

Donald Stewart

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I had expected Stewart to win the September 2 primary and planned to return to Alabama in October. But Stewart did not get a majority in the Primary. He got 48.6% and Folsom got 36% or something like that. Moreover, Denton got the Republican nomination over Selden.

These results were both so at variance with Stewart's reading of the situation in July and, hence, so threatening to DS, that I decided to go back to Alabama for the run off primary September 23. I did not ask to see Stewart, only to be allowed to come and hang around the office.

I want to find out what happened between my first visit in mid-July and the primary. And, if he wins the runoff, I want to know what he plans to do with Denton?

There were some missed readings in mid-July. For example, he said once that he could win the primary with 75% of vote. He keyed on Selden and not Folsom--and, certainly not Denton. The meeting at Moulton looked like Lawrence County was in great shape, but Folsom carried it. Why? The meeting at Centre looked like Cherokee County was in good shape, but Folsom carried it. Why?

Did the Jack Anderson story have more to do with it than he thought it would?

Is there a big anti-Stewart vote out there?

On Sunday night, I saw a Folsom TV ad. It shows the FEC print-out rolling up the screen as a voice says Stewart collected 138,000 from outside sources and Folsom got all but \$150 from inside Alabama. If you want to vote vs.

"Washington and New York interests" and hit "the big boys" vote for Folsom.

Then a picture of Folsom at the end.

Got to headquarters about 9:00 a.m. Got some voting statistics and played with them all day. Part of it was busy work. It's not the best time to come to a campaign. Everyone is very preoccupied and the stakes, for all of them, is very high. Peggy drove me home and apologized for not giving me any time. I said I understood. I got a word or two with Richard Woods, Al Lapierre, Franklin Skinner, Peggy's mother. Ann Gholsom said hi, but was very busy.

Al LaPierre--"Our strategy has been to treat the election as a non-election. We denied Folsom as much free media as we could by keeping him and Donald as far apart as we could. We stayed off television. We did black radio, some white radio in his home area--send the local boy back. And we did a little white radio--anti-Folsom--in selected rural areas. We kept Donald scheduled wall to wall in the areas he did best in--the major metropolitan area and the balck belt. We stayed out of the wire grass entirely. Our strategy is to do well in Mobile, Birmingham, Huntsville, Decatur, the Quad cities, and Donald's home area. Our problem is to get our vote out. If we do, Folsom can't match it. He has no organization--nothing in Jefferson County, nothing in Mobile or Huntsville. Instead of putting 100,000 into TV we put it into phone banks--just like Talmadge did. Our strategy follows the Talmadge strategy, except that he debated Miller. The one thing we argued about--for two days--was whether or not to debate Folsom. In one sense we wanted to debate him. We would have torn him up; he's so flat dumb. But why give him the publicity? He can't get it himself. It's a gamble, a big gamble, but it's a good gamble, I think. Turnout is the key factor. We got 25% turnout in the primary and historically there's always an 8-10% dropoff between the primary and the runoff. We could a turnout of 17%. That would be good for us. If the vote stays in the area of 300,000-400,000 we're

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in good shape. If it goes over 400,000, all bets are off. As far as we're concerned, we don't want people in most of the rural areas to even know there is an election going on. Traditionally, people in the rural areas vote only once in a nongubernatorial year--in the primary and not in the runoff. Even in the primary, some rural counties had very low turnout. The apathy was out there during the primary. It was an unexciting race. Donald is not an exciting campaigner. I wouldn't take the gamble if this were a gubernatorial year where you get a vote of a million-two. In 1978, you had a governor's race, two senate races, attorney general and some congressional races. This year, there's not even a congressional runoff. There are local runoffs in less than half the counties. We'll run a low visibility, low turnout race. The ballgame is in the major metropolitan areas and the black vote. If they turn out, we'll win. And if we lose ^{it} we won't be because people haven't done everything we asked of them. Why we even have little old ladies in the rural area with their own phone banks, calling people, putting a plus beside Stewart supporters. But the ball game is Mobile, Birmingham, Huntsville. There are 80,000 registered blacks in Jefferson County and 40,000 in Mobile. The cities and the black vote--if they turn out, that's the ball game."

Peter Hart did a poll that showed Folsom with 13% of the vote--10-14 days before the election. Had DS way ahead.

Post Herald did a poll on Saturday showing Donald at 57-43 over Folsom. Donald did better with every group except the over-50 group. Did better with farmers, blacks, 6 largest metropolitan areas.

I asked about Folsom's strength - Al said it was name and anti-incumbent sentiment. Said Denton came on "in late July and August. It was the only movement in the ~~state~~." Also, he said what Franklin Skinner said "We took a

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beating every day for three weeks before the election on the finances
problem--pounding, pounding. That hurt us a lot. Now it's behind us--maybe.
As Donald says I've been investigated by everyone and cleared except by a
proctologist. We'll know tomorrow whether it has been erased from the mind
of the voters."

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Franklin talked about an AP guy in Montgomery named Scott Shepard, who
gave Donald the worst of it in AP dispatches--where he quoted a Weyrich
report in his news broadcasts. He was predicting 60-30-10 before the AP
stories started appearing and were picked up by papers all around the state.
A "That's when I saw the numbers sinking, the week before election."

Al has a big map of Alabama on his wall entitled "The Ballgame". It
outlines the largest counties in the state (by population) and it has stars
on all those that Stewart did not carry.

Al - "If we run against Denton, the campaign will be a media campaign.
We won't have to worry about the blacks anymore."

It is now Tuesday evening and Stewart has been defeated by Folsom.
I'm back in the hotel pretty much in a daze. It's midnight. I don't know
what to say or to think. But I know I can taste a little of the deep sadness
that people feel when they lose. It's probably even a deeper sadness when
they are convinced they deserve to win. By every measure, except one,
Stewart is the superior candidate and would make the superior Senator. The
one exception is, simply, that a majority of the Alabamans who voted today
did not think so. (Unless, of course, the Republicans turned out and voted
for the weaker candidate.)

I don't have much to write in my book. I sat in Headquarters for two
days, leaving people pretty much to their jobs. They all seemed very busy

and I was really storing up credit for the long pull--when Donald went back to the Senate. I had a plane reservation out of Anniston tomorrow, and Peggy Long was going to try and get me to see Donald in Anniston tomorrow. Well, that's all off now. And I don't have any notes.

Today I went to the newspaper and got some back copies and on the way back the cab driver said "I don't hear much about the election but I have an opinion. I think Folsom is going to win."

I clipped newspapers, went to lunch with Peggy and Virginia, went to the specialty shop, went back to look at the Senator's schedule, went down and decorated the Press Club for the "victory party", went back to headquarters and then left when the high command went into the lock out phase.

Just before I left, I was in the room with Al, and Richard and the media guy--Silver--when an early TV report from one of the "boxes" came in. The gist of it was that there was very low turnout and little Republican crossover. They were very happy. "That's just the way we figured it" said Silver. And Dutko popped in and said "If we win this son of a bitch, we will have called it just right. Our strategy will have been perfect." He said it with great confidence. Even when it looked bad at the Press Club, Richard Woods came down and said "We look good. We're down by 3,000 statewide and we'll win Jefferson County by 45,000 votes. And not all of the black belt counties are in yet. I suppose a lot of people have been having heart attacks down here. But we're better than the media shows us. It looks very good."

Mrs. Long drove me home--said "Donald didn't know what he was doing and neither did the people around him. He had some very weak people around him. His media was very soft and bad in my opinion. He didn't have good press work. They had to call Paul Butrus in for the last 10 days. It was too late. They didn't even start a get out the vote campaign till the last

few days. I got volunteers to come in; and they didn't have anything for them to do. I could see it coming. There was too much lassitude around the headquarters." She spoke with the frankness of age and with a lot of native shrewdness. At the Press Club, she had become convinced it was over when they lost Madison County (Huntsville). "We lost Madison County" she said incredulously.

I think Stewart lost it in the primary, not in the runoff. The primary was his real chance. (That opinion was shared by most I think.)

Just before I left headquarters at 5:15, Al said "you may have a new chapter for your book. We held an election and nobody came." He was pleased since that seemed to be what they hoped for. During the day, he kept calling around asking people "how's it going?" And he saw cause for optimism in fact that "two black boxes in Birmingham are 200 votes each above what they were in the primary--and it's only 4:00. That's good news. It means there's good street work going on."

Dutko and Butrus seemd to be working mostly ~~an~~ fundraising. And they had scheduled some fundraising events in October. Marie ~~Jen~~ⁱⁿison said that they spent too much time fundraising during the campaign. Donald certainly used fundraising as a criterion as he looked forward to Selden.

Donald did not come down from Anniston to his victory party after the primary and I heard people saying that angered them. When one guy heard DS was coming down to the Press Club, he said, "That's the first piece of good news we've had tonight." People expect the candidate to show up to greet the troops--who work hard.

But the resiliency of the workers is also considerable. I went around to headquarters about 10:30 in the morning and they were liquidating things with a good deal of dispatch. Diana Adams said "I don't ever want to go

through anything like this again. But I'll probably do it all over again. I loved every minute of it." Virginia said "I'll go back to work tomorrow, lick my wounds and then get into it all over again. I feel like I have a responsibility to work in politics, otherwise I can't complain."

Al said, "This one is my last. I've been in it for 12 years. Like Hunter Thompson says, politics is like a drug. My father was a ward leader in Mass. and I've been hooked ever since I was a kid. But I'm looking forward to answering the telephone and having someone ask me to go out and have a beer or play poker. I'm looking forward to not jumping every time the phone rings, waiting to hear what has gone wrong now. It will be easier on my stomach." Richard said "Have you got a lecturer's job open at Rochester? I always thought that would be great to do after 3 or 4 years in Washington." Peggy said "I've got to look for work, real work." (She followed this up with a blast at Arthur Young.)

We left the Press Club to go back to headquarters to be there when Donald came to make his press statement. It was an emotional time. He didn't concede. Lulu hugged her friends and cried--not sobbing, just teary. Donald seemed composed. I saw Jimmy Jr. for a handshake, but generally stayed out of it.

I talked with Richard Woods on Wednesday morning. What happened.

"In any close race like this, it was probably a dozen things. You have to start with the fact that Donald left lots of bodies buried. He's tough. He runs over people one time to get things done. And these things come back to haunt him. His trouble with Jack Anderson came because of that. The two instigators, who kept that story alive were past friends that he turned into enemies--Coleman and Rutledge. So the first thing you have to look at is the integrity question. Both Folsom and St. John got into the race--they said so--because they thought he was vulnerable on the integrity question."

"Without that you wouldn't have had a primary."

"We had a low turnout situation. If you think of a thermometer, the intensity of warmth for Donald is low. People who dislike him do so intensely. People who like him aren't strongly committed. In a low turnout situation, that's a problem. We felt that our organizational efforts and the phone banks would overcome that. Obviously, it did not."

"The irony is that the people who didn't vote or who didn't vote for him were his constituencies...farmers, labor and blacks. He lost the rural counties and the labor counties and the blacks didn't turn out."

"He is very uncomfortable in a country club and very comfortable at plant gates. I don't know whether it's an insecurity or what. But it is not philosophical. His father was a farmer who dealt with small town bankers, and there may have been a resentment coming out of that relationship."

I mentioned how he always knocked the big boys in the car and he allowed as how that was typical.

I asked him why they decided on such a low key campaign when they so obviously had the best candidate. Why hide him when he's so good? "I know what you are asking. The answer is that for two years we had had him out

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there, people had seen him, he was on TV and radio--and the polls had not moved. People had not gained anymore positive feeling for him. It was our opinion that no matter how much you got him before people, it wouldn't move people to vote for him, but that the negative people would be moved. On the thermometer idea, more would be moved to vote against him than for him. He comes across poorly on TV. It's hard to understand till you see him on TV. It looks like there's a sneer on his face. He's a hard candidate to sell. He also looks a lot younger."

"Our poll (Hart) showed that 40% of the voters couldn't tell you anything about Stewart. He had 80% name recognition. Sixty percent could identify something about him. He had a very soft image, no defined image. If you talk to people, they say the problem is he's too liberal, but the poll showed that was not so--only 18% said he was too liberal. That's not ^{an} unusually high rating at all."

"The black vote is reliable in some places and not in others. The black counties in the west are controlled by Mayor Hayden of Uniontown. If only the other black areas were as good as his are. Mayor Arrington is also good. But Joe Reed is traditionally the main power man, head of the ADC. And he's interested in Joe Reed as opposed to black people. In the two years we were in the Senate, he never once called us on a legislative matter. On judgeships, yes; but issues, no. That was amazing to me. His goal is to advance his position; while Mayor Hayden will get his vote out. In Birmingham, our organization got them out. In the Southeast, we relied mostly on the black organizations. We tried to go around them some, but they didn't get out."

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If it could be ^{run} ~~one~~ over again, "We would do different things leading up to September 2nd, but we couldn't have done any better since then."

The critical decision-making time was late July, early August. We had a planning meeting and looked at the poll. It showed Stewart 49%, Folsom 15%, St. John 3%, Stewart 2%. No one expected that we would do anything but improve. The decision was made to do a lot of TV and to spend less on organization--most specifically, we decided not to use the phone banks in the primary. They would add 3-4% to our vote, and we were only talking the difference between 55 and 58% or 54 and 58%. We decided it was not worth 100,000. Peter Hart said 'short of diaster, there is no way you will lose.' He expected a big victory. He's supposed to be the best. He took two polls--one as follow-up to the basic one. Both showed us at 49%."

"Hart's poll showed us at 67-19 against Denton and about the same against Selden, in November."

"It was not the moral majority or ideological rejection."

"Alabama has 7 congressional districts. He had one-seventh the amount of time a congressman has to build personal relationships. He had 4 months, really, for each district. He had seven times as much territory to cover in two years. There is no doubt that if he had had 6 years, it would have been different."

"Russell Long had only 2 years the first time. He said he had lots of ideas but couldn't get anything done. Donald Stewart, said Long, got a lot more done than he did."

He spent a lot of time with the rural folks. We thought they loved him, but he didn't carry the rural areas. Despite the fact that Alabama is an agricultural state, actually there are very few farmers in the state. Most of the rural folks work in the city." (I think they saw farmers as their constituency--not rural. And they learned that farmers and rural not the same.)

"Labor was totally ineffective. But we weren't counting on them." (Again the focus on constituencies, blacks, labor, farmers--rather than people who trust you.)" He listed, as labor counties, NW Alabama, Lauderdale, Walker, Etowah, Tuscaloosa and Jefferson (tho' Jefferson is more complex).

Re Stewart - "He is a serious person. He thinks of himself as a problem solver. (He cited Bates Wilson pipe co. case.) He hated to be told by anyone that 'No, it couldn't be done.' It must have happened 100 times a year that he'd come to us with a good idea about something and found he couldn't do anything about it. He was very frustrated and was looking forward to the 6 year term so that he could get into things."

Al Lapierre (on the morning after) - "We lost 3 counties we expected to carry, frankly, Morgan, Tuscaloosa and Madison. The Madison vote was the same as he got last time. I expected 55%. Tuscaloosa, I can't figure out come hell or high water. It should be a Donald Stewart county."

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"There are two theories. One is that you get beat over the head--with the investigation crap--for over a solid year. That image gets implanted in people's heads. Even though he was cleared, he got nicked and dinged to death. The other (theory) is that there is an anti-incumbent move in the country. Russell Long got his lowest vote ever. Stone is in trouble in Florida. Robert Kerf Jr., not an incumbent but a great name in Oklahoma, lost." *But both hypotheses are anti-Stewart - negative, voting against theories*

"The black turnout was low in Southern Alabama. Traditionally, turnout is low. Statewide, it went higher than I thought 450,000 (sic). Donald is a traditional moderate candidate that carried the urban counties--the same counties that Baxley carried--the black belt and the major metropolitan areas."

"You deal in blocs of votes. People think labor is a block, but that's

bullshit. The battle is over. Labor is only concerned with wages. They are like every other middle class family. They go boating on weekends."

"One more day, we would have won. We had things moving in Jefferson County. In the black areas we worked better than I had ever seen it done. We could have squeezed another 10,000 votes out. We were clicking like I've never seen."

"The ADC just didn't deliver. That pattern has been occurring for the past few years. Reed, he can barely control his own Montgomery area. Black folks are like white folks. They don't have to be told how to vote anymore."

Re money given to blacks on election day, he called it "hold-up money". "The old way was to give it to one man and he distributed it. We gave it to individuals, by checks, the right way, with social security numbers and all."

Would you do it differently? "I'd hold to our runoff strategy."

30,000 of TV wouldn't have helped that much. Folsom didn't win it on TV."

"Anybody who got into the primary--with the pounding we took and the bad PR--would have won just like Folsom did. His name got him into the runoff. But his name didn't win the runoff."

Re primary. "We should have educated black voters more on the name difference. There is no way in hell that lady should have gotten the vote she did. She was beating St. John in black counties like Hale. She was polling votes in every black box in the metropolitan areas. She never polled over 2% in any election, and she's been running since 1966."

"It's a wave of what's happening in Alabama. In 1978, he caught the anti-incumbent wave. This year he got caught by it. All you can do is hold on and hope you survive. Usually you don't. He was put in the same position he put ^{Mayor} ~~Mayor~~ Allen in, in 1978. In 1978, you had a clean sweep. Now, the

mood is, maybe nobody can change it, but give this guy a shot, it's worth it."

"Without a doubt, he would have made it in 6 years. I sympathize with people who have to run every two years."

"There was some single issue voting, but it didn't hurt us that much. It happened in Jefferson County when the moral majority went after Buchanan. That cost us 10,000 votes, when Democrats crossed over to save Buchanan. Their loyalty to Buchanan was great. They probably wouldn't have stayed and voted for Donald even if they thought he was in trouble. They were so loyal to Buchanan. But without a Republican congressional primary, we would have carried those voters."

Re Doug Williams, who was relieved as campaign manager and sent to NW Alabama to coordinate and replaced by Paul Butrus, ^{Al} "If we'd have had Paul earlier, it would have been different. He's an old pro--a Birmingham man. He managed the last Sparkman campaign, the Heflin campaign. Before he came, we waded in the water and we reacted to all sides. It freed some of us from doing what we weren't good at. I'm not a good administrator. I'm good at working with political groups. Doug was good at press and speechmaking. I was good at pure political work. But we had to administer the campaign."

"Paul came in two days before the primary vote. Some of us tried to push earlier. He's a father figure to all of us. Even when we were on opposite side--and he had every reason to hate my guts--I could go to him for advice. In 1972 we had harsh words when he was running the Sparkman campaign and I worked for McGovern.

Re primary. "The polls showed a rock hard 49% with 21% undecided. You feel certain you'll get into the mid-50s. The poll was a problem. It got people too complacent. I guess I was one of them. We expected a laughter. I got completely fooled. You learn something from every race."

"This is my last campaign. I've been at it for 12 years. I'm mainly a party type. It will be a relief to hear the phone ring because someone wants to play poker or go have a beer and not because something has gone wrong. It will be easier on the stomach."

Al was wearing his NY Yankees baseball hat. He said to someone, "We're 5 games ahead. That's the only ray of sunshine in my life." He stood in front of the big tally board staring at the county totals in disbelief. Each time he walked by them, he would stop and look at them in a kind of daze.

"In two years, it's hard to establish a solid foundation. His quality didn't communicate itself."

Re business community. "They hung back in the primary, but come the runoff they really threw in. They knew it would be easier to deal with Stewart than a Denton, who is a Jesse Helms type."

"You've got 67 Democratic committees and 7 of 'em really function. Some of the Democratic chairmen in those southern counties support Republicans. The party isn't worth shit anymore."

"On September 30th I called Rick Silver to ask for the Stewart TV tapes. He and I talked briefly. "In southern politics, if the incumbent doesn't win in the primary, he won't win the runoff. He's gotten about all the vote he's going to get. I can cite you case after case. Herman Talmadge broke the pattern. John Jenrette in S.C. broke the pattern. But that's about it." Silver did the DS-TV.

On October 1, I called Louise Lindblom and she talked a little about Donald's defeat. "Jim didn't win it. Donald lost it. There were pockets of people he thought he had working for him, who had gone over to Folsom because he had insulted them--one after another. His personal style was nothing. People say he looked like he'd smelled a fart. Donald was so

insecure that he became arrogant. He would humiliate people in front of their own crowd. They'd ask him back to try again and he'd do it again. What's the good of doing something in the Senate when you turn people off? People would go to bat for him and he would call headquarters and bad mouth everyone up there. I'm tired of that kind of adult male behavior. His votes were soft. He didn't turn people on, to get out there in a nothing time--when there was no one else on the ballot--and vote."

She said the DNC had done a poll after the runoff primary (I think) that showed Folsom at 57%, Denton 33%. She added (because I guess she sees it as significant) that Folsom had 25% "negatives" and Denton 22% "negatives."