Hubert H. Humphrey

Dakota Images

Hubert H. Humphrey was born in Wallace, South Dakota, on 27 May 1911. He graduated from Doland High School in 1929 and from the University of Minnesota in 1939. He received his M.A. from Louisiana State University in 1940. Earlier he had taken a six-month course in pharmacy in Denver, in order to work in the family drugstore. He married Muriel Fay Buck on 3 September 1936. While living in Huron, Hubert worked in the drugstore and Muriel was employed by Northwestern Public Service Company.

Humphrey ran for mayor of Minneapolis in 1943 and lost, but ran again in 1945 and won. He was elected to the Senate in 1948. He was reelected in 1954 and 1960, but left the Senate in 1964 after being elected vice-president. He ran again for the Senate in 1970 after failing in his 1968 presidential bid and won easily. He was reelected in 1976 even though he was forced off the campaign trail by cancer surgery. He tried to win the Democratic presidential nomination in 1960 and again in 1972.

As a liberal mayor of Minneapolis, Humphrey battled for a civil rights plank at the 1948 Democratic National Convention. He played a major role in Senate efforts that led to civil rights laws, fought against nuclear weapons testing, pressed for medical care for the aged, and took up countless quests on issues of poverty and human rights long before such causes were popular. He helped initiate the merger in 1944 of Minnesota's Democratic and Farmer-Labor parties into the now-powerful Democratic-Farmer-Labor party.

On 13 January 1978, Humphrey died at the age of sixty-six. At the time of his death, he was serving his fifth term as senator. It was the drought and poverty of South Dakota that helped shape his liberal philosophy. Those early days in South Dakota gave Humphrey a lifelong feeling for farmers and their annual battles with weather and price fluctuations.

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