

Robert Morgan

November 20, 1980

He was as nice as he could be---still had his hoarse voice.

"I'm all right. I wasn't surprised that I lost. It's not a catastrophe for me. Except that I don't like to go out involuntarily. I do think it is a catastrophe for the state and the country. Yesterday I had a meeting with a representative group of businessmen. I told you I had good support from all types of businessmen. They said to me: 'whether or not you run in 4 years, whoever does run will have an unlimited *war chest* to defeat Jesse Helms. He's a danger to the country.'"

"I don't know what else we could have done. Maybe we could have hit back every time he lied and exposed him. Maybe we could have put on a negative statewide TV campaign attacking him in the last few days. If I had done that my friends would have said that I had gotten right down on his level. I'm glad I didn't do it. All the newspapers agreed that this was the dirtiest, most unfair campaign in the history of the state. All of them praised my campaign. I feel good about that."

He walked over and got Tom McIntyre's book and read aloud from it an excerpt that said how the pamphlets stressed anti communism, and this idea that they were the real Americans. "Did you see Jesse Helms ads in the last week? 'We need a real Christian in the Senate.' That's the most dangerous kind of group. We've got to get together some kind of group and stop them."

"In my home county, my friends heard rumors on election day that members of my staff were homosexuals and active in the Washington gay community. I don't ask the sexual preferences of the members of my staff. But that is an out right lie. (He then talked about that in a confidential way.) All last week they were handing out leaflets saying I was for ERA and for

the breakup of the family and of ^{ab} normal family relationships. That is one of their code words for support for homosexuality. I was so angry when I heard that that I got in touch with my lawyer and went to see the Attorney General. He was out and I didn't want to talk to anyone else. I called one of the people whom I was told was passing that rumor and scared him half to death. I thought of calling in a crack team of former FBI agents and have them find out the source and bring the case to court. The problem with that is that you will inevitably bring publicity, and I would not do that to innocent people. But I would have shot somebody that day if the situation and the opportunity had presented itself." Called Mrs. ~~Pronzer~~ ^{Preyer} and she was crying because at school one of her kids was shown an anti prayer pamphlet of that sort.

"In other parts of the state they distributed pamphlets during the last week saying I was anti tobacco. If anyone was more pro tobacco in the Senate than I, I don't know who it would be. On that pamphlet, they had the worst picture of me they could find and distorted it." (He showed me that pamphlet and the John Birch pamphlet.)

— Theory—All Senators are essentially accidents.

"We did tell people that these were lies, but we were speaking to the saved. That's what my friends kept asking me to do. My supporters wanted me to answer the charges so they could answer them for other people. So I talked to them. But I never did it statewide."

Just couldn't bring self to do it. Ask Syd Eagles about debate over big negative campaign. I think that where Robert's character came into play in the campaign. He just couldn't do it. It was his worry the whole time I was--staying in character. Hurt by his character. *Character is big*

with him -- so much of what he said in campaign next was denigrating ascription behavior. Should have been better, snob, had enough sense, title of Dr etc etc etc.

"I can think of a dozen things that we might have done to change 10,000 votes. But under the circumstances and operating on the information we had at the time, I don't think we would have done anything differently. And I don't even know whether any of those things would have been helpful."

"The only shortcoming that emerged from his rumination was a sense that there was insufficient planning and organization and a late start.

"I didn't have time to get in on any planning of the campaign. I stayed here till Labor Day. And as soon as I hit the state, they put me on the road. They kept me away from the planning end of it. Syd, good as he is, has always been more interested in state politics. I tried to get Carroll to come down but he didn't want to. He didn't want to take on the pressure. I suppose it was my fault for not training someone and having him ready. But Carroll helped me with contacts across the state that I wouldn't have had otherwise. So there are positives as well as negatives. Who can say?"

One thing you can say is that he did have staff trouble of one sort or another for some time. He criticized a lot of them at one time or another. And Don Vaughn's comment ties staff closely to him. His staff relationships were probably pretty important. He was so proud of his Attorney General staff and much less so of his Senate and/or campaign staff--or maybe less certain about them is a better way of putting it.

"Maybe I could have won with a better organization. I've thought a lot about it. If I had had an organization like the governor's. But he had been at it for two years steady. And I had been back here. How could I have organized the state congressional district by congressional district the way he did. [He has patronage in every district--corrections officer, highway employees.] I don't know how in ^Qod a Senator can do it. We had two groups

that helped us politically--the home builders and the S & L's. And that's unusual for a Senator. It was a case where people who see a Senator regularly got interested politically and helped. But most of the people who see me are not politically interested--the educational groups, the food and nutritional groups. The governor has the corrections people and the highway people who owe their jobs to him. They see the connection between their job and politics much clearer than do the people whom I see. A Senator doesn't have any patronage--not any to speak of. Mostly he has to rely on volunteers. I did pay Syd and Mike. Who is he going to get to give up a high paying job a year before election and come to work for nothing on a campaign. I don't see how a Senator can build an organization."

Was unity theme a good idea? "I think it was a good idea. But it had some problems. Whenever the governor talked, he talked about bringing 100,000 jobs to the state. I think you need more than that to run a statewide campaign. I thought we should talk about our farm program, our housing program, even international issues. Our people aren't parochial. But as titular head of the party, the governor gave the major speech. When I got my time, I always felt crowded. I never felt I had enough time to say what I thought needed to be said. Also, we spent too much time preaching to the saved. I think the rallies were a good thing but I don't think all of us needed to troop into every district rally to speak for 3 minutes each. Peter Hart, our pollster, told me that I should do enough rallies to keep our supporters enthused but that I should spend more time with the undecideds--at the rotary club, the civic clubs and so forth."

Comment by another Senator: "The irony of it is that after attacking me as being anti family--a man with ~~2~~ children, they elect a man who never dated a girl in his life. Now we have the only state in the union represented by two queers."

Talked about the Laxalt family bill as "A very dangerous piece of legislation. It laid the foundation for these attacks. It wants to take family life back to a puritanical standard." Got his aide to dig out a copy of it for me.

He talked quite a bit about life in the Senate. "A lot of this is what we have done to ourselves, as a party. We have had some serious leadership problems. Up until the last month, Senator Byrd has not been as accommodative as he should have been. I would have a dinner meeting of the North Carolina Bankers that I had to go to and I would ask Bob Byrd whether we were going to have any votes that evening. He would answer "We may." Well, I would say Hell Bob, I've got to know whether we will or we won't. And he would say "we may". During the last 18 months, when he began to see he might lose control of the Senate, he became somewhat more accommodating. But he should have done much more. We never had caucuses. Mike Mansfield had them. But when Byrd became leader he announced he was going to relieve us of the burden of caucuses. The result was we never get together as a group to talk over our problems and to discuss what we could do about them."

"Our committee chairmen were the same way. I like Russell Long. He's a character. I love to listen to him talk. And he's smart as hell. But you couldn't get Russell Long even to listen to your views on a tax matter. You could get started, but pretty soon he'd be telling you what his opinion or program was and you couldn't get a hearing for your idea. I had a bill in about the concentration of newspapers--Mo Udall and I. It's a matter I cared deeply about; and you and I talked about it when you were in N.C. I never could get Russell Long give me a vehicle for that bill. I don't say it would

did accept any

have made the difference between my election or my defeat in the election. But it would have given me the opportunity to accomplish something worthwhile during my term in the Senate."

Said Proxmire helped him the most--with housing subcommittee.

The talk re Ted Kennedy's deal with Thurmond to push Kennedy's nomination for judge and not any of the others. He has one of 17 pending appointments in the committee and he's upset. Culver calls to persuade him and he talks about it. He wants Dems to meet and vote out all 17. Culver wants him to support *Breyer*

On the day after the election, "The President called me and told me that he had told his staff that if he had had the power to reverse one result in the election, the one he would have chosen was mine. Then he started to take the blame ^{on} himself for my defeat--mentioning the Panama Canal, ^{and} to Nicaragua-- and I stopped him. "Mr. President, I said I voted for your proposals because I believed in them. Not you or anybody else forced me to vote the way I did." Then he said the President went on to say it was a hard campaign and mentioned the tactics of the moral majority.

Near the end of the interview I asked him if he was serious when he said he liked being *Attorney General* more than Senator and he said "I never liked this job. It has its compensations, but I never liked the job."

"I think I may go back on the State Supreme Court. There is a vacancy there and the Governor wants to appoint me. Half my friends say I should take it and the other half think it will be putting me on ice. I could go back to my law practice in Lillington. The firm is still there. I've had an offer to practice law here but I certainly don't want to stay in Washington. If I practice law back home I will have contacts with enough N.C. clients doing

business with the government to make a good living. I'm not sure what I'll do. The only thing I know is that I want to live in N.C. All the power and all the money in the world couldn't convince me to live anyplace else." A very different set of home-Washington ties and perspectives *from Culver*.

At one point when he was discussing the election he said, "What do you think?" I said I thought that where you lose by 7000 votes the search for an answer could easily lead to recrimination that would be counterproductive. He said "I'm not bitter. I haven't looked back and I'm not going to. I've done more of it with you than ^{with} anyone. The worst headline I ever got in my career came last week. Jesse Helms put forward his anti bussing amendment. I walked over to the floor and did just what I have been doing since 1975 and said what I have been saying since 1975--it's all in two of the newsletters in my book--and I supported Weiker. The next day the headline in the Raleigh paper said "Bitter Morgan opposes Helms anti-bussing amendment." The paper apologized for it later. One thing I am not is bitter."

I asked him if he thought he had been targeted because he looked more vulnerable than say the governor. "Yes and no. Yes because of our lack of organization. No because they wanted to get control of the Senate. That was their major aim, so they would have targeted me anyway. But no, because I always believed, and my polls showed that I was strong in N.C."

"The governor slipped 10 points the last week. They might have even gotten him if they had thought they could. Lt. Gov. Jimmy Green only won by a couple of thousand votes. They could have gotten him." Said that a last minute pamphlet accusing Hunt of planning to increase gasoline tax hurt him. It, too, was a lie.