The General hadn't even called 'the chief' up," meaning of course [Herbert] Hoover. And Hoover was then at the Bohemian Grove in San Francisco--or in on the Russian River and it was very simple matter to get in touch with Fred Seaton someplace in Oregon and the wires went out inviting Hoover to get on the train in San Rafael and ride into San Francisco, which he did.

BURG: Was there initially some question about whether they should invite him, Governor?

SMYLIE: No, I don't think there was any question. I think it was just probably a staff failure, really. If anybody'd asked me in those days where was Hoover, I would say he was in the Waldorf. That's where you usually found him. And instead of that, why he was out camping out there in the Grove.

BURG: The last living Republican President that you could call

on--

SMYLIE: Yes, and I don't think that, except under tight wraps, that the General had been in any situation where he could do anything about this, and by happy circumstance, he was headed for San Francisco and there was the ex-President.

BURG: Enroute--

SMYLIE: Yes. And it worked out and that made Bud happy, and so he sent his money along.

BURG: For gosh sakes. And an interesting thing, too, Governor, the relatively small sum of money.

SMYLIE: Oh, yes. Well it was, of course, by the kind of sums we've learned to talk about these days, why, the amount spent on that campaign was astronomically small. But $5,000 was a good, round sum in those days.

BURG: Yes. Now during this work that you were doing, you're more or less in contact with the campaign train if they're out on the circuit.

SMYLIE: Well we could get in touch with them if we wanted to and what we did was--from San Francisco they went on to Los Angeles and he came out of Los Angeles to Phoenix to Albuquerque to Salt Lake, and we did a kind of a secondary advance routine. They'd always have a memo on the train of things that'd be appropriate to mention, you know, little historical bits, this, that and the next, who they hadn't ought to overlook and whose nose was out of joint about what and who could manage it. And who we thought would be helpful and who was, needed jacking up, and that sort of thing.

BURG: Was Ed Tait doing any of the advance work?

SMYLIE: Yes.

BURG: So you ran into him occasionally?

SMYLIE: Yes. Well mostly out on the West. I went East once more, but this was for the purpose of, it was easier for me to go to New York than it was for Bermingham, who was an older gentleman, to get his entourage together and travel out here. There didn't seem to me to be much campaigning going on in

Idaho, and so I set up about six or eight speeches out here that, you know, on my own turf. And went around and made those in the last two weeks in October, I think. But you didn't need to make any speeches; he carried the state by seventy-three percent.

BURG: But, you for a time there, were a bit concerned--

SMYLIE: No, I think nationally that sometime along about the 20th of October that election turned. It was widely said that it was that speech in Detroit about that he was going to go to Korea, but there came a point, out here anyway, when they just didn't believe Adlai Stevenson.

BURG: I see.

SMYLIE: All of a sudden it was starting to jell.

BURG: Now that is your observation about Idaho. Was it also your observation--

SMYLIE: I think it was fairly general through the West.

BURG: --in the western states. And you had been in almost

all of them.

SMYLIE: Yes. And somehow they had a kind of a reservation about his sincerity that you could almost feel.

BURG: I see. Now do you suppose that that sense of humor of his--a very well known sense of humor--do you suppose that that turned people off?

SMYLIE: Well I think it was quite a bit too sophisticated for general consumption. You know, you can't tell John Lindsay jokes in West Yellowstone, they don't know him. A little too polished, a little too urbane. It might have gone well in 1960, but not in 1952 somehow.

BURG: I see. I appreciate having that comment. Let me ask you this: When you first were introduced to the General in Denver, was that a private meeting, Governor, or were--

SMYLIE: No, I was just taken in the door and introduced as the attorney general of Idaho and that I was being helpful and we passed--we didn't even sit down as a matter of fact. But I spent most of my time with Fred Seaton.

BURG: How did Eisenhower strike you on that first, very brief meeting?

SMYLIE: Oh, as magnetic as I thought he would be.

BURG: Really?

SMYLIE: Yes.

BURG: He came across that well.

SMYLIE: Well he came across like gangbusters. Just real impressive personality. I didn't visit with him long enough, as a matter of fact, never in all of the times I saw him, long enough to ever get to the place where you're discussing issues or something like that. I thought he probably had better ways to waste his time than doing that with me and to attempt to do it would have been indulging in self-flattery.

BURG: Let me put it to you another way then, governor. On the occasions where you were with him, you, by then, had had a number of years in Republican politics--did you have any reservations about him?

SMYLIE: No, I don't think so. I was in 1952 inclined to be quite a pragmatist. I thought that if we didn't elect a President, why it was going to be pretty tough.

BURG: You had much company in 1952 in that belief, from other Republicans.

SMYLIE: Yes. He was obviously a man of demonstrated ability. I might have had some reservation about how much he knew about the United States. But as it turned out, he sensed the United States in a sort of a visceral way, I think. He knew about it without knowing the facts and figures, which is perhaps as important as a whole bunch of minutiae.

BURG: Was it your observation that he did this and did it rather accurately?

SMYLIE: I think so.

BURG: You don't recall instances where you thought, "My God, man, you have misjudged your own country badly."

SMYLIE: I don't think so. He seemed to me to sense what I

think was a pretty wide-spread feeling, that they had run awful far awful fast for an awful long time and they'd like to rest under the trees for a while. In other words, there was that going in the country.

BURG: The idea that this would be a period of four years or possibly eight years of regroup and reorganize.

SMYLIE: Yes, get things squared away. Even as much as had been written by that time, there wasn't much that the general public could really know about his conduct of the European campaign. They knew in detail that he'd won the war and that was it.

BURG: If they'd read Crusade in Europe, why they'd have his own account of how.

SMYLIE: Yes, but there wasn't any great body of information available for wide public dissemination--that was pretty early on before the days of paperbacks, you know.

BURG: Yes, right.

SMYLIE: And for some reason or other hard books were out of style about that same period in time. The television was just

beginning. I don't think we had television in Idaho in '52--I know we didn't, because '54 was the first campaign year it was used--so that everything you got was by radio. He came here in 1962 when I was running for governor the third time, and I guess Bryce Harlow was travelling with him. Bryce called me from San Francisco and asked me what I wanted the general to say. I said, "I didn't want him to say anything." I said, "Just get him out of that Jet Star; put his hands in the air and smile."

BURG: And that will do it.

SMYLIE: Yes. And that did it.

BURG: The television broadcasting all over the state, that'll be sure to do it.

SMYLIE: Yes, it just turned that airport crowd on just like nothing in the world, you know.

BURG: I'll bet. I'll bet it did. Now let me ask you this. One criticism frequently advanced about the man was that he simply had no political savvy. Would that be a judgment you would make, having seen him during this campaign period for example? And

if you wish--

SMYLIE: No, he knew exactly how to do it on the campaign trail. Where he lost savvy was that, I think, very often his staff overprotected him.

BURG: During the eight years of the administration?

SMYLIE: Yes. And he would neglect knowing something about people that he ought to have known, but this is only a failure of staff. Nobody can have all that information in their head.

BURG: So a sensitive individual--

SMYLIE: Yes, could get turned off or hurt. Well a good example of that is, I think it was in 1956, I went in and told Sherman Adams that they were beginning to mutter in the Republican governors that nobody'd been invited to the White House, which nobody had.

BURG: As late as 1956.

SMYLIE: Yes. And so they laid on a luncheon. They flew us all up from Williamsburg, where we'd been at a governors' conference,

for a luncheon with Ike. I can't remember whether it was Sherman or Fred Seaton that I said this to, but I said, "I thought it would be advantageous if they'd start mending some fences in that department pretty soon now." And he had his friends in the governorships, like Arthur Langlie, and--

BURG: From Washington. Dan Thornton.

SMYLIE: Dan Thornton and people like that. And it would occur to me that he would have thought that he'd been seeing governors, you know.

BURG: Maybe. And Sherm Adams, of course, had been one.

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SMYLIE: Yes. But the people that were not in that sort of a fix with him were also governors, you know, and most of them from small states, but have noses none the less.

BURG: Yes, that could get out of joint.

SMYLIE: Yes, that's right!

BURG: And did!

SMYLIE: Yes.

BURG: Let me ask you: In the campaign staff--and then we'll move to that White House staff--in a campaign staff, and this would be purely your own subjective judgment, but which of those people did you feel was absolutely first-class, perhaps outstanding in the work they were doing?

SMYLIE: Oh, I thought his knowledge of the party and people, largely because he's been through all the Dewey things, Tom Stephens was a great hand. He knew who the bodies were. I don't think Tom was any great intellectual giant, but the bits and pieces of keeping a train running, you know, keeping people flowing--Tom was excellent. I thought Fred Seaton was excellent. Governor Adams was so frosty that, until you got to know him real well, it was kind of a tough enterprise.

BURG: Did you get the impression from the contacts you had that there would be Stephens and Seaton who pretty well had that campaign train mobilized and moving, with Adams perhaps playing a secondary role?

SMYLIE: Oh, Adams, he stayed in Denver a lot, as I remember it. But Seaton and Stephens were almost always there. And, of course, both of them had been through the political wars which was a-- Seaton had been in the Senate and had been national committeeman from Nebraska and in the Nebraska state senate. And Tom had been through both the '44 and '48 Dewey campaigns and had a much broader appreciation of who people were out this way anyway. I couldn't judge that once you get east of the river. I got some overplay from people in Iowa whom I knew. But those are the two that I would pick out as the star ones.

BURG: Now Frank Carlson was also on that train from time to time.

SMYLIE: Yes. And he knew his way around, there's no question about that.

BURG: Senator from Kansas. And any other names that come to your mind as being stand-outs? Or I can give you another lead, too, governor. Anyone who blotted their copybooks so thoroughly that it came to your attention during that period of time?

SMYLIE: I wouldn't know who this was, who might have made the decision, but at one point in time they had left out of the Salt Lake visit, what is almost the ceremonial call on the head of Main Street--you know, it's the headquarters of the church and if you're a presidential candidate you go up there and say hello. You don't stay long, but--

BURG: Would it have been McKay at that time?

SMYLIE: Yes, David O. [Head of the Mormon Church]

BURG: Yes, probably.

SMYLIE: And we got that corrected, but they were going to use the Tabernacle that night for the speech and to have not gone and paid your rent would have been--

BURG: Nobody touched bases--

SMYLIE: Well, we got cleared up, it never surfaced, but if that had ever happened, it would have been a bad mark of the worst order.

BURG: Indeed it would have. I'm a little surprised that it went as far as it did.

SMYLIE: Well it was somebody who didn't know and I'd always halfway suspected Sherman as, you know, plane's got its wheels down at 3:30 and you got, the timing thing--

BURG: Yes, twenty-five minutes to get from X to Y.

SMYLIE: Yes. It's conceivable, they start cutting things out, and if we didn't quite know exactly what David O. McKay was, you know. 'Cause he ain't just a man.

BURG: I'm a westerner and that kind of an oversight kind of appalls me.

Let me ask you about the White House staff itself. Now, of course, Adams you would know very well. But how about that staff and your experiences with them. Who were the standouts on that staff?

SMYLIE: Well, --

BURG: Stephens, of course, was there.

SMYLIE: Stephens was there--

BURG: Adams was there.

SMYLIE: --and Adams and Seaton.

BURG: [James C.] Hagerty.

SMYLIE: Hagerty. I didn't know Hagerty as well as I knew the rest of them. I'd always made it a kind of a point not to bother them it I didn't have something to bother them with. And so I would occasionally see some of them elsewhere than in the White House. Like Stephens knew where the Carlton Hotel was, and that's where I usually stayed. By that time Ann Whitman was there, I think.

BURG: Ah, yes. I didn't realize you knew her.

SMYLIE: Yes. Mostly when I'd go to see them it was to try to get some swimming pool funded at the Mountain Home Air Force Base, or something like that.

BURG: Oh, really?

SMYLIE: Real chores.

BURG: The big issues were the ones that you dealt with, I see.

SMYLIE: And now Senator Dworshak, who was then in the Senate, was on the appropriations committee and he'd make so many speeches at some of these budget officers that there were things he didn't dare go down there and ask for, so we sorted out the responsibility and I'd go ask for the things that he couldn't ask for.

BURG: And I had in mind great burning issues in the West.

SMYLIE: Well, occasionally. But those were pretty well spoken to by Senator Dworshak and he was in, both senior on Interior and Appropriations [committees] by that time, and wasn't any point in burdening the atmosphere with more oratory.

BURG: But Tom Stephens would make it a point to come down and see you when you were in town?

SMYLIE: Yes, well it gets to be 5:00 o'clock occasionally.

BURG: Yes, thank God!

SMYLIE: When I had an errand to run, why I'd normally talk with either Governor Adams or Mr. Seaton, Senator Seaton. Then

in due course I became quite close friends with Bob Anderson who became secretary of the treasury after Mr. Humphrey left.

BURG: I see. How did that come about?

SMYLIE: Well, he was the Cabinet chairman of the Joint Cabinet-Governors' Conference Committee on Federal-State Relations that foreran the Advisory Commission.

BURG: I see. So you met him through that.

SMYLIE: Yes, in those meetings. Oh, it's been three or four years since I saw him, but he was a very impressive person.

BURG: What particularly impressed you about him?

SMYLIE: Oh, his ability to handle staff; his ability to use information that had been gotten, obviously, in useable form for him, and his patience at trying to work at a thing that's almost unworkable, you know. What we were really to get started was some machinery for unraveling the bureaucracy and they're still talking about it.

BURG: There have been many, many efforts made before your time and after. But I want to get to that, but I want to go back too and pick up your own campaign for the governorship, which comes then in '54.

SMYLIE: In '54, yes.

BURG: Who talked to you about running for that position?

SMYLIE: Oh, quite a few people around the state. But nobody ever gets urged to run for governor; they urge themselves.

BURG: Really?

SMYLIE: Yes. I presume that it might have happened, but I think maybe this latest--Trumbull in Connecticut.

BURG: Well I just wondered if anyone had

[Interruption]

BURG: I could see where that could be a difficult thing if Jordan steps up and the lieutenant governor is not perfectly satisfactory to everyone. And evidently this was true in the

SMYLIE: Oh, yes, he was. I had by this time announced. And Governor Jordan couldn't succeed himself. There was a barrier in the constitution in those days which--

BURG: Was it a three-term limitation?

SMYLIE: No, it was a one-term limitation.

BURG: Oh, really. I see.

SMYLIE: In my first speech on the state of the state, I asked for the submission of an amendment to do away with that and it was done in the '56 election. To really understand that you have to go back to the younger element in the party that had decided in '52 that the real target was the governorship. At that point in time I don't think anybody'd really made any decision or had done much thinking about who because there were two or three younger guys that might feasibly have maneuvered themselves into position. But I was attorney general and in a position to generate news and begin to build a power base. By the time it arrived why there was a mayor of Coeur D'Alene who was relatively little known and ran third and there was former Congressman John Sanborn who was sixty-five. And at that time

I was thirty-nine, and the comparison worked out well, and happily we got through it without enough scars so that we couldn't put it pretty well back together.

BURG: Was it a pretty rough campaign?

SMYLIE: Yes, I thought it was. There were some things that I thought ought to be done that hadn't been being done in the Jordan years and he probably had some resentment of some of the things I said because he hadn't done them, you know. In other words, to urge their doing was implicitly critical.

BURG: Did he have a legislature that would have assisted him in doing these things?

SMYLIE: Oh, yes, he had a two-thirds majority in both houses the last time around the track.

BURG: That ought to have done it.

SMYLIE: Yes.

BURG: In the American system.

SMYLIE: Yes. No, I think Governor Jordan had some bad advice on his first budget and got himself in trouble with a lot of people, and then tried to get out of it and didn't ever quite make it. I'm not sure that he could have been re-elected even if he could have run; although he probably thinks otherwise.

BURG: Was it the priorities established for the next budget that people quarrelled with?

SMYLIE: Yes, in other words he'd been a little too penurious with education and he hadn't been as actively aggressive in trying to help the municipalities meet up to some of the two decades of abandoned problems that they were faced with.

BURG: Yes, you had a reputation along the west coast for terribly low teachers' salaries; even after the Depression years they remained low.

SMYLIE: Yes. Up until 1955 they'd never fully funded the state formula for public school education. And that was one of the things I said I was going to do. Well he hadn't done it, and we got a poll done that was kind of an issues oriented

poll and it was obvious from the results of that that I think sixty-six percent of them named public school education as the number one problem. With that kind of information you knew you had the nipple.

BURG: Yes, you had the right issue.

SMYLIE: Yes. And so we just kept drumming on it. I laid down about four major speeches that were really the skeleton of the total campaign. The fellow that the Democrats nominated was a man named Clark Hamilton, and he just wasn't a television personality. And I was the first candidate, I think, in Idaho ever to use television in a political campaign. We didn't have any senators running in 1954, so it was pretty easy to get to be the lead guy. Then I started doing this series of five minute broadcasts that were to all intents and purposes ad libbed from on camera. You had almost a captive audience in those days: it was a new thing. And this other fellow just couldn't handle the medium at all.

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BURG: Did most of the programming originate here in Boise?

SMYLIE: No. There were two stations here in Boise and one in Idaho Falls and one station here got into the west half of Twin Falls county, which is about halfway across the state, and the Idaho Falls station'd get almost that far west. You weren't getting total coverage, but you were getting pretty adequate coverage.

BURG: How about the north?

SMYLIE: Well you could buy Spokane, but the rate card was too expensive. You'd have to pay one hundred percent of their rate card for five percent of the audience.

BURG: So Coeur D'Alene is basically what you have up there and--

SMYLIE: Yes. Coeur D'Alene, Sandpoint, Lewiston, and I don't think they had a cable down in Lewiston yet. Lewiston's down in a cup you know and--so Spokane wouldn't reach it anyway.

BURG: So the bulk of the state's population's down here along the valley and you were reaching that.

SMYLIE: Yes. You could reach it there. In 1958 I ran for re-election. They got the right-to-work thing on the ballot, and that murdered everybody except me. I won by 50.1 percent.

BURG: 50.1!

SMYLIE: Yes. And lost both houses of the legislature.

BURG: But you were in for a four year term, so there was no way you could use the election of '56 to help you.

SMYLIE: No, no.

BURG: No riding in on anyone's coattails.

SMYLIE: No, nor was there in '62.

BURG: Yes, yes, I see.

SMYLIE: In '62 I had the Cuban crisis, mid-stream in the campaign.

BURG: Part of the work that you did dealt with federal-state relations. When were you approached on that; and how was the approach made?

SMYLIE: Well Bill Stratton was elected chairman of the governors' conference at the Williamsburg conference in Virginia in 1956, and the President had made a speech about federal-state relations and proposed the formation of some sort of a committee.

BURG: Nothing existed up to that time, formally as a body within the executive branch.

SMYLIE: No. In response to that, we put together a governors' conference committee on federal-state relations, and Bill appointed me to be a member of it. This is 1956. Then I think it was about 19--, maybe the year after that we had a, no that was in '55. In '56 I came to Williamsburg and suggested the formation of this, or maybe it was '57. Anyway, it was a joint Cabinet-governors' conference committee, and I got tapped to be chairman of the governors' side of it. And Bob Anderson, as I suggested earlier, was the Cabinet secretary who was chairman on that side.

BURG: How many members of this group? Do you recall?

SMYLIE: I think there were five on each side. Maurice Stans

was on that committee and somewhere in my records I'd have the membership of it, but--

BURG: Was Douglas Price on it?

SMYLIE: Yes.

BURG: Douglas R. Price.

SMYLIE: Yes. And Frank Bain, of course, was active in it. He was then the executive secretary of the governors' conference. I think I got to be chairman because the '56 elections weren't kind to us in the governors' chairs. And '58 was worse. Can't remember, sometime along the line, the recommendation for the establishment of an advisory commission came out of this committee and in due course the legislation was enacted. [L. H.] Fountain had the committee going in the House of Representatives. It was looking at the same thing at the same time, and Fountain was on that original--we used to invite Fountain to the meetings of this joint committee.

BURG: How often would the joint committee meet?

SMYLIE: Oh, it met about four times a year.

BURG: Oh, really? As often as that?

SMYLIE: Yes, usually a day-long meeting.

BURG: And the site of that meeting--was it in the White House?

SMYLIE: No, normally we had it in the--can't remember what they called that room--but it was a room in the Carlton Hotel.

BURG: I see. Now let me put this question to you: Since you were in virtually at the outset, what did the committee feel were the most sensitive areas in federal-state relations, the priority problems that had to be aired?

SMYLIE: Well the priority problem was essentially to try and figure out some way to get the--some of these problems that we thought could be handled more adequately at the local level, back to the local level but that, in our thinking, required a concurrent surrender of revenue source by the federal government. In other words, some way to fund them. And we did begin to start talking even in those days about revenue sharing as we

know it today. But initially the end we had been directed to, precise taxes that could be identified as producing x-dollars in revenue, and of course Anderson was always trying to balance the budget, and succeeding better than most. But he wasn't anxious to give up something without being able to take it off the other side of the ledger.

BURG: Do you suppose he'd been put in the position simply because of his work in the federal government; that he would shepherd federal revenues?

SMYLIE: Yes, well of course if I'd been in his position I would have done the same thing.

BURG: I wonder if it was a smart move to put him there. If the President truly wanted to move things back down to state level it might have been better to put some other Cabinet officer--

SMYLIE: I think it might well have been.

BURG: I wonder if Ezra Taft Benson might have been a better choice.

SMYLIE: But the thing that really defeated most efforts was what was thought, I think, certainly by the federal bureaucracy to be a fact--that the state and local governments didn't have the capability to do some of the things that were being done, or needed to be done. Now that was beginning to turn around by that time. State governments were getting to the place where they had staff that was just as capable as many federal staff people.

BURG: Also it was not a case of the federal types feeling that the states didn't have the economic resources, but rather they didn't have the human resources to run such programs.

SMYLIE: Yes, and in many areas this was a valid objection.

BURG: Areas--by that you mean geographic areas.

SMYLIE: Yes. Well the guy I had running my employment security agency, which is the employment security program, unemployment comp and the employment service, was a splendidly talented person--so much so that whenever Wilbur Mills wanted to have an expert on unemployment compensation legislation that was not out of the

Department of the Labor, why he hollered for Fred Garrett. But that wasn't the case across the country.

BURG: Where were the weakest regions?

SMYLIE: Oh, in many of the social programs, the southern states and in the big labor states, where in the unemployment compensation program where labor had been permitted to dominate that program too heavily, why most of those funds were in trouble by 1959.

BURG: And not, you felt, under capable administration.

SMYLIE: Yes, that's right. Well we'd cranked on our additional taxes early on and we'd gone to the thirteen additional week thing on our state statute long before it was authorized by the Congress. As a matter of fact, what they finally did in the Congress pretty well was copied after the Idaho statute.

BURG: Now governor, I meant to ask you something and I neglected to, and it may be an ignorant question. Are we talking about a bipartisan committee or are we talking strictly about--

SMYLIE: No, it was bipartisan.

BURG: Bipartisan.

SMYLIE: Except that the Democratic governors would tend to look at the President's cabinet members as Republicans, you know. They were in fact, serving a Republican President.

BURG: Did that, in your estimation, hamper the work of the governors on the Committee?

SMYLIE: No, I don't believe so. You'd have to look at that joint committee primarily as exploratory. In other words, I never was very convinced that we were going to get a great deal accomplished. It wasn't going to be the millennium, but at least you might be able to lay the foundations for something. And I think the advisory commission now existing, which was an outgrowth of this joint committee, pretty well--it had as much to do with moving this revenue-sharing program forward and into effect in fact as any other single agency. I think we'd have got that done with Lyndon Johnson's second budget--the Great Society budget, '66, no, '65, if it hadn't been for the fact that somebody talked about it too soon.

BURG: Oh, really?

SMYLIE: Well, you know, he had a great tendency to have to originate the idea or it was no damned good.

BURG: Yes, I remember that. Somebody blabbed that.

SMYLIE: Yes.

BURG: I see. I didn't know that. Now did the group function under its second name through the Eisenhower administration then? It had--

SMYLIE: I believe so, yes. And I think that that ACIR [Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations] legislation was enacted in, I believe it was '58 or '59, something like that. I'd have to check that back.

BURG: I see. Now how long did you remain in this--

SMYLIE: Well I was on the advisory commission until I left the governorship in January of '67. Appointed by Eisenhower and reappointed by Kennedy and Johnson.

BURG: Now during that span of time, as you look back at it

from the moment you came on till the time you left, did you see advances being made? That is, were you satisfied with the rate of growth and influence of this particular committee?

SMYLIE: Well I think I'd say that its primary usefulness has been the amassing of a very great body of knowledge about how some of these things function and about the problems of state and local governments that did not exist theretofore. I think its major accomplishment probably has got to be the revenue sharing program.

BURG: Any notable failures? Things, that at least in your estimation, really ought to have gone farther and did not?

SMYLIE: Well, its basic failure is structural. It's just holy writ that this can't be an executive arm of the government in the office of the President, which is where it's physically located and operate with the President's disapproval. And so that if the budget officer on that commission votes no, why, that's a message. You just have to assume that the President's not for it.

BURG: Let me ask you this because I think it grows out of that--perhaps you already answered it in part when you spoke of Lyndon Johnson. Was it your impression as we move from Republican administration in '61 into Democratic administrations that less progress was made? Or did it seem to you that things kept moving?

SMYLIE: Well in the Kennedy years not much was accomplished simply because of the fact, I think, that there wasn't anybody in the White House who was really interested in the thing as a device. I think Ed Muskie finally got them interested, but this didn't really occur until Johnson was President, and then Parris Bryant came in in a kind of a liaison job between the governors and the White House and it again began to become sort of an effective forum, at least.

BURG: But Mr. Kennedy didn't seem to take the interest in it that--

SMYLIE: No. I think that'd be a fair statement.

BURG: I presume Mr. Eisenhower did--

SMYLIE: Yes.

BURG: --and Mr. Johnson did.

SMYLIE: Yes. But in both instances I think their interest was born of a very real appreciation on the part of both of them of the fact that sooner or later you're going to have to do something to sort out this system.

BURG: That is Eisenhower and Johnson.

SMYLIE: Yes. And, with all due respect to the late President, he had barely begun to understand the government I think.

BURG: Mr. Kennedy.

SMYLIE: Yes, in the face of some rather tremendous problems abroad. But he came to the presidency with no executive experience and very little experience of the peculiar way in which this system works. He'd had no experience that would really give him any deep learning in that area. And that's not meant as a criticism; not everybody moves to the same road.

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BURG: Yes. You've already spoken words of praise of Robert Anderson and the kind of man that he was. Does anyone else stand out in your mind on that committee for the effectiveness of their leadership on the committee, their contributions to its work?

SMYLIE: Well I think that I'd have to say that Maurice Stans had a very effective role. He was then chief of the office of the budget. And I think he was really trying to make some progress.

BURG: He impressed you.

SMYLIE: Yes.

BURG: How about out of your own ranks?

SMYLIE: Well, Bill Stratton worked hard at it, he was governor of Illinois. After 1958 Nelson was on that commission, and he worked hard at it.

BURG: Nelson --?

SMYLIE: Rockefeller.

BURG: Nelson Rockefeller. You stayed on it and could presumably have gotten off it any time you wanted to; so I assume that this was a pretty strong interest of yours.

SMYLIE: Yes. Well it was a strong interest; in addition to that it was an opportunity to brush elbows with some fairly fascinating people.

BURG: Yes, I would imagine. I could quite understand that. Now, you've told me that you left the governor's chair in 1967. Was there some kind of statutory limit on--

SMYLIE: No. I was defeated in the primary. I was retired by popular demand.

BURG: It came to you as it comes to all men.

SMYLIE: Yes, that's right.

BURG: And then you entered into private law practice here in Boise?

SMYLIE: Yes.

BURG: And still at it. No strong urge to retire.

SMYLIE: No. I'm not sixty-five yet, and won't be for a few years.

BURG: May I ask what this practice largely concerns itself with? Is it a corporate kind of practice?

SMYLIE: Yes, primarily corporate law with heavy emphasis on commercial law. We represent two or three banks, an insurance company, and do a fair amount of estate and trust planning. And a couple of retail establishments--do quite a bit of work with Chrysler Motors in litigation that arises out here. From time to time run some errands for I.T.T. [International Telephone and Telegraph] and for El Paso Natural Gas.

BURG: Do you envision a return to politics?

SMYLIE: No, I don't believe so. I think I'm a little too old to think about that any more. And I don't mean that to say that I'm old, but the public profile as far as age is concerned is

about twenty years below me. [Laughter] No, it's a very real fact.

BURG: I understand. Yes.

SMYLIE: I say that not with any bitterness. If I'd been really smart I suppose I would have not appointed Jordan to the Senate and gone myself, but I'm not sure that I would have been any happier. I think I would have been quite frustrated in the Senate.

BURG: You really think so?

SMYLIE: Yes. No, the difference between--well the current governor of Idaho is a Democrat, but when you've been governor, why there's a fairly limited club and there aren't very many people an incumbent governor can talk to about things in general. And he occasionally talks with me, and one of the first things I said to him was that I trusted that he wouldn't get overawed with the fact that he'd been in the state senate--that in very due course he would know where the enemy was--they were upstairs. [Laughter] You can make things happen--

BURG: Yes, that's right.

SMYLIE: --in a governorship.

BURG: A senator has got to find ninety-nine colleagues or however many.

SMYLIE: Yes. Mrs. Phupy's Debating Society.

BURG: Well, Governor, thank you so much for your time today.

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