



photo submitted

This 1968 hearings photo shows Robert Kennedy at Neon High School at senate hearings he held there during his tour through Kentucky during that year. The Appalshop group recreating RFK's 1968 visit is currently searching for pictures of his visit to Hazard.

Theater group to bring Kennedy's 1968 tour back to Hazard

In February 1968, Robert F. Kennedy toured southeastern Kentucky, from Vortex to Prestonsburg, visiting homes, schools, and holding hearings for the Senate Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower, and Poverty. Dozens of local citizens testified at the hearings, and thousands gathered along the route to listen to Kennedy, Senator Carl D. Perkins, and county officials speak.

Kennedy came to southeast Kentucky to hear from its people what they thought about the "war on poverty", jobs and education, and the future of central Appalachia. He listened to high school students from Harlan, grade-schoolers in Barwick, coal miners and activists.

In September 2004, Kennedy's entire two day tour will be reenacted, at all the places where he stopped, by an all local cast.

Sponsored by Appalshop in Whitesburg and directed by the internationally acclaimed artist, John Malpede, RFK in EKY is a giant form of community theater, spread over two hundred miles, with dozens of roles, from Kennedy himself to Harry Caudill to school children, marching bands, and journal-

ists.

Right now the project is looking for people who participated in Kennedy's original tour, or who have family memorabilia of the event such as pictures or letters, to share their memories at a series of memorabilia gathering events. Stories are videotaped, pictures are scanned, and artifacts are photographed for inclusion in a digital archive/museum of the visit and project.

RFK in EKY is also looking for people who would be interested in playing a role in the recreated tour. No experience is necessary. The project also needs people to help out with all areas of production.

Director John Malpede calls the project "a chance to hold a mirror up to an historical moment, to see what was on the table then, and what's on the table now". Recreating Kennedy's tour in an election year, the project also intends to help put Appalachian voices back into the national conversation on policy and priorities.

Their next memorabilia event, which is the group's effort to gather local photos, memories and other aspects of Kennedy's tour, is scheduled for June 10 at Hazard City Hall from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.