

GOOD NEWS NEVER CAME

The Judge Waited in Vain

By JERRY KLINE
Star Staff Writer

WARRENTON, Va. — "Judge" Howard Worth Smith, his head bowed and his lined face expressionless, waited for hours in an overheated room for hopeful news that never arrived.

The 83-year-old congressman who bragged he never lost a fight in 60 years was trailing his opponent, George C. Rawlings Jr., by a few hundred votes. But two counties were yet to be heard from.

Then, at 11:05 p.m., his legislative assistant, Homer (Pete) Pettit Jr., softly gave him the crushing news. The precincts were all in, he said, and "the AP says we're down 364."

Judge Smith said today he will not make any statement conceding the election to Rawlings until the vote is certified in an official canvass. Smith said figures compiled at his headquarters directly from the precincts show a vote difference of only 250 and, with "so slight a difference" out of 50,000 votes cast, "clerical errors would not be unusual."

Last night Smith sat quietly, stared at the yellow pad in front of him and flicked an ash from his third cigar of the evening. He picked up a yellow pencil and carefully printed a number, 53,000, the size of the total vote in Virginia's 8th Congressional district. Then he darkened the number several times.

After a minute, he asked about the Spong-Robertson race. The figures were read to him and he said, "That's close, isn't it?"

Unconvinced that the Associated Press report included the figures for the two missing counties, Smith's lieutenants renewed their efforts to learn the outcome in those areas.

Twenty minutes later, Pettit received the figures for the two counties. Both gave majorities to Rawlings.

The three special telephones began ringing with requests from the press for a statement of concession. The woman in charge of the phones told each caller that "indeed, no," the congressman had no statement to make.

He'll await the official vote tabulations

before deciding whether to let it stand or ask for a recount, he said.

Shortly after 11:30 p.m., two hours after he had sat down at the table to tabulate the returns, Smith rose from his folding metal chair and announced, "Well, I'm going to bed." Some two dozen partisans—all that remained of more than 200 persons who had shown up earlier to wish him well—smiled weakly and stepped aside to make a path.

The evening had begun on a brighter note for the chairman of the House Rules Committee. Dozens of exuberant friends greeted him as he and his wife entered Smith Campaign Headquarters on Main Street, formerly a barber shop. Their daughter, Mrs. Joe H. Tonahill, was visiting from her home in Jasper, Texas, so she came along.

The first returns came from Rectortown, a Fauquier County precinct. Smith received 78 votes and Rawlings 55. Smith read the figures for almost two minutes and then walked outside.

The New Baltimore precinct—Smith's own—reported next. The voters gave their local dairy farmer 85 votes and his opponent 33.

When the Markham precinct reported 51 votes for each candidate, a woman glanced at the posted figures with indifference and said, "Lot of commuters there, lot of new people."

As the precinct reports trickled in, more Smith supporters crowded into the stuffy rooms to read the blackboard. The large fan near the door circulated the increasingly warmer air around the room and the temperature passed the 90-degree mark. Smith took off his suit coat and sat down by the telephones in the rear room.

He spoke briefly with a Leesburg man who had telephoned. "It's not good," he told his caller. "It's very tight. It's going to depend on the Fairfax County majority."

To a caller from Goochland, he said, "I'm a little weak now. Did you carry the coun-

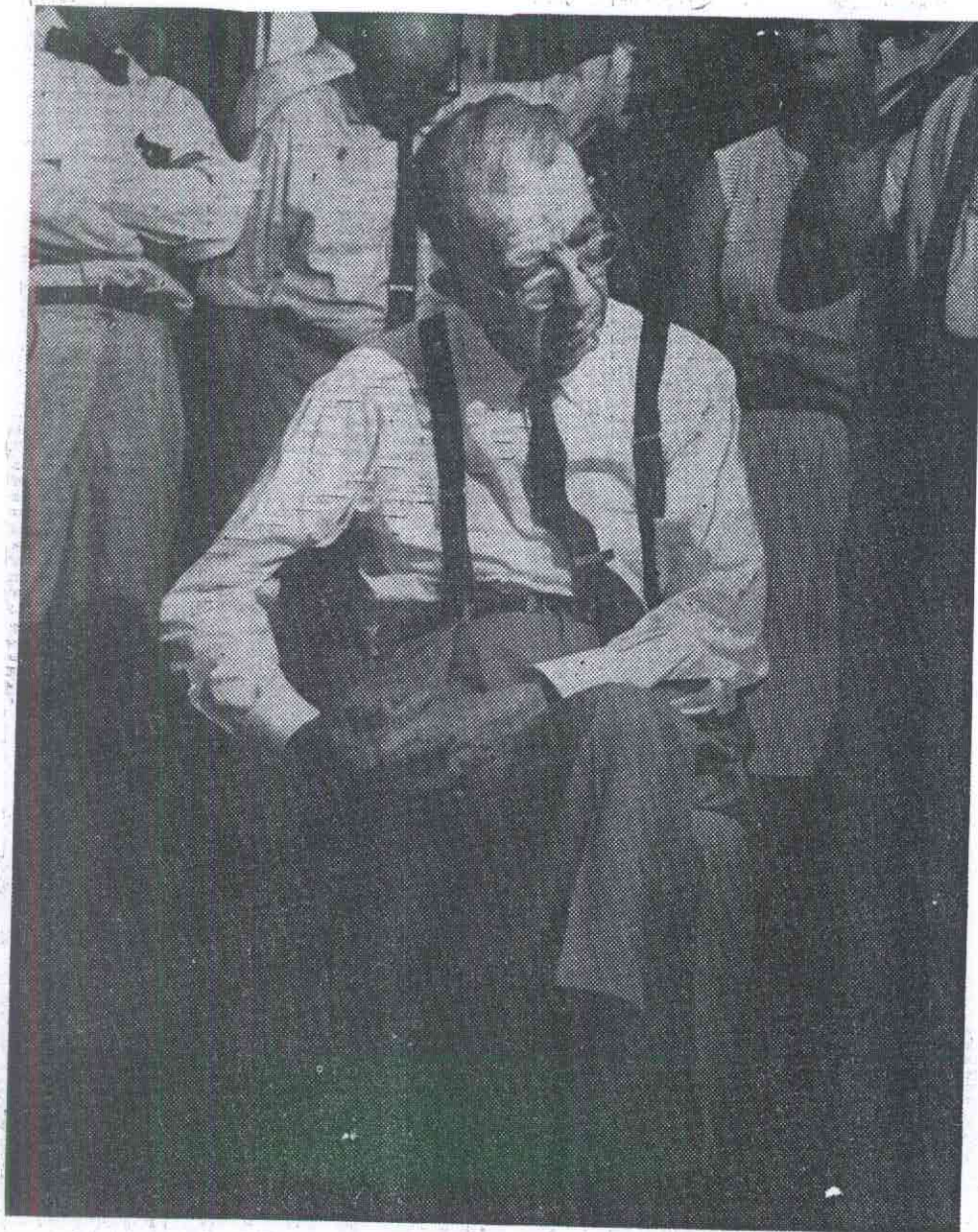
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-Phillip Rush

For Rep. Howard W. Smith, it was a long, unrewarding election vigil.