

**Interview with Fred Hughes**  
**February 22, 1977**  
**Central Minnesota Historical Oral History Collection**  
**St. Cloud State University Archives**  
**Interviewed by Calvin Gower and James Robak**

Today is February 22, 1977, this interview is being conducted by Calvin Gower and James Robak for the Central Minnesota Historical Center. We are interviewing Mr. Fred J. Hughes of St. Cloud, Minnesota. He has been a resident of St. Cloud for quite some time and currently a lawyer, in the past actively involved in politics and other areas of interest. Mr. Hughes do you want to start out by giving us your date of birth and place of birth?

**Hughes:** I was born on the 19th of June in 1908 In Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin.

**Robak:** Were your parents born and raised in that area also?

**Hughes:** My father Frank R. Hughes was born in a little town called Madrid, New York, in the upper state of New York. My mother was born in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. My dad came out to Chippewa Falls when he was a young man, eighteen or nineteen years old. Incidentally he lived until he was a hundred years old, we buried him on his hundredth birthday.

**Gower:** What was your father's occupation?

**Hughes:** My father Frank R. Hughes was an insurance man for many years. Then for the last twenty years of his life he was postmaster of Chippewa Falls. My mother died when I was a young boy in 1921.

**Gower:** Had your family been in this country, the United States, for a long time?

**Hughes:** Dad's mother Williamson was her name, she was a Canadian girl. Grandfather Hughes was a New Yorker, Madrid was near the Canadian border. My mother's people I never knew any

of them, her mother's name was Downey and she married an Agnew. My mother's name was Agnew, but I never knew any of those people on the Agnew or Downey side who were ever anything other than residents of the United States.

**Gower:** So there is a long side of the family in the United States.

**Hughes:** Yes, that's right.

**Gower:** Did you go to the schools in Chippewa Falls then?

**Hughes:** I went to Notre Dame grade school that is a parochial school. I went the first two years of high school to what was known as McDonald Memorial High School. Then my mother died as I said before when I was a young boy. I was the last of seven children. Dad then sent me here to St. John's to finish my high school. I came as a "prep" a junior in high school in the fall of 1924.

**Robak:** So you graduated from St. John's Prep?

**Hughes:** I graduated from St. John's on a Sunday in June in 1926. I went to work for the Northern States Power Company Monday morning in Minneapolis.

**Gower:** What were you doing for NSP?

**Hughes:** I was in what the company called the consumer survey department, it was a group of young men. I suppose in modern terminology we were in the field of public relations. We would call on homes. We had a little truck, two of us in a unit. We would stop at your home and Mrs. Gower would come to the door, we would tell her we represented the Northern States Power Company and we wondered if she had any complaints about our service. In 1926-27 most people said the bills were too high. The problems were if they had a light cord that needed fixing, we could fix the cord for them. If they had a major appliance that needed repairing we weren't very expert at that work but little minor things we could do. An accommodation thing. Really what we

were trying to do and what we were responsible for was to sense if something was wrong if they had a basic problem or if they had a legitimate complaint about the power company. We referred it back to the company every night with our reports. Generally we had a few light bulbs if they didn't have a light bulb. Generally we let them have one, we didn't sell anything, but we had light bulbs with us. The general idea was to leave that lady or man as the case might be with a little better feeling about their electric-utility company. We had a sympathetic ear if we felt it was a legitimate complaint and we reported it back to the company.

**Robak:** Was this just for the area of St. Paul and Minneapolis?

**Hughes:** Yes, the Twin Cities area in fact I only worked in Minneapolis and the suburbs Robbinsdale, St. Louis Park, I guess that's all there were then just the Minneapolis metropolitan area.

**Robak:** How long did you work there?

**Hughes:** I worked there until the fall of 1928, a couple of years. I went out west for six weeks or so. I visited an uncle of mine an older brother of my fathers. He had gone out to Arizona long before it was a state, he was a very substantial cattleman. I stayed out there with Uncle John for a while, then came back to St. Johns and started college in February of 1929.

**Gower:** You had done some work at the University of Minnesota during this period?

**Hughes:** I took night school when I worked for the power company.

**Gower:** So you went to St. Johns, when did you graduate?

**Hughes:** I graduated In June of 1931. I was in residence at the college for two years. I had taken, I suppose you couldn't do that now, but my senior year in high school I got along moderately well in school and so in my senior year at high school I had two freshman college courses, English and Economic History.

**Gower:** You can do that now too. What was your major at St. John's?

**Hughes:** Philosophy and History.

**Gower:** Then you went to law school?

**Hughes:** Yes in September of 1931 and I graduated in June of 1934.

**Gower:** Then you settled in St. Cloud at that time?

**Hughes:** Right as a lawyer. I came back and started to practice, I wasn't a part of the firm but I was in the office with two other men Charlie Phelps and Harrison Sherwood. Mr. Phelps was a long time city attorney here and one of the great lawyers that I ever knew. I learned a great deal from him as well as Mr. Sherwood. Mr. Sherwood was a trial lawyer and Mr. Phelps was more an office-man. I had a marvelous experience with those two men, they were very generous and good to me. It was an extremely profitable experience. I stayed with them until I ran for Congress in the fall of '42, I left that office then.

**Gower:** Did you go into an office of your own?

**Hughes:** I started an office of my own.

**Gower:** That was in the fall of 1942?

**Hughes:** Right.

**Gower:** When did you get married then?

**Hughes:** We were married in 1934. As soon as I passed the bar or it was before the bar a little presumptuous perhaps but we did it.

**Gower:** Your wife's name?

**Hughes:** Valaira it's a Spanish name, her maiden name.

**Gower:** Her father's name?

**Hughes:** John Spaniol he owned the old Spaniol property down here on Sixth Avenue North between St. Germain Street and First Street North on the west side of the street. The building is still standing there. The old Spaniol Hotel. Mr. Spaniol that is Valaira's father's father, her grandfather Peter Spaniol was one of the early pioneer German families as I understand it. One of the first German families in this area. He had what they used to call a boarding and stopping house on the same location. It's still standing I think it was built in about 1929. It's not as old as you might think, it's an extremely well built building. So well-built that they can't remodel it very effectively.

**Robak:** What is it used for now?

**Hughes:** Some kind of residence hall, I think. John Fandel if I remember correctly owns it now. They use it for a residence hall. When that big outfit that makes machinery out here, Turbodyne, when they came in here before they had all their offices they used this for office facilities. They had a bowling alley in the basement, and a very fine bar. In those days it was the best place to eat, it had a very fine restaurant.

**Gower:** Were you active in politics at all at a student or young Republican?

**Hughes:** No, when I was in law school I belonged to a fraternity called Gamma Eta Gamma. Harold Stassen was also a member of that fraternity. He was a couple of years ahead of me so he wasn't in school when I was. He graduated a year or so before I did, but I knew him when I was in school. I was what they called a steward at the house. That's one of the ways I made my way through law school, that and washing dishes. I got to know Harold than very well. When he first ran for governor that was the first evidence that I had interest in politics. I did so because of my warm friendship for Harold.

**Gower:** What role did you play in his running for governor on 1938?

**Hughes:** I remember very well we had what was called a "Founders Day Banquet" the fraternity house had a Founders Day Banquet at one of the hotels I can't remember where it was. After the banquet Harold Stassen and Harold LeVander, Stassen's subsequent law partner, later governor, and I went over to a little cafe on Nicolet Avenue. We were having a cup of coffee Harold was talking about running for governor, he was accounting attorney for Dakota County. I said, "Harold, how can you possibly run for a governor no one of knows you except for a few of us. We are young and we don't have any money, no background or reputation. We can't bring anything to you except a sense of loyalty." I never will forget he reached over to the container and pulled out a paper napkin and started putting down figures. He had Stearns County for 500 votes. There was a wide division in the Republican Party at that time. Martin Nelson who was subsequently on the Supreme Court, George Leach who at that time was mayor of Minneapolis. Both of these men for lack of a better description looked backward rather than forward. They were not the kind of people who had what we now call charisma. Harold had Stearns County down for 500 votes. He said, "Could you get me 500 votes?" Well I never asked anyone to vote for someone in my life. But I was then teaching at St. John's. I knew if you really are in favor of someone you could impose on your friendship if they think you are honest and have any respect for your judgements. To me that didn't look like a very big chore. So I said, "I will get you 500 votes. I don't know exactly where or how, but I'll get you that." He said "That will be your quota." That's the way he started and that's the way he ran his campaign. There were about twelve of us we were all young, no money, no standing to the communities. I think for the most part it can be honestly said that we were reasonably decent people. We did have some respect for our peers even though they were somewhat younger people. We were referred to in the *Minneapolis Star* by Mick Halloran, God bless him, who was then the political writer for the

Star. Mick referred to us and stuck with us all through the campaign as the “diaper brigade.” In that campaign you asked what role I had, my back grounds were all Democrat. I told you my father was postmaster, he was appointed postmaster position by Franklin Roosevelt. I think when I came out for Harold Stassen as a Republican--I think if I would have left the church it wouldn't have been nearly as bad on him. But I left the Democrat Party. That's factitiously said of course. As a result of that I was what they called the all party chairman for Stassen for Minnesota. In those days the Farm Labor Party Elmer Benson was governor in 1938, Floyd Olson had been governor and Hjalmar Petersen had been his lieutenant governor, a very fine respected Scandinavian gentlemen over from near Duluth. He was from Askov he ran a little newspaper there, he was a very fine man. The Benson-Petersen contest then became involved in this contest for dominance in the party. Benson heat Petersen that was a very bitter fight. That Benson people wing of that party to say the least was very liberal, very liberal people. The bitterness that was engendered in that campaign made it possible for me as chairman of an all-party organization to enlist a great many regular Democrats and farmer Laborites who were dissatisfied with the radicalism of the Benson wing of the party. As a result I don't know the exact figures, but as a result there was a massive turn over between the Benson election in 1936 and the Stassen victory in 1938. It was attributed to Stassen. He was a very bright, able person. He capitalized the Imagination of Minnesota He was a man of impeccable integrity. Along with that you had these negatives as afar as the other people were concerned. Unless soul lived through that era you really can't understand that. If memory serves me. Well, in the first year after that Janssen was elected in '38 if I recall rightly these were thirteen people In the highway department or connected with the highway department who want to prison for fraud and cheating on contracts. Hits sort of thing. It was rather a sordid situation. They had at that time, it was literally kind of

the Boss Tweed or Tammany Hall thing. Those people were running around the state with a little black bag. If they worked over in the highway department they would come around every pay day however often that was and your share, I don't know how much money but a percentage of your salary was the price you paid for working. That was the background against which Stassen endorsed the civil service in Minnesota.

**Gower:** Was there much of a contest within the Republican Party for the nomination?

**Hughes:** In retrospect there wasn't we were all too young to understand how strong, we were. All we had was enthusiasm. I am sixty-nine year old and I know a lot more now than when I was thirty or so. In 1938 I was thirty. Presumably I am a wiser man at least I have made a lot more mistakes and I learn from my mistakes. I should know more. I simply do not have the energy anymore to do what that thirty year old lad does now. That's what we had while we were worried about these important people in 1938. So important significant in the community sitting in offices as you and I are doing today. We didn't know any better we were out beating the bushes and making hay. It really wasn't much of a contest to the mind we really swept them aside with relative ease, I don't mean to be immodest but that is the truth.

**Gower:** Were there people in the Republican Party in 1938 who were quite discouraged about the way things had gone in 1931, because they had been defeated so much to that governor's election. But for you people it was we can go ahead and win to 1938. Was that kind of the feeling to the party?

**Hughes:** Oh yes such as you have today, it's not unlike a situation in Minnesota today. The fortunes of the Republican Party are at a pretty low end and they are going to be at a lower end today when young Sullivan beats Stangeland up there in the Seventh district.

**Gower:** You think he is going to defeat him?



**Hughes:** No doubt about that at all to my mind. You can't bring the Vice President of United States, Governor of the state, Senator of the state Alec Olson, and everyone in that kind of thing. You can't do that without having this effect. I think you have to be pretty naive to think that Stangeland has a chance.

**Robak:** Do you think that he will shoulder the primaries?

**Hughes:** No, the primary election doesn't do it, the primary does really tell it because you don't have a primary result in the contest, the Republican contest.

**Robak:** Yet there was such a large vote for Sullivan?

**Hughes:** I said they had a primary contest in the DFL party you did have that on the other side, but today I can't tell you who it was. But there again the Coye futon thing really scared these kids. Coye is now 64 or 65 years old. She never was really in the category of an Aristotle. She was never what you called a very heavy weight down there.

**Gower:** So probably part of the reason that you younger people were able to get that nomination to 1938 was because of the pessimism of some of the older people in the party. Is that correct?

**Hughes:** That may be a factor, but I think it was a small factor. What we had, before I went on the air I told you that Harold Stassen and Father Virgil Michael, who taught me philosophy at St. John's, are the two best minds that I have ever encountered. I say that in '69 and when I was in the middle of the Stassen thing in 1938. There was a small group of us who were involved in this thing, but we were concerned and educated I'm sounding immodest again, but we were a concerned group of young people. We were concerned about what we thought we saw and what we did see. We understood this a good deal better than a lot of people did. When people had to pay to work for the state contracts and people getting together and buying each other off. It was a very sordid situation. In that campaign we had very serious charges of the Benson people being

...tied into the Communist Party and I just don't mean on a periphery basis. There was a genuine concern that we were able. That was evidenced by some of the people who were our strongest supporters. They were the Hjalmar Petersen people, they were the one who knew what was going on in their party. We did not. I was amazed at some of the things these people told me. Clearly the most effective single campaigner that I had under my aegis in that 1938 campaign was R.A. Trovatten. He was the commissioner of agriculture under Hjalmar Petersen. He was a great big Norwegian man. He and a man by the name of Walter Mikkelson, he subsequently at that time had a newspaper in New Ulm and then another one in the southern part of the state. These people were privy to what was going on in that party and it was not good.

**Gower:** These were both Farmer labor people?

**Hughes:** Yes.

**Gower:** But they were working for your campaign?

**Hughes:** Yes, indeed so. I said I was chairman of the all party organization, but those people would not identify with the Republican Party but they would identify with our all party organization. My background was Democrat but I've been a Republican since the Harold Strassen days. But I'm no William McKinley Republican, I'm far more liberal than most Republicans are.

**Gower:** Was this all party organization a complete one?

**Hughes:** Yes, indeed it was.

**Gower:** But outside of the Republican Party?

**Hughes:** Yes. There was a great deal of anti-Semitism in the state of Minnesota at that time. There were three Jewish people; Roger Rutchick who was executive secretary to Elmer Benson, Abe Harris who was a large not very attractive man physically, and the third man's name escapes

me. But those three people exerted a disproportioned Influence in that party. As a result it engendered throughout the state a rather strong anti-Semitic feeling. Which really doesn't do too much credit to the state of Minnesota. In our campaign, never in anything I did, hut to our campaign there were always some people who would go out half-cocked. I don't know who they were I can't call names. We had unpleasant situations develop as a result of that. Dick Coiling himself was a Jewish lad from South St, Paul. As I said there was about ten of us in the "diaper brigade." If we were all together today, these of us who are left, would without exception tell you that the key man to our group was Dick Colling. He was the brightest and most dedicated of us there. A man of consummate integrity he would never do a dishonorable thing under any circumstance. He was the natural heir to follow the Stassen regent. Harold came in and came in strong. Harold did a marvelous job, he was well regarded and the Republican Party was on the ascendency. He named Ed Thye to succeed him. But the natural successor to Harold would have been Dick Coiling, He paid the price for being Jewish. There la no question in my mind nor any of the rest of us who were close to him at that time. Dick was about my age give or take a year or so, about 30. He was a lawyer. His father was a photographer to St. Paul. He was a very tall, dark, handsome man, Dick never married he was a bachelor, but just a delightful person and quiet. He was the exact antithesis of the traits which these other three men had exhibited, that had brought about this unhappy social humility.

**Gower:** What happened to him?

**Hughes:** He died a good number of years ago. I forget now, tremendous funeral.

**Gower:** Do you think he would have been governor in Minnesota if he were not Jewish?

**Hughes:** There is no question to my mind. No doubt about it.

**Gower:** Was there anti-Semitism before or did it arise more to the the 1930's because of this Farmer labor group?

**Hughes:** The largest single nationality group to the state of Minnesota is German so you had some of the Hitler thing, I'm married to a German girl and it's one of the wisest things I have done in my life. So I don't mean to derogate the German people. I don't want any misunderstanding there. The glorification of Germany and the thing that Hitler preyed upon all the time with the periphery attack on the Jewish people. I suppose there was some latent feeling. But it was really these three men and their performance that left a great deal to be desired.

**Gower:** I notice that there has never been a Jew as governor of Minnesota. The first Catholic is Rudy Perpich, that is what it said in the newspaper. First it was the Yankee group there's Ramsey and so on and then you get into the Scandinavians. I assume there were Lutherans probably all the way.

**Hughes:** Ed Thye was Luther Youngdahl, C. Elmer, Elmer L., Harold LeVander, Ted Christianson, and Jake Preus. It's a subjective judgement. We had a very good organization at that time. We weren't above reproach nobody is, but we didn't have very many barnacles on us. We could have done that, in my judgement we would have done it and I think Harold would have picked Dick. Dick was clearly the most outstanding man we had.

**Gower:** Was Edward Thye too on this in 1938?

**Hughes:** Ed was a county commissioner for Dakota County. Stassen was in Dakota County as an attorney and Ed was commissioner of agriculture under Stassen.

**Gower:** But he wasn't to on this activity in 1938?

**Hughes:** Yes, in his own way. What Harold did, he had this all figured out, how many votes he needed I forget right now. It was about 70 or 80 thousand votes that he could get it in his own

county, because he was county attorney after all. He had people like Ed who were respected in their own area who knew him. Anyone who knew Harold well would be for him and would do what they could. In that sense Ed was for him from the very beginning. But to the broader sense no, it was usually a bunch of younger people who did those chores.

**Gower:** So Stassen felt that he should support Thye then to 1942 rather than this other fellow, Golling?

**Hughes:** We had a meeting when Harold told us he was going to resign. He was running for office in 1942. We had a meeting in Tim Miller's house in St. Paul a relatively small group of us. Harold called us in there end he told us that night, this was before the fall election, he told us that he was going to run for governor again and if elected would then resign as soon as the legislation session was over and join the service. He asked a member poll around the room whether he should announce that and tell the public. I'm not very proud of the advice I gave him, that we all gave him as practical political people not to reveal that. I will never forget that you learn some lessons, you learn about the character of people from things like this. He turned to us after this and said, "Everyone has said no yet no one has given me an answer as to why the people are not entitled to know this, I will announce it tomorrow morning." These are the kind of things that make you feel you would go the last mile for a fellow like that. A man of great principle.

**Gower:** You said you ran for Congress in 1942?

**Hughes:** Yes in 1942.

**Gower:** Had you ever run for any other office before that?

**Hughes:** Never.

**Gower:** What district did you run for?

**Hughes:** The Sixth district.

**Gower:** Did you run to the general election?

**Hughes:** The primary against Mr. Knutson. It was kind of an interesting thing, just four of us in that meeting. Mr. Harold Knutson was then congressman from the Sixth district. He was one of two or three Hamilton Fish of New York. Harold Knutson was probably the number one or two isolationists in America. Harold was very strongly anti-Semitic, I know that because there weren't any Jewish people in the Sixth district, I had some help, I mean help by people who gave me \$50 or \$100 to campaign. I remember that very well, they told me because of this strong anti-Semitic feeling that Knutson had. The real evil was the isolationism. Here again you would have had to live in that era to know how strong the isolationism thing was. Harold Stassen and Arthur Vandenberg turned the mid-west and as a result America around on isolationism. Arthur Vandenberg was a Senator from Michigan. He and Harold had been appointed by Roosevelt as the two people in the United Nations place to San Francisco. We decided someone had to take on Knutson and I was ready and willing, but not able. But we made a whack at it and did a pretty decent job in terms of all things considered. That was interesting -- Harold felt that he could not run the risk at any time, there's a fine line between leadership to politics and dictatorial attitudes. You ask for people to be leaders in politics, but you don't want them to dictate, telling everyone what they ought to be doing. There's a question of whether Mandate does that when he goes to the Seventh district. The three of us decided it was more important for Harold to get the continuance to Minnesota by supporting Ed Thye then it was to get Knutson out. He couldn't support everyone, so we decided that Harold would support Ed and not me. Harold said that day, "I don't think you can beat Knutson under the circumstances, "But we took a whack at it." In 1942, Fred Marshall who I knew very well, liked and often voted for, told me many times that he

felt that I had made it possible for him to go to Congress, because we had softened Knutson up. He left a lot to be desired.

**Gower:** How close did you come in that election?

**Hughes:** I really can't tell you that, I suppose I could dig it out. My recollection is we lost by about 4600 votes, but don't hold me to that, in the primary election. We lost it primarily in Stearns County. I was a Catholic, Harold wasn't. At that time I was teaching at St. John's and so was associated with it. The religious prejudice you think of didn't work at all. Harold had assiduously developed this German mentality. I'll never forget the statement Harold Knutson made, which is reproduced on a cartoon in the Pioneer Press with Hitler reading a newspaper with a headline that Knutson said, "Hitler is manifesting a forbearance which might well be emulated by the people at the other end of the avenue." Namely President Roosevelt. Within a few days before Pearl Harbor, Knutson said, "The grasshoppers constitute a greater threat to us than the Japanese." Once again I didn't win but conceptually we were right. It's a good thing for America that this man's views were in the minority.

**Gower:** Did you ever run for any other political office?

**Hughes:** Never, the Lord preserved me once and I never want to attempt it again. I left that for the next generation of Hughes'.

**Gower:** Now you were a member of the University of Minnesota Board of Regents for twelve years?

**Hughes:** Yes, twelve years.

**Gower:** What period of time does that cover?

**Hughes:** I was appointed first by Elmer L. Anderson from St. Paul, Governor Anderson. Ray Quinlivan was the chairman of the board at that time, he died in about 1961. I resigned about '73 or '74, about twelve years after.

**Gower:** How did you like that service on the board?

**Hughes:** I enjoyed it very much to start with It was very challenging and rewarding. It got irksome and just plain troublesome towards the end. Twelve years is a long time to serve. Things had happened that I wasn't particularly pleased with and the university didn't have a lot of sympathy for some of the things that were going on. I just felt it was time for me to get out of the way.

**Gower:** How much of a role did the Board of Regents play in the operation of the university?

**Hughes:** A very big role. That is really why I got off the Board of Regents because the situation was changing. I had the privilege of serving with some remarkably fine men and women on that board. As I went on there our role was conceived in manner that I approved of mainly in the formation of major policy. I never did think the Board of Regents was responsible or should attempt to be responsible for the day to day operation of a 400 million dollar operation. That is what you hire very expensive qualified for presidents, academic and financial vice-presidents. I don't think you can do both, you can't give your attention to policy matters and also wonder who's writing the insurance and who's buying the coal. This kind of thing. If you don't have the right people doing these things you better make some changes at that level. That's my theory of the way the board should run. That's the way it ran for a long time. I was chairman of what they called the health sciences department. Dr. Lyle French was well out of trouble to Minnesota with the rapport between the physicians in the state and the University of Minnesota. There developed a chasm between institutions down there and practitioners in the field which we felt



was a very bad thing for the state, the institution, and the doctors. No one was well served by that. So we set about to do something about it. So we set up this vice-president, this committee on health sciences and made a vice-president. Dr. Lyle French was vice-president of health science. That is the only specific' academic area so elevated. As I said I chaired that committee, we had a very significant input into presidential policy decisions in the health science field.

**Gower:** Why did this chasm occur do you think?

**Hughes:** Oh, the academic ivory tower approach, the you fellows out there and we people back in here approach. That is maybe too much of a simplification. A little intellectual arrogant and condensation Is a very unpleasant trait in people. It develops in all of us, power is a dangerous thing.

**Gower:** Who were the presidents of the university that you worked with?

**Hughes:** Matt Wilson was there when I came. I was on the selection committee when we picked Mac Moos. I'll give you a little interesting story on the Knutson-Hughes situation in 1944, we were in Chicago for the Republic Convention. I was charged with a certain state Kentucky, I guess I forget, which was my state to keep track of things. I had a telephone call from a man one day that wanted to have lunch with me, so t said all right. I didn't even know who he was, but I said ail right so we went to lunch. New when I ran in '42 I had put a mortgage on my house and that sort of thing. I didn't have very much money or anything like that. And this man knew more about me than my wife did! He knew where I was born, how many people in our family, where they were, everything about me, my education, he knew a great deal about me, I guess I learned what the CIA was like listening to him. I said, "What do you want?" He said, "I want you to run for Congress." I said, "No, I had a try at it last year or two years ago, thank you but I'm not interested!" I'll never forget that, this man reached into his inside coat pocket and pulled out 10

thousand dollars and put it on the table. That's more money than I had for my whole campaign, I had never seen the guy before. He represented a very large company in America. Mr. Knutson was, as I told you, the ranking minority member of the Ways and Means Committee. I said, "What In God's name are you doing with that money?" He said, "That is for you if you will run for Congress and there's very much more where it comes from. I said, "What do you want?" He said, "All we want is for you to go to Congress." I said, "It can't be that simple." I said, "Why do you do this?" He made a statement about that I was too young I guess to really understand then. Mr. Knutson had too many and too expensive emergencies and that I could take it from there. Needless to say I didn't take the ten thousand dollars and I didn't run for Congress. But it is kind of an interesting little antidote. Those are the things you learn as you go along to life, I guess.

**Robak:** Was this your last involvement with politics?

**Hughes:** Oh no. I've been involved in it many, many times. When I was on the Board of Regents I decided I would not have anything officially to do with politics. I just felt that would ill serve the university and that I should not do it. I didn't until Harold LeVander ran for governor. Harold is an old friend of mine. He was best man at my wedding, we were not classmates because he was a year behind but we went to law school together. He's just one of the best friends a man could ever have. I turned Harold down three times, because I felt really strongly about it. I thought that if you were at the university level you shouldn't get yourself involved. That is one thing that bothers me is Nick Coleman's idea that first criterion on the Board right now is to be a Democrat, that's a terrible service to the educational institution. But anyhow Harold finally called me one day he got me down to Minneapolis when I was down on another matter. He got a hold of me and just really twisted my arm. I kind of wonder at what point a fellow ceases to be a friend. As a result I did go in and was very active in the Harold LeVander's campaign.

**Robak:** Did you serve as state chairman?

**Hughes:** Yes, that is a plaque over there.

**Gower:** That was in?

**Hughes:** 1966.

**Gower:** Were you there to work for Stassen in the National Convention?

**Hughes:** Yes.

**Cower:** What were some of the things you did between that period, politically, in '44 before the Board of Regents?

**Hughes:** I was active in all their campaigns. I never really felt very strongly about C. Elmer Anderson from Brainard. The Republicans ask, you really don't have a right and I say this to Elmer direct, you don't have a right to ask for leadership when you place those kind of people. We did everything we could to get Elmer out of there. We did everything we could to get Luther in. I could see that coming. I could just see Luther offered that judgeship and that is just what Humphrey did was to get Luther out of the way. Luther Youngdahl was a tremendously popular fellows, kind of righteous sort of guy. Carter and Jack Armstrong, clean as a hound's tooth sort of fellow.

**Gower:** Did you try to talk him out of going into the judge fellowship?

**Hughes:** No, we couldn't do that. But what we did do was try to get him to go for Anchor Nelsen as lieutenant governor. Instead Luther wouldn't raise a finger for him so Anchor got beat and C. Elmer was governor. A certain momentum carries over for a time. No one in his right mind would claim that C. Elmer offers very much leadership. He's a decent honorable fine and honest person, but a lot of these people ought not to be governors.

**Gower:** Were you active in supporting any of the presidential candidates such as Eisenhower in the '50s?

**Hughes:** We did everything we could to get Stassen appointed or nominated. I was never particularly active in the presidential thing. I guess to the last presidential thing I was state chairman for the Rockefeller thing. That was against Nixon in 1968. We carried Minnesota. Incidentally we were one of the few states who carried Minnesota. I have always been kind of proud of that I never did like Nixon.

**Gower:** Of course Stassen tried to get someone else instead of Nixon in 1956 as the vice-presidential nomination.

**Hughes:** That is right, that is what I meant when I wrote Jim Reston, if the Republican Party had followed Harold Stassen's caveat the Republican Party and the nation particularly would have been a great deal better off.

**Gower:** You mentioned earlier that you had been involved to the program to help out refugees from Hungary to 1956.

**Hughes:** Whenever that Hungarian revolt came Ed Thye if I remember rightly was to the Senate, because Ed asked me to do that to an organization meeting. I remember Dan Gainy and I were there, I was asked to be chairman and Dan was treasurer. Each state was requested to take a certain number of these refugees. That was a very tough job because there are not more than 4 or 5 people out of 10 that can speak Hungarian. No one could speak Hungarian and there were no Hungarian dictionaries. George Grimm was active to that he was tremendously helpful, he was a fine compassionate, sensitive man. He got 300 Hungarian-English and English-Hungarian dictionaries. I don't know where in the devil he got them. They were worth the price of admission when we got those little things. Mrs. Antol Doratti, then the conductor of the

Minneapolis Symphony, she add some other ladies that she got, we had the highest class people handling our used clothing down there that you could ever imagine. There were more mink coats and fancy dresses in that place with these lovely ladies. They were generous, wonderful people and they could speak Hungarian. Mrs. Doratti would get some other people who could do this. We would have had a terrible mess without them, we were to a bad enough time as it was. Tom Moore who then owned the Radisson Hotel gave us a little office up there to the Radisson. We had quite a show going.

**Gower:** How many refugees came into Minnesota?

**Hughes:** I have no recollection. I thought I had something to the back office, maybe I've thrown it away.

**Gower:** It was a number of people?

**Hushes:** Oh yes, several hundred.

**Gower:** You helped them get jobs?

**Hughes:** Right, to the building over here on Ninth Avenue North that used to house Gaida's Sausage place. Urban had one of his Hungarian men come in and he drew murals on the whole back, sausage murals of these little fellows making sausages and so on. That was one of things we got them. These people didn't assimilate very well or maybe it was we who didn't do a good enough job. There was tendency to gravitate to the larger metropolitan areas, roost of our Hungarians were urban rather than rural people. So they kind of gravitated to the urban centers. Buffalo, New York had a lot of people there.

**Gower:** Did you encourage your son to run for the state Senate back in the 1960s?

**Hughes:** Well, my wife says I did. She accuses me of it. I don't, think I ever consciously did that. My father, God bless him, tried to instill to me a sense of responsibility. We all have certain

talents and limitations. In my own limited way I've tried to put back into society what this country has done for me. I don't mean by way of success, I mean freedom. There aren't many places in the world, there is a lot of complaints about Americas, but all you have to do is go someplace else and you are glad to come home. I feel very strongly that way and have tried to instill that in our children. Mrs. Hughes and I both. It takes different forms, you don't have to run for office. But Keith, I think, does have this talent, this facility to get on well with other people. He can compromise different points of view yet he doesn't have to violate his own principles, but he is respectful of difference to opinions. I just noticed he has an interesting tittle thing on his desk- "doubt is an uncomfortable position, hut certainty is a foolish one" or something like that. Which indicates Socrates or I guess Voltaire. But I felt Keith had something to offer and he did. Frankly I was sorry he had to get out of public life. I think he would have stadia some contributions at a higher level. Of course I very well think he would have gone had he chosen to stay there. I am disturbed by what I see of people in public life. Who in my judgement in many instants are to it for making a living rather than to terms of a contribution, I say to you today I know Rick Nolan, but I don't know this Sullivan boy, two of those young people today at 57 thousand dollars a year income with really very little to contribute to society. That's achieved by Congress falling to have plain staple honesty to face up to its issue. I think that Congress and some of these other people needed a raise in salary. But I don't know how you expect people to have respect for the governmental function when people fail to face up to issues as these men have. They will all have their fancy explanation when they come back. I'm disturbed I don't know how long a country can survive with people unwilling to really face up to issues. That's why I guess I felt that strongly to someone like Keith when he went into public life. I understood

fully why he got out. That last year Keith was to senate, the pay was 48 thousand a year and he spent 11 months out of this office. There's no way that that is viable.

**Robak:** I would be interested in some of your views. How have you enjoyed your work as an attorney?

**Hughes:** Well the practice of law has changed to my 40 years to the practice. We are just now getting out a brief that will be out this week to which on behalf of a relatively small bank to our area, a 17 million dollar bank. We are suing the Comptroller of the currency of the United States on the ground that it is attempting to achieve by regulation something that he cannot do by the reason of the statutory authority that gives him the enabling legislation that sets him up to business. That's the kind of thing that would never have been in existence 40 years ago. But you have increasing degree of encroachments on personal liberty. Whether it is individual or cooperative liberty, fields of education is a very sufficient field where people on tee top if they do it in Portland, Maine they ought to do it to Seattle, Washington, and they certainly should do it to St. Cloud, Minnesota. The concept of conformity there are two ideas to my judgement used interchangeably and used to different ends of the spectrum. Identity and equality when you establish a broad basic identity you absolutely undermine equality because we aren't the same. Morally we are equal but we are not equal intellectually, physically, and to a lot of different ways. I may want to sluff off and you may want to work like the dickens. We aren't identical, that strong hand of government disturbs me in the field of law. As I said to our practice of law in increasing degree we see there encroachments to lots of fields, health, and education, etc. You see a picture up there of Warren Burger, Warren was one of our original "diaper brigade" in 1938. I suppose that is probably the single most significant contribution that Stassen will have made, is the Burger chief justiceship. I get back to Stassen you see.

**Robak:** That concludes today's interview.