1981

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Spong rules out Senate, court bids

By James Latimer
Special Correspondent

WILLIAMSBURG — Neither judicial nor senatorial legs can lure former U.S. Sen. William B. Spong Jr. away from his unembellished reputation as head of the Marshall School of Law.

Spong made that abundantly clear as he began to tell reporters that he would not be available for either of two high offices to which his name had been linked by speculation in recent weeks.

Answering questions last week from a pair of standing committee whom he has known for years, Spong effectively removed himself from the field of prospective candidates for the Virginia Supreme Court as well as the U.S. Senate in 1982.

A straw poll of Democratic State Central Committee members one week ago indicated Spong was clearly considered the front-runner by those polled.

Legislative leaders were said to be taking those top-three choices for the Democratic nomination, Spong put a chance in the running when he finished 13th in the New England States Democratic Primaries.

Asked first if he were interested in running for the Senate,
Happy where he is, Spong asserts

Carried over from First Popo

category to be left late, by the retirement of Justice Albert E. Banes Jr. accepted at a
his tentative

"Well," he began. "I —

(telegram) — I will not ask that
my name be considered for
that position.

"It would be an honor to
match my service in this court.

But I'm not quite

to serve here. I also

what I'm doing, particularly
the teaching, and I think I'll
stay around a while.

What Spong has been doing

since late 1979 is dedicating all
his efforts to the rebuilding
and improving of the versa-

tile but once shaky law school
that was established under

Thomas Jefferson and Presi-

dent George Wythe at the Col-

lege of William and Mary in

1693.

Former "Young Turk"

A former "Young Turk" and

class officer in the General

First Popo in 1969-70,

was Virginia's junior U.S. sen-

ator in 1969-70. He was
gang, a

conservatism of the McGovern

presidential debate, by Re-

publi
can William Scott, large-

ly as a result of a shocking

electron" media blitz fin-

anced in the spelling bee

by a $25,000 "auto-

from one oak, the late J.R.

Effort.

After his defeat, Spong qui-

etly withdrew from the political
game to concentrate on more

scholarly "public" research and writing on legal

and governmental policy

matters, as well as practicing law

and teaching the courses of

several institutions.

Reporters and friends tal-

ked more about the impact he

the impression he was as a

ably institutionalized in the ac-

ademic world — he once said he

was determined not to become

a professional academic, but

to create a new career —

that he was not about to

leave

It now.

In his closed system, delib-

erate way, Spong minimized

the possibilities that any sort

of "Draft Spong" movement

did develop for the court or

Senate, and indicated strongly

that he would decline it if it
did.

He has a commitment to

himself to stay at W&M until
certain things are accom-

plished, which means until

some indefinite time in the fu-
ture, he said. More than that,

he said hopefully a report

article that quoted him as say-

ing he and Mrs. Spong have

never been happier than they

are now. That doesn't mean he

won't eventually run on

something else, he said. He

wouldn't speculate now on

when it might be, but it quite

possibly won't be in the Senate

campaign, even if he did up in

his home county of Orange

—- he

he doesn't want to discuss

at this time.

Rounding out an estimate

about $130,000 in his 1981

campaign, Spong guessed it

would cost $200,000 or more

to wage the type of camp-

aign next year. "The obli-

gations one might encounter in

money that money would be

inefficient to me," he said.

What the Democrats need,

he said, is "somebody who

wants to do the job and is

willing to begin right out and

work for the job." The

said he was not considering

that "Glad to have a task,

but I hope they

will find a candidate ... who

will continue the momentum

that was undoubtedly started

by the Democratic sweep of

the three top state offices this

year."

(The 1981 election of

Charles S. Robb as governor

marked the first time Virginia

Democrats have won either a

gubernatorial or a
elections since Spong and Dick

Robert J. were elected together as Democrats in

1979.)

"I was very happy being a

senator. It's one of the

grandest jobs in the world," he

said. "Then, with a little check-

he added, I guess what you

have to do to get there is

something that you have in

mind as well."