

Carmie Henry

~~Woodrow~~ 9/29/81

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media and we went up in the polls. We outspent Flaherty in the media and we won. If we hadn't outspent Flaherty in the media, we would not have won. It's as simple as that."

Carmie Henry, September 29, 1981

He came to work for John McClellan from an internship and was with him-- on Defense Appropriations Subcommittee for McClellan last 2 1/2 years. We talked about committee staff and personal staff differences. He went with Hodges on personal stuff and then with Pryor.

What do you tell people about Arkansas? "It's a rural state. It's a small state. Its main industry is timber and wood products. And second is poultry. He agreed with Parker Westbrook. "The eastern side is flat. It has a lot of farming--some pretty wealthy farmers, too. The northwestern part has the mountains. And a lot of people are retiring there who aren't Arkansans--outsiders, from places like Chicago. From Little Rock on down to the South West is where the timber people come from and the oil people. And I'd say they are different from the rest."

I asked about David's support. "He does best in the southern part of the state. And he does pretty well with the elderly. Arkansas is second to Florida in percentage of elderly. The farmers are coming to him more, but they are transient supporters. I'd say small businessmen are important. And the hard core Democratic types--State Representative, State Senators, local judges and members of the quorum court. He's tied very tightly with the network of locally elected officials. We work very closely with them and help solve their problems, and do their homework for them. He has a reputation among them as someone who stays on top of things, who lets them participate and lets them share the credit. He doesn't believe in party discipline in Washington, but he believes in it at home (laughing)."

He described DP in Washington as not partisan. "The Democrats can't take him for granted and then Republicans work very hard to get him to go with them. He's a swing man."

Said DP walked out of a Democratic Caucus when they were trying to get pledges to support certain Democratic alternatives to Reagan.

"He's interested in what the people of Arkansas are thinking and he follows what they want. Some Senators say they come here to vote their judgment. Pryor votes the public opinion of his state."

"Pryor is not an aggressive person. He likes to send out a stalking horse to get shot at so that he can see which way the wind is blowing."

"He's a good nose counter."

"If you want to know what Pryor's overriding goal would be I think it would be to send one letter every week to every person in Arkansas. That would be heaven for him. We answer all our mail--all 900-1000 letters a week. And we do it as well as anyone. But Pryor calls that defensive communication. He wants more offensive mail--to tell people what we are doing here. He wants more targeted mail to particular groups. If you asked him why, he's say because knowledge is good, because the more people know about what's going on the better off they are. But I think it's because he wants people to feel that he's on top of things here and that he's talking to them personally. It's a PR thing, a name recognition thing--it's like Hollywood, any publicity is better than no publicity. Some people criticize us for our use of targeted mail. But for everyone of them there are 50 others who feel as though their Senator is communicating with them personally. Next week a letter will go out to some 9000 farmers explaining why Pryor voted against the farm bill. Last week we sent one to 300 local judges and so forth. We may have the best targeted mail operation in the Senate."

He said that everyone who writes to him as "David", will get a letter back signed "David." And all subsequent letters to that person will be signed David. (I call this "David in-David out!") He noted that when McClellan was Senator, they kept a list on one sheet of paper of the people who would get letters signed John. Now DP will sign David to anyone who calls him David. And lots do that, because he encourages it. It's the "ole David" syndrome. And Carmie slipped into the old David several times.

"Pryor learned a lesson from his defeat by McClellan, a lesson he never forgot. It takes a lot more work to find out what your constituents want and think than he thought it did when he was a congressman. McClellan had built up a constituency that stayed with him. (But) He was on the way to getting out of touch."

Again, the stress on knowing what your constituents want and giving it to them or knowing what they think and voting with them.

He said DP always saw the governorship as a stepping stone. "I don't know what kind of legacy he wanted to leave as governor. I do know it was always just a stepping stone to here."

Re President he said "If someone were to present a plan to him showing how he might become President, he'd jump at it in a minute."

He didn't see any effects of being governor on his behavior in the Senate. But he did say "I think he finds being Senator more difficult than being governor. That surprised me, because I thought as governor you would live with crisis. But as governor you could delay or postpone decisions, do a study, create a commission or turn the job over to someone else and get someone else to take the heat. Here, Pryor has to vote every day and that vote becomes David Pryor's decision. He likes to hold back and put things off. You can't do it as easily as a Senator as you can as a governor."

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He talked about DP's type of contact with others, in a way that runs counter to my impression. "People vary in the number of people they can keep in regular contact with. For Pryor that is not many. He likes to walk through the office and say hello to the staff, but when it comes to sitting down with them to talk about a problem, he's not interested. He's only interested in votes and PR; and he only keeps in regular contact with one or two members of the staff. The same with constituents. He likes to walk out into the front office for a five second slap on the back with visitors there, but if 5 judges want to sit down and talk with him or if somebody comes in and opens a brief case he hates it. He doesn't like detail. If you want him to read more than one or two paragraphs, forget it."

Yet, "He's more constituency oriented than most Senators. He keeps in close touch, goes home three out of every four weekends. He knows what people are thinking."

I asked what had given DP "best publicity" since he got in and it stumped him! It was very interesting. After a lot of head shaking ("You'll have to ask Bruce or Ann" or "I know I'll think of something later") he mentioned the nerve gas issue. He spoke of Pryor's opposition to the nerve gas facility and the contrary position of the Pine Bluff Chamber of Commerce. "That was one of those pet things of Pryor's that keeps popping up." Then he said "His support of the President--we got some nice letters on that." Either DP has had 3 years without excitement or the excitement never penetrated to Carmie's desk.

We talked about the rivalry between two Senators. Mc & Fullbright. "They did not like each other. They had nothing in common. They had nothing to say to each other. They never went to the bar together." He explained it in part by fact that WF was university, President and JM never graduated from High School. WF got lots of honorary degrees and JM got one. Carmie thinks

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competition is natural and ^{in ev}meritable since there are only 2 and they get compared by people in the state.

He didn't say much about DP and Bumpers except "If I were Pryor I'd always want Bumpers to be the other Senator. He's the one everyone says 'he's got to go.' I think Pryor would like to be the senior senator; so that would mean Bumpers would have to be defeated." I asked why DP would want to be senior senator and he didn't know. I wonder if DP has ever suggested that he'd like it--another step up the ladder?

We talked about two possible ways for two senators to behave--to compete for the same turf or to carve out separate identities. We decided that the latter was the best strategy. The problem is that you can't stay separated at the time of the vote. Then, you must both vote; and that's where invidious comparisons begin. Or, it's one of them. Would campaign style be another?

When I asked Carmie how I could study the Senate, he replied that he didn't know. He said that nobody could tell me that because they all saw only one segment. I know this is true--to the point of being a cliché, a given--but, still, it's something I need to keep constantly in mind. I'm getting a particular perspective..

Carmie said a Senator was really "three Senators". "He's a Senator in his relations with the 99 other Senators. He's a Senator in his relations with his constituents back home. These two relationships may not have anything to do with each other. And then he's a Senator who was a lawyer or a businessman or whatever who is a private person with certain things he wants to accomplish in life." That was the closest he came to generalizing. The third part of it is interesting, and is a little different--maybe.