

Hard Work and Good Luck

by Senator Mark O. Hatfield

This is the first installment of a new department featuring one person's story of their entry into the political arena. In this issue, Senator Mark Hatfield, recently retired from the U.S. Senate, describes how he got started in Oregon politics almost 50 years ago.

I got into politics and government through hard work and good luck. In high school and college, politics had been attractive enough for me to run for various student offices, sometimes winning, sometimes losing. I began to study political science formally in 1940, when I entered Willamette University. After leaving the Navy in 1946, I read a little law, again at Willamette. But the notion of what my life's work would be really began to form the following year when I attended Stanford University as a graduate student in political science.

There I met Travis Cross, an undergraduate majoring in journalism, whom I had known casually from my church in Salem and who had also just left the Navy. We discovered a mutual interest in politics, as I was considering a career in public office while Travis was hoping to become a political strategist, promoter, and publicist. For the next year and a half we talked politics every chance we got. From our talks developed a friendship and a detailed plan for his career and mine.

The first chance to test our skills came in a campaign for graduate representative on the Stanford student council. Our partnership won me that election. But in 1949, after spending two years earning a master's degree and studying for a Ph.D. in political science, I had worn myself down and decided to take a break, return-

ing to Salem and Willamette. I dropped by the office of G. Herbert Smith, the president of the university, whom I had known when I was an undergraduate and president of my fraternity, Beta Theta Pi. He had served as the fraternity's national president. As we talked, Smith said that he had lost an instructor who was supposed to join the political science department. Would I be interested? "You bet I would," I replied. He then said that he had another position to fill at the university, public affairs officer. Did I know of anyone qualified for it? Yes I did—Travis Cross. Good luck had brought us together again.

In September 1949, when our jobs at

when the Legislature met, every other year. That would give me enough time to cross the street to attend the sessions.

In the meantime, Travis said that we had to raise my profile so that I would be known as more than a son of the community. The two of us went to radio station KOCO, and I signed up as a commentator. Once a week on "The Political Pulse", I delivered 15 minutes of political commentary about current events of the day from the classrooms of Willamette University. I also signed up to chair the local cancer society. I started attending all the meetings of all the local organizations that I could, starting with the Rotary and other business, labor, and farm organizations.

Moreover, Travis and I organized key business people in every community in the county to sponsor me. My campaign included all of the county because, in those days, the county in Oregon, not the legislative district, was the unit of representation in the lower house of the Legislature.

When the primary elections came in May, 12 Republican candidates (three of them incumbents) ran for the four seats representing the county. The voters had come to know me as a civic presence instead of just another political "wannabe", and when they cast their ballots, they chose me to head the ticket. I was elected in the general elections that fall. For the next 46

years I remained in public office—six years in the state Legislature (four in the House and two in the Senate); two years as secretary of state; eight years as governor; and thirty years as U.S. Senator—and I never lost an election. Politics was my calling, and the people of Oregon chose me to represent them.



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Willamette began, Travis and I figured it was time to turn pro. Enough time remained for me to run in May of the following year for a seat in the lower house of the Oregon Legislature. First, however, I had to get the blessing of the university. I went to President Smith and told him of my hope for a seat in the Legislature. Smith replied that he would have a chat with the university's board of trustees. When Smith got back to me, he said that any difficulties the university might have with my political career could be worked out. For a start, after I was elected, I would teach only 8 and 9 o'clock classes