

Interview with Sev Youso

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Interviewed by Jean Choate

An interview with Sev Youso, long time Benton County DFL Chairman, concerning Fred Marshall's 1948 campaign. January 15, 1971.

Choate: When did you first meet Fred Marshall?

Youso: I first met Fred Marshall in the summer of 1948 when he became a candidate for Congress. He was with the Agricultural Stabilization Program, the Farm Program at that time and it was rather unknown. He'd never been in politics or ran for any political office, he really was a newcomer to the field.

Choate: What role did you play in the campaign of 1948?

Youso: I was a DFL party chairman at that time, I had been for a number of years and of course, coordinated a great deal of the county campaign for him. Also Mr. Marshall was able to surround himself with quite a few non-partisan people. It wasn't long after he became a candidate that I received a phone call from Dan Fouquette from the National Bank of East St. Cloud. Dan was quite a conservative, I presume you could call him a rather staunch republican. He was supporting Fred Marshall, he asked if I knew someone in this area who was prominent in the Legion, and a rather prominent farmer who could serve on the sixth district Marshall Campaign Committee. At that time Paul Nelson was quite prominent in the legion affairs in the sixth district and a well-known farmer and I recommended him to the committee. Paul was appointed

the treasurer of the Marshall Sixth District Campaign Committee in the opening year of 1948 when he first ran.

Choate: Where do you feel that Marshall got most of his support?

Youso: I believe that Marshall's greatest support came in the agricultural area. That was primarily one of the big factors, being that he was closely associated with the Farm Plan. He stood strong with the farmers. Actually it's the vote that re-elected Truman and upset Dewey. Another factor, I think, that was quite important was the veterans. The GI vote right after the war. Knutson had voted against the pay increase for the service men and I think they were fired up or sore over this, and most of them were back to vote in the 1948 election (many of them weren't back to vote in the 1946 election) practically all the service men were back and casting their vote in 1948. There isn't any question in my mind that a great deal of the service men cast their vote against Knutson because of his vote against the pay increase. Another thing I thought played an important part in the success of the Marshall campaign was the fact that the Marshall Program was being proposed at the time by the United States Government. Day after day in every daily paper and every radio station, all the publicity and everything was directed to the Marshall Plan. The Republicans supported the Marshall Plan, the independents supported the Marshall Plan, everybody was supporting the Marshall Plan. At the same time, here was Fred Marshall. The name Marshall in the Sixth district was, right there, I mean they tied it in together and it just seemed to me that everything that was being said was good about the Marshall name. There was nothing bad said about the Marshall Plan. Now I don't know if many people tied Fred Marshall to the Marshall Plan or not, but that name Marshall sort of enhanced him. Even the Republicans were saying good things about Marshall. I think to some extent, that rubbed off in the campaign and certainly did him good. It didn't do him any harm.

Choate: What were some of the incidents you remember concerning the campaign of 1948?

Youso: I don't really recall any particulars. The one thing that always stuck out in my mind is the campaign posters that they used for Fred Marshall, with two big bundles of wheat under each arm. He had the appearance of a real sophisticated dirt farmer that seemed to hit home in the rural areas. It just registered with the rural people. But other than that there was nothing spectacular about his campaign. It was low key and quite matter-of-fact. The campaign was so quiet that very few people figured that Fred Marshall was going to win. I happen to be one of them that did place a little private wager on it, that he would win, and he did. But there was really nothing spectacular about the campaign except that it was keyed. The situation was just right, the name was good. One factor at that time was the fear among the farmers of them Farm Program then. I think that's the one thing that beat Dewey, is the revolt of the farm people just about two or three days before the election. They didn't have faith in Dewey and a new Farm Program. They went right back and supported Truman and along with him, anyone else who in their mind was going to be a part of the Farm Program that they had. Of course Marshall was closely tied into it through the stabilization act where he worked. That they just figured, "Well here, this is the fellow we're going to vote for, we're not going to take any other chances." It won the election for him. I presume that in his work and dealings with the Farm Program that he came in contact with a number of people in the sixth district. I think all people had a high regard for him, a good deal of respect. The very fact that the varied type that supported Marshall is an indication that he was able to gain the respect of others besides just party people. His votes certainly prove that he went across party lines from independents and even from Republicans. After I got to know Marshall better years later, (I served as party chairman, all the years he was in Congress). It was easy for me in understand how he could gain such support and confidence

from people. It was shortly after Marshall was elected that he made a swing through the district. He wanted to visit all the counties and all the party chairmen before going to Washington with his executive secretary, who was Paul Presseller. At that time he set a date for people to come when he was at Foley and Benton County to visit with him. At the end of that afternoon, (we spent the afternoon) at the Legion, where the meeting was held, where the people could come and visit with him. We were all done and Fred says to me, "Now, you're the party chairman, when I go to Washington in years to come there will be political appointments to be made, for people who will be getting an office. There's one thing I want clearly understood. You as party chairman and I as Congressman, politics is the last consideration. While you as party chairman are going to have friends that you want in these offices and feel are entitled to these offices. The first consideration is the qualification of the man, if it isn't that then I'll have to overrule you and any other party chairman in the district." Well I never had that problem in (all the years he was a Congressman) in our county. We handled a number of appointments. I know of more than one instance throughout the sixth district where the recommendations did not meet Fred Marshall's approval.