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GUIDE TO THE PAPERS OF JOHN SHERMAN COOPER

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JOHN SHERMAN COOPER

Few Kentuckians can claim such a productive and varied career as John Sherman Cooper. In addition to serving twenty years in the United States Senate, he has been both a Washington and country lawyer, both a circuit and county judge, a soldier under General Patton, a State legislator and a working diplomat.

The oldest of seven children, he was born in Somerset, Kentucky on August 23, 1901, to John Sherman and Helen Gertrude (Tartar) Cooper. His father was Pulaski County's first school superintendent and also a county judge, as was his maternal grandfather.

Educated in the public schools of Somerset, Cooper was a gifted athlete and president of his senior class. In the fall of 1918, he enrolled at Centre College, but transferred to Yale University after one academic year. At Yale Cooper was captain of the basketball team for two years, was elected to membership in the Skull and Bones Society and was voted most popular in his graduating class in 1923.

Cooper entered Harvard Law School in the fall of 1923, but his father died the following summer. After one more term at Harvard, the young Cooper returned to Somerset to assume responsibility as head of the family.

In 1928 Cooper was admitted to the Kentucky bar and commenced the practice of law in Somerset. In that same year

his public career began with election to the Kentucky House of Representatives. Two terms as Judge of Pulaski County (1930-1938) during the Great Depression strengthened Cooper's innate compassion for the unfortunate and was to have a marked influence upon his later career. After an unsuccessful bid for the Republican gubernatorial nomination in 1939, Cooper resumed the practice of law in Somerset.

At the age of forty-one, he enlisted in the United States Army as a private in 1942. After basic training he entered the Officers Candidate School at Fort Custer, Michigan. Although the oldest member, Cooper finished second in his class and received a commission as second lieutenant in 1943. He served with General Patton's Third Army in France, Luxembourg and Germany. Viewing the Buchenwald concentration camp shortly after its liberation indelibly etched upon Cooper's memory the horrors of war.

Following the end of hostilities, Cooper headed the re-organization of the German judicial system in Bavaria. He also served as legal advisor to Colonel Philip Schafer who was in charge of the repatriation of approximately 300,000 displaced persons in the Third Army zone of occupation. In that capacity Cooper was responsible for a recommendation, which General Patton approved, that displaced persons of Russian nationality not be forced to return to the USSR, leaving behind their spouses and children, which Russian negotiators were insisting they must do under the Yalta Agreement. Cooper was discharged

from the army as a captain in February 1946 and awarded the Bronze Star for his service in World War II.

While still in Germany, Cooper was elected circuit judge for the 28th Kentucky judicial district in late 1945. Cooper had been away from the law for several years, but of his first sixteen decisions which were appealed, fifteen were upheld by the Kentucky Court of Appeals. During Judge Cooper's tenure blacks were allowed to serve on trial juries for the first time in that judicial district.

Cooper was first elected to the U.S. Senate in a special election held in 1946 to fill the unexpired term of A. B. Chandler, who had resigned to become Commissioner of Baseball. Cooper won over John Y. Brown, Sr. by 42,000 votes, the largest majority ever given a Republican in Kentucky up to that time. As a freshman senator, Cooper served on the Judiciary and Public Works committees and sponsored the first bill to provide 90% parity support for tobacco. He quickly established a reputation for independence, often voting against the Republican leadership if his conscience so dictated. Senator Cooper's bid for re-election was thwarted in 1948 by Democrat Virgil Chapman.

In 1949 Cooper affiliated with the law firm of Gardner, Morison and Rogers in Washington, D.C. However, much of his next three years was spent gaining first-hand knowledge of world politics and diplomacy. President Truman appointed Cooper a delegate to the United Nations General Assembly in 1949, and he served as an alternate delegate in 1950 and 1951. Cooper

was an advisor to Secretary of State Dean Acheson at the London and Brussels meetings of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Council of Ministers in 1950. At the request of Secretary Acheson, he visited NATO countries in 1951 to report on their military and economic status.

Cooper was again elected to the Senate (over Thomas R. Underwood) in 1952 to fill the vacancy created by the death of Virgil Chapman. Cooper was the only Republican senate candidate to run ahead of Eisenhower in any state in that presidential election year. However, in 1954, Cooper's bid for re-election was defeated by his good friend, former Senator and Vice-President Alben Barkley.

Appointed Ambassador to India and Nepal in January, 1955 by President Eisenhower, Cooper served with distinction in a very difficult diplomatic post. He won the respect of Prime Minister Nehru and the hearts of the Indian masses. U.S.-Indian relations demonstrated a marked improvement during Cooper's tenure as ambassador.

At the urging of President Eisenhower, Cooper became a candidate for the Senate again in 1956. He was elected over Democratic candidate, Lawrence Wetherby, to fill the unexpired term of Alben Barkley. In the senatorial election of 1960, Cooper won his first six-year term, defeating former Governor Keen Johnson by 199,000 votes. The 1966 election saw Cooper surpass that record when he won re-election over John Y. Brown, Sr. by 217,000 votes. Senator Cooper did not seek re-election in 1972.

In the Senate Cooper fought tenaciously for enlightened and worthy programs in such varied fields as: labor legislation; federal aid to schools; coal mine safety legislation; aid to farmers; mutual security assistance; civil rights; water resources development; aid to underdeveloped areas; health insurance for the aged; and expansion of the Rural Electrification Administration facilities. He vigorously opposed: deployment of the costly anti-ballistic missile system; attempts to weaken the Tennessee Valley Authority; and infringements upon individual rights. From his position on the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Cooper was one of the most persistent and influential critics of the Vietnam War.

A 1960 Newsweek Magazine poll of fifty Washington news correspondents named Cooper the ablest Republican in the Senate. In 1965 he received the American Political Science Association's award for distinguished service in the 88th Congress. President Lyndon Johnson, in 1963, appointed Cooper to the Warren Commission, which investigated the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Since 1973 Cooper has been a member of the law firm of Covington and Burling in Washington, D.C. He took leave from the firm in 1974 to accept President Gerald Ford's appointment as the first U.S. ambassador to the German Democratic Republic, serving in that post until late 1976.

Cooper married Lorraine Rowan Shevlin in 1955 and they reside in Washington, D.C.

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