

INTERVIEWEE: DON HUMMEL (TAPE #1)

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

October 22, 1968

F: This is Mr. Don Hummel, who is Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development for Renewal and Housing. Mr. Hummel is in his office in Washington.

Mr. Hummel, to start, tell us a little bit about your background.

H: Well, I was raised on a ranch in Southern Arizona, my folks having moved there during territorial days from Cincinnati, Ohio. I didn't start to school until I was over nine years old; there were no schools in that area.

F: Where was the ranch?

H: The ranch is at Sonoita, Arizona, which is about thirty-five miles north of the Mexican border in southern Arizona, about twenty miles west of Fort Huachuca.

F: That's in the grass country?

H: That's in the grass country. I started to school there in a one-room school house where all grades were in one room. One other family and ours were the only non-Mormon families in that area. Then my dad returned to law practice in Tucson, and we moved to city schools. I finished my first eight grades of what we called grammar school in those days in five years. Then I went on to Tucson High School and graduated from Tucson High. Then I went to the University of Arizona where I finished in 1930 with an A.B. in political science and history. After graduating from the University of Arizona I went to the University of Michigan Law

School at Ann Arbor, Michigan, and graduated from there in 1933 with a J.D. degree in law. Upon my graduation I took the California bar examination, as I had worked as a ranger in the summertime in the National Parks Service, starting first at Grand Canyon and then to Lassen Volcanic National Park in California. I was serving in California when I graduated from Law School, so I returned there to take the California bar. I was admitted in December, 1933, and then took the Arizona bar and was admitted there in March 1934. I joined my father in law practice in Tucson, Arizona and was practicing there. At the time there was plenty of business but no money. We were right in the midst of the depression, and one of my classmates had been Dallas W. Dort (that's the Dort automobile family of Flint, Michigan). Dal was appointed as a director of the Division of Investigation of WPA arising out of allegations of misuse of WPA funds by the then Senator Borah. I went to work as an investigator for the WPA in February, 1936, and was stationed in Portland, Oregon. I worked with the WPA as an investigator and then as field agent in charge of the intermountain region with headquarters in Denver, Colorado, covering eight states. We handled all the allegations of criminal complaints involving the use of WPA and relief funds. I held that job until 1940, when I was transferred to Atlanta, Georgia to take over as field agent in charge in Atlanta for the eight southeastern states. I was in this job when I was employed as head of the Inspection Division of the Office of Price Administration and sent to Atlanta, Georgia to establish that office. I was there a matter of just three months when they transferred me back to Denver, Colorado to start setting up the Inspection Division for the Office of Price Administration for the

Intermountain States.

F: Did you ever meet Mr. Johnson in any of these positions? He was a Congressman then.

H: Not at that time. My first personal meeting with President Johnson was at the Democratic Convention in 1960.

F: You were a delegate to the Convention in 1956, weren't you?

H: In 1956, yes.

F: At which there was a slight Johnson boom, but you didn't meet him at that time?

H: I didn't meet the President at that time.

F: How did you meet him in 1960?

H: I was a delegate in the Arizona delegation and there was considerable maneuvering for delegate votes for President Johnson. I might backtrack a moment by saying when I was a delegate in 1956 and Adlai Stevenson was the nominee for the Democratic Party, Arizona yielded for the nomination of Mr. Stevenson. Adlai Stevenson was a close personal friend of Dick Jenkins, who owned a ranch in Southern Arizona. Mr. Stevenson often spent some of his vacation [with Jenkins], and that's how I got to know Mr. Stevenson during those visits. Dick Jenkins was the chairman of the Democratic central committee and I was the vice-chairman until I was elected Mayor of Tucson and had to resign that position.

After the nomination of Mr. Stevenson and when the Convention was thrown open for selection, Jack Kennedy was nominated for Vice President, and I led the opposition to President Kennedy on the Arizona delegation at the request of a friend of mine by the name of Frank Minirik, who had been a classmate of Estes Kefauver. Minirik had been defeated by Dick

Jenkins as the chairman and had been left off the delegation and--Frank was a friend of mine--had asked if I would represent Kefauver in the Arizona delegation. I agreed, and as you know finally Kefauver was nominated.

It was shortly after the election of President Eisenhower that Jack Kennedy was speaking at a Sunday evening forum in Tucson, and I got a call that he wanted to see me before his appearance--it lasted for a couple of hours. He was interested in why I opposed his nomination as Vice President and why the Arizona delegation was against him. I explained that it was not a personal matter, that none of us there knew Jack Kennedy. We felt that the vigorous campaign that Estes Kefauver had waged would be a major assistance to Adlai Stevenson in his election. I guess at that moment that I was [though] not in so many words, asked to favor the future candidacy of Jack Kennedy.

F: Did the Arizona delegation go to Los Angeles in 1960 committed or uncommitted? I'm trying to recall when the view of Arizona was decided.

H: It was pretty well committed as I recall. Stewart Udall was the chairman of that committee. That was an interesting story in that Stewart Udall was for Adlai Stevenson, and I talked him out of it on the basis that Stevenson was not a candidate. If anybody was in a position to ascertain who was going to be the nominee and if Jack Kennedy didn't have enough votes, he was probably going to make the decision as to who he would throw his support to. As a result Stewart Udall called me and said, "I think you have this figured out right, and so I am going over to see Jack Kennedy this afternoon and go on his campaign trip."

F: Udall was a Congressman then?

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H: Udall was a Congressman. He went over and started on the campaign trail. You will recall at that time there weren't very many Congressmen who were supporting Jack Kennedy. The result was, Stewart Udall ended up as Secretary of the Interior. At that time the former Majority Leader Ernest McFarland, former Senator, was representing the Johnson forces and this was the mistake that was made as far as Arizona was concerned. Because Ernest McFarland, former Senator and Governor at that point, had gotten pretty much out of step with those of us who were in the political scene at that time. And no real effort was made so that when the Johnson forces contacted many of us, we all had prior commitments. We were in a position then--and I'm sure that many of us would have looked very favorably on the President. He was a southwesterner and understood our problems, but the man that he had selected to represent his interests in Arizona was sort of out of step with the Arizona delegation, and as a result did not line up delegates for President Johnson.

F: When you reached Los Angeles, you said you met Mr. Johnson for the first time. How did that come about?

H: Well, Mr. Johnson met--Many of us were asked to come and talk with the President at his headquarters and he met with delegations. It was on that occasion that I first personally met the President.

F: Do you have any memory of what he said to your delegation or whether it had any effect?

H: Yes, particularly his appeal to us as fellow southwesterners with knowledge of the problems that we faced in the southwestern states. His

appeal was considered very favorably; however, too much water had gone over the dam already, and Kennedy had the delegates committed.

F: Were there any inferences that if the Convention stalled, you might switch to him on a later ballot?

H: Well, it never got to that position that I know of. I don't believe there was, because there was no such discussion. If you recall, it went through on the first ballot.

F: Were you surprised at Mr. Kennedy's choice of Mr. Johnson for Vice President?

H: Not really. I thought it was a very wise choice. I felt it was the smartest move he could make and as history has shown, the move that finally won the election for Kennedy in a close election.

F: How did the Arizona delegation receive this information in general?

H: They were delighted. They thought that they had somebody in the Executive Office who understood their problems.

F: Did you campaign actively during the campaign of 1960?

H: Oh, yes.

F: Did Mr. Johnson have any contact with you during that period?

H: Yes, I'd like to go back, now that you mention that. Lyndon Johnson was the principal speaker at a rally we put on in southern Arizona when Adlai Stevenson was running. At that time I met him briefly as I was on the platform with him during that rally.

F: Is Arizona split between northern Arizona and southern Arizona, more or less a North-South--

H: No, not too much, except that I would say that the urbanization that has taken place is in the central part of the state and the southern part of

the state. The northern areas are more rural and tend to be more conservative than the rest of the state. There has never really been a North-South split; it has been more an urban-rural split with Tucson and Phoenix opposing and the outlying smaller counties.

F: During all this period you were Mayor of Tucson, and you overlapped the Kennedy period for a couple of years, did you have any relationship with Vice President Johnson--?

H: No, not directly.

F: How long were you Mayor of Tucson?

H: I was Mayor almost seven years. I went in May, 1955, and came out in December of 1961. I served three two-year terms and part of another because of a charter change that shifted the calendar term.

F: What did you do as Chairman of the U.S. delegation to the Inter-American Municipal Congress?

H: I was Chairman to that Congress primarily as I was Vice President of the National League of Cities, then called the American Municipal Association.

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