Politics ran in the family. He became a lawyer to have the independence needed. After the war he was a county chair. After run for Congress in 1950, he wanted to run for state Senate but thought it impossible to win locally, so he ran for Attty General and won. Plan for governor in 1962 when Nelson chose not to run for re-election. His four years as Attorney General was controversial and did not endear him to the state legislature. McCarthyism dominated because of Soviet scare.

GOP assumed that governor's office was theirs and that any Democratic governor (Nelson) was an aberration. Everyone knew we had to raise taxes, and Kuehn campaigned on that basis. Issue was how to raise the money. Kuehn wanted sales tax, but Reynolds opposed it in favor of higher income tax.

Transition was tough because of legislative battle over tax. How to negotiate with the very conservative legislature. GOP were tightly disciplined and unwilling to negotiate. So Reynolds decided to go to the public by conducting budget hearings at various locations in the state, especially in state institutions (hospitals, prisons, etc.). Reporters and TV viewers learned of their state. Legislators didn't like the tactic.

Governor's staff. In the executive branch he had Howard Koop, Joe Naabam, and young budget analysts (Wayne McGown, plus people like John Gronumski as Commissioner of Taxation and advisor. For personal staff, Reynolds had David Adamany. Two year term made recruitment difficult. Hired Stanley Zickerman (former Milwaukee Journal reporter) who was an old friend; same with Leonard Zubeckksy. Staff focused on the currently hot topic and battle. Howard Koop handled battles with the state bureaucracy. Wisconsin civil service system was strong, like British system, and suspicious of elected officials. Wilbur Schmidt headed Department of Public Welfare. Big problem in pre-cabinet years was that the career bureaucrats could "run" their overseeing boards and commissioners. Career people in DNR always opposed Gaylord Nelson because DNR had become part of Republican establishment.

How move the bureaucracy? Mostly by persuasion. Reynolds was stymied. His power rested on the budget and his influence with legislature.

Getting appointments through the legislature was impossible because of pure partisanship. No discussion, no question.

Priorities included taxes, budget, civil rights (open housing), education (Fred Harrington at UW was aggressive and energetic promoter of university education), conservation, industrial development. Had virtually no relationship with the business community.

Best thing Reynolds did as governor: spending (investing) to improve things, such as buying Downer College, building UW-GIB and Parkside campuses, state parks in Door county.

Worst thing/biggest mistake: failure to establish relationship with business community

Enjoyed politics and campaigning. Turned down a career job to be free to pursue elective office.
Heavy emphasis and time commitment to policy and legislative matters. State senators were more cooalsitarian than Assembly, largely because of Bobby Knowles (moderate) and Walter Hollander. Assembly GOP were just bidding time to the next election. Democrats weren't even players in the legislature. Reynolds felt it his duty to submit a budget, even though it would be opposed. The big first year budget had two dimensions: how much, and how pay? The budget amount was comparatively easy, but the battle over sales versus income tax was harsh. [end side one]

In the end, both swaps were raised, and GOP won the battle of perception. Judgement is the key issue; most legislative proposals from agencies and departments were easy and minor. Reynolds believed in need to bonding to expand the road system (Project 66); legislature seemed to agree on the need, but they didn't want to do it on Reynolds' watch. In politics, it's hard to cut a deal because legislatures aren't free agents; they have to check with their constituents before casting the final vote. On Project 66, the highway lobby was happy with Reynolds' proposal. In the end, the legislature chose a referendum to decide the issue.

Reapportionment controversy. Reynolds had sued the legislature as Attorney General, and they remembered it. Easy to resolve the congressional reapportionment, but no agreement on could be reached on state seats. Eventually the courts did it.

Civil Rights and open housing. Milwaukee Democrats were not enthusiastic about open housing, but out-state Democrats were.

Reynolds didn't schmooze with the legislators. He did spend a lot of time with them throughout the first budget battle, but then he moved on to Project 66. Got along well with Lt. Gov. Jack Olson, but both went their separate ways. Doesn't like the partial veto. Wisconsin prohibits logrolling (felony). Reynolds didn't want to get into a logrolling relationship. Deciding to veto, bill is cleared by relevant agency, since staff was too small to have its own expertise.

Decision to run as stand-in for LBJ. It wasn't Johnson's idea. To maintain Wisconsin Democratic party, the party leaders thought it would be a good idea to have a favorite son. Nelson didn't want to do it, so Reynolds did. Once George Wallace entered the primary, it became a big deal and very time consuming. If he'd known the amount of work, he might not have done it. Took too much time.

Why support JFK over HHH in 1960? Because HHH would be too liberal and couldn't be elected. When Kennedy people came to Wisconsin, they sounded out Reynolds and Lucey. Both suggested Ivan Nessign, mayor of Madison.

Reynolds/Lucey - Nelson. Not an ideological issue, but either one of Madison vs Milwaukee Democrats. Madison Democrats idolized Adlai Stevenson, but Reynolds didn't agree or think he could win. Nelson's constituency was in Madison, and he never interfered in Milwaukee. Reynolds got involved in Milwaukee politics when Attorney General. Milwaukee and labor were HHH's base; labor wasn't enthusiastic about Reynolds. In 1960 Reynolds refused a Teamsters Union check for campaign. Reynolds and Lucey came to support Kennedy from different perspectives.

Relations with Milwaukee. Got along pretty well, given his investigations of Milwaukee as Attorney General.

Loss in 1964 wasn't great surprise. Being a federal judge was a great job with policy consequences.

Media: pretty good. Media dominated by Milwaukee Sentinel. David Adamany advised Reynolds to issue press releases to UPI and Sentinel. Press was knowledgeable. John Wingard was very conservative but ethical and knowledgeable. Press "loved" Reynolds but had to write about his fights.