

U.S. Sen. Frank Church reaches to new heights

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IDAHO CITY, Idaho — When U.S. Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho, formally announced his candidacy Thursday for U.S. President he reached another high plateau in his illustrious career.

There are many who may not like Church's philosophy and policies but there isn't one who can in all honesty say they don't respect him for integrity and sincerity.

Now 51, Church came to the Senate nearly 20 years ago at the age of 32, then the youngest senator to ever sit in the upper chamber.

He has earned his spurs the hard way in bitter political battles but never once has the senator lost his cool, even in the hottest debates.

This writer remembers Church when he was just another young Boise lawyer looking for a political job.

He wasn't impressed at first but after seeing Church campaigning it didn't take long to see that he would be a formidable contender against two well known political names on the Idaho scene then, the Republican incumbent, Herman Welker, a crony and admirer of Wisconsin's Joe McCarthy, and the singing cowboy, Democrat Glen Taylor.

Church had a winsome appealing mannerism in those days, flashing his bright smile and sticking out his hand to say, "I'm Frank Church, running for the U.S. Senate."

He combed the potato fields and warehouses, stores, streets and wherever he could find the people.

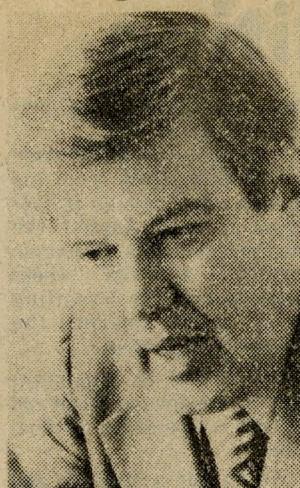
It looked like a horse race in the 1954 Democratic primary and too close to call. It was, probably the closest major race in Idaho history with Church winning by 175 votes.

It left a bitter Taylor who unsuccessfully challenged the vote results. Taylor, now a successful wig manufacturer in Millbrae, Calif., has since conceded that Church has become a good senator and has given him endorsement.

The general election race was a coker with McCarthy hitting at communism in the government which investigation subsequently proved him wrong.

It didn't impress the Idaho voters, either. This writer felt Church would win by 30 thousand votes. He was wrong. It was 46 thousand.

Church had told this writer he had always wanted to become a U.S. senator, that his hero was



AT THE LEFT was Frank Church when he became U.S. Senator in 1956. The right is a picture taken of him in a Post-Register interview a few months ago.

William Borah, the "Lion of Idaho" who was a power in his day, especially in foreign affairs.

Taylor, of course, lost much Democratic support when he ran as vice president with former Vice President Henry Wallace in the Progressive Party.

Church has come a long ways in 20 years.

His present chairmanship of the Select Committee investigating the investigating agencies has won him national attention.

He is next in line to assume the chairmanship of the prestigious Senate Foreign Relations Committee and thus win equal standing with Borah.

He had won the national oratorical contest of the American Legion when a student at Boise High School and is still considered one of the top if not best orator in the upper chamber.

He is chairman on the Committee of Aging and an Interior Subcommittee.

He was propelled to national prominence when he delivered the keynote address to the 1960 National Democratic Convention. He has won national conservation and other honors too numerous to mention.

Church, of course, is a longshot to win the nomination or the presidency.

He will join some seven or eight other Democratic contenders, but at this time, the only formidable ones appear two who have announced, former Georgia Gov. Jimmy Carter and U.S. Sen. Henry Jackson, of Washington State, and the durable warhorse who many suspect may eventually be the nominee, Sen. Hubert Humphrey, of Minnesota.

It is pluses for Idaho's senior

senator, however, as he continues to gain national prominence which wouldn't hurt chances for reelection or for President in 1980 in case he should not make it this time.

It must be remembered if President Ford is elected, he can only serve one term as he served more than two years of Nixon's tenure and is ineligible for another term. The 1980 race would then be wide open.

The pieces may fall right and Church could pick up the top prize. Otherwise, he's still in a choice spot for 1980.