

September 28, 1959

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON
GOVERNOR J. HOWARD EDMONDSON

Oklahoma's Governor J. Howard Edmondson, 34, is the nation's youngest state chief executive.

He is the youngest governor in the history of Oklahoma; elected by the largest majority ever given a gubernatorial candidate in the state.

His first political campaign was on vastly different "governmental level" - - for vice-president of his senior class in Muskogee (Okla.) Junior High School - - when he was 15.

He won that race, and his platform was on the same general philosophy as the one that was successful in his gubernatorial campaign: a platform on reform planks.

Howard Edmondson was born September 27, 1925, in Muskogee, where he attended public schools.

A class mate all through school Jeannette Bartleson, later became his wife.

Their first date was when both were in the fifth grade. It was for a three-show feature at the movie and a shetland pony ride on Saturday afternoon. It cost Howard 15 cents.

After graduation from Muskogee's Central High School, where he received B's and C's, except for superior in history and civics, he decided to enter the law profession and entered the University of Oklahoma.

In March, 1942, he enlisted in the Air Force for pilot training. His orders came through three days after his 18th birthday. He was graduated as a flight officer and served until December 5, 1945.

On May 15, 1946, the future governor was married to Miss Bartleson. Mrs. Edmondson taught French at the University of Oklahoma and her husband re-entered school.

Their first son, James Howard (Jimmy) was born on his father's birthday - - Sept. 27, 1947. Two daughters, Jeanne and Patty, now 9 and 7, followed.

In 1948, he dropped out of the university temporarily to help his brother, Ed, in Ed's first campaign - - for county attorney of Muskogee County. During the summer of that campaign, the two Edmondson brothers, their wives and three babies lived together in one house. Their campaigning paid off-Ed was elected.

Howard returned to the university to complete the law degree in August, 1948. He opened a private law office, helped in the campaign for his brother Ed's election to Congress in 1952, and in 1953 moved to Tulsa to become chief prosecutor in the office of then County Attorney Robert L. Wheeler.

He handled the important prosecutions of that period, and in 1954, when Wheeler decided not to run for re-election, Howard made the race and was successful. He was re-elected in 1956, with 72,000 votes - - one of the biggest majorities ever earned by any candidate in Tulsa County History.

Early in 1958, the Edmondson campaign for governor was launched with a small group of volunteers.

The campaign rolled along with volunteers at the wheel and to accomplish the “impossible.”

During the 27th session of the Legislature, the governor - - inaugurated on January 13 - - placed before the members the proposals that had been his campaign platform.

And during the six-month-long session, the 27th Legislature wrote a reform-studded record.

They submitted the question of repeal, wrote a strong liquor law, approved a “little hatch act” merit system, voted a central purchasing system, okayed: a record budget for education, appropriation for the Kellogg center at the University of Oklahoma, a record appropriation for mental health and a new hospital for mentally retarded children, legislation making toll roads possible and many others.