Dick Clark
March 14 - at State Department

Andy Loewi sat in. They didn't differ a lot. Dick is so mild mannered that he just didn't have the animus about it that Andy had. And Dick put a little more stress on being too liberal as a problem than Andy did. Andy was taking his cue from Hart, though; and Dick was using his own instincts on the matter.

Said a very interesting thing toward the end. "We'd have been a lot better off without the poll. Had we assumed we were in more trouble, we would have come back on him. But with the poll showing a 30 point lead, we thought the last thing we needed was to create more interest in the campaign. We had a great reluctance to make the campaign anymore visible than necessary. We could have done it because he was not a good guy. He was very vulnerable. He had been in trouble early in the campaign. So there's no doubt it could have been consistently and legitimately done. I hate to use the example but Senator Percy found out he was behind, he came back on his opponent and won. But with the poll being so lopsided, God you don't take chances. It's like a football game where you have three minutes to play and are three touchdowns ahead. You don't pass. But if you asked me what I'd do again, I'd keep right on polling. I don't know what else you can do. I don't have much faith in polls. But what the hell else have you got."

He said there were things he didn't believe in that last poll, when I asked him if he didn't have his gut reaction. But his general idea was that you rely on polls in absence of anything better. Can't live with them or without them.

Re mood change. "When I went in in 1972, the war was still on--Viet Nam. The fellow I ran against--Miller--was very closely associated with that effort. And that was of interest to people. There was no building the avalanche of
of anti-government feeling, in the sense that government could not solve problems. There was a suspicion of people in the government, the sense that government was remote—that feeling was there. But the lack of faith that government could be useful has grown enormously in six years. In 1972, there was a lot more support for farm supports than later. There was more support for government programs to help me. Now, people still want to keep 'mine,' but they don't think any of 'em work. I don't know if I'm articulating it well. But now there's the Goldwater spirit that government never has done anything right and never will. Democrats and labor union people—our constituencies—were mouthing that in 1978, much more than ever before. I did a little walking this time and supporters of mine would stop me and picked up on that. When there's a wave moving across the country and the media picks it up, everybody is saying it. In January, friends of mine, liberal Democrats were out in Iowa talking that way. That's the mood, they say. So the mood had changed in 6 years. There's no doubt about that. The impact was very great I think. People said, "Dick Clark is not a bad guy. He works hard at it, he's honest, he comes back. But he's just too liberal. He hasn't kept up with this change and is holding out for old ideas. There's nothing wrong with him but his views."

My first question to Dick was "What happened after the last time I saw you in the Mason City airport?"

Answer: "Nothing much happened. With respect to any obvious difficulties we didn't think anything had happened—until the returns came in."

"Some things were happening, but we didn't think they would have an overwhelming impact. Obviously, they did."

"The Right to Life people were much more successful than we thought they would be. We knew they would hurt us, but we thought it would be about 5%. They probably cost us close to 10%."
He then mentioned Tom Ryan at Northern Iowa College in Cedar Falls—a college classmate—who had been studying catholic areas.

"In Dubuque and Carrol counties—both very distinctively Catholic, I just barely carried them. Usually Democrats carry Dubuque by 9-10,000 votes. I did; Culver did. This time I carried it by 400 votes. In these very heavily Catholic counties there was a real flip flop."

"In the rural counties, we didn't do much worse than we did in 1972. I carried them by a small margin. I didn't do as poorly in the rural areas as I did in the Catholic areas."

"Abortion was a very heavy factor. No one questions that. But no one knows exactly how heavy."

"A second thing was that we got a turnout of 41% of the vote. That was very low for Iowa in an off year. Our polls were predicting a 54% turnout. That's the major reason, incidentally, that I think the polls were so far off. Every poll showed the higher the turnout the better off we would be and the lower the turnout the worse off we would be. So that hurt us."

"The Sunday before election, the anti-abortionists did a good job. There's no doubt about it. They plastered every church. They were out in force."

"A third point; one which would be interesting to research. We haven't had the interest to do it, but we were talking about it the other day. That's the effect of the real right wing effort. They had a John Birch publication—not identified as such—that had surfaced when you were there. They plastered that thing door to door in the last week of the campaign. There was a tremendous effort by somebody. They really did a job. A friend of mine in Muscatine—a town of 20,000—said that thing was hanging on every door knob in town. There's a fairly good chance that they got awfully broad circulation. It was a scurrilous article. The Council Bluffs ______ ran it as an ad just before election."
The National Rifle Association sent mailgrams to all its members. Clark wants to take your guns away. So many of them popped up in the last few days."

"The National Right to Work group also loaded in on us in a big way. They said that anyone who took more than $5000 from the AFL-CIO and its affiliates were in violation of the law. That was a front page story in several papers --even papers that supported us. We got the Federal Elections Commission to shoot that down, but it happened 2 days before the election. So the truth didn't do any good."

"All this activity happened the last week--the last 2, 3 or four days. All our indications now are that it was very extreme. It may have been enormous. We have no way of judging. Direct mail is very quiet. How the hell do you know?"

"Our latest polls showed us ahead 57-27. The Register poll was different. It showed us throughout the campaign at 11 points ahead--ten at the end. But the Register predicted a 54% turnout, why all the non-voters would have been jaundiced toward me I don't know."

"The voters were saying they were voting against me--abortion, Panama, gun control. Nobody said Jepsen is a good man or Jepsen is the man we want in the Senate."

"I say this confidentially, but some people have suggested that South African money may have been behind this. The government there has gotten in trouble trying to influence politics in other countries. I don't know whether I believe they were involved. I'd like to know. If I had to bet my last nickel, I'd be they weren't involved."

I posed the question to them how come the Jepson people were able to put on such a last week barrage--which must have been very costly--when the polls showed him so far behind. That is, who would put all that money into a losing
race. Dick was baffled. Andy said the Des Moine Register polls only had him 10 points behind. "He wasn't that far behind that he had no chance." The other possibility (and this may have been where South Africa came in) is that someone else put the money in—not Jepsen.

I reminded him of the idea he had expressed to me about his going home giving him leeway with his votes and asked him to evaluate it again for me—the idea of a "cushion."

"It doesn't do you one damn bit of good with single issue groups. By definition, they don't give a damn what you did for the last six years. The only way to satisfy them is to change your vote."

"If you look at the other people around the country who had the kind of record I had—Hathaway, Haskell, Anderson (though Anderson was a little different)—when you look at them everyone was considered a dead heat and yet they all got slaughtered. Had I not had all that cushion, I would have gotten beaten a lot worse. If I hadn't had so much going for me I'd have gotten beaten a hell of a lot worse. I didn't do badly in the polls—just in the votes. Hathaway's polls showed him up a point or down a point. Haskell's poll showed him down a couple of points. They both got creamed. When Walter Mondale came to Iowa, he said Anderson's race was very close; but that he was afraid Anderson might get beaten by a little. Anderson got slaughtered. I only lost by one point."

"I have a hunch that people were looking like us and saying, 'They're just too liberal. The people against us were riding the crest of an anti-government mood. I'd have gotten mowed down if I hadn't had the record I had."

Idea was that the difference between his performance and theirs was his "cushion" but that there was not much he could do about it.
"I don't have any solid conclusions about it all. What is there you can say scientifically about this business? I thought before this election that I had learned that the media was dominant—that TV was the dominant force in politics. The one thing I feared two or three years before the election was a candidate who would pour money into the tube and put so much money in TV that he would buy the election from us. But he had no TV the last three weeks. We bought the optimum amount we could have bought. We outspent him by 50%--10% (Andy said no) well maybe 50-1 in the last three weeks. We had the best media person in the business—had never lost a race, and so forth. We assumed he was out of money. If the media was it, we should have won. He was behind and yet he gained."

"Suddenly we got this spurt in every other form. He wasn't paying for it. It was independent expenditures. It would be interesting to know where the hell all that money came from."

Could you have done anything differently over the 6 years to make any difference in the outcome? "Our casework was good; our community case work was good. If I hadn't gone on Foreign Affairs or Rules which have no pitch out home and had gone on Commerce and Public Works and worried more about Iowa problems—maybe. I did it with agriculture—a lot—but not with business as much. Still, we did a hell of a lot of it. You could argue that if you took on no interest except those of your constituency it might make a difference. That's what people seem to be doing now. The Foreign Relations and Judiciary Committees aren't in demand anymore. Pete Rodino says no one wants to be on Judiciary—what's that got to do with my district?" General idea was that this is about the only alternative he could entertain and he wasn't sure that would have made a difference. And he wouldn't have done it anyway.

I asked him what he'd advise John Culver. "I don't have any advice; and
we've talked about it. Single issue groups will only vote for you if you change your vote. The more you escalate the issue with them, the more of an issue you make out of it. We tried to duck it. Our polls showed that people didn't know my position on abortion. What happened was that a lot of them got informed the last Sunday. There is no way to beat single issue voters. You could try to get the flipside of it by showing that these groups are treating you unfairly. But that's risky, too. I don't know what you do about single issue groups. What do you say to someone who thinks guns are more important than anything else?"

He noted (as he was getting up to leave) that he got no positive help from the people who agreed with him on abortion. "I spent a lot of time with the women's caucus--the pro-choice group--but I never got any of them to work for me. I don't know if I ever got a vote out of them--especially the liberal republicans. Certainly they never helped me--and for a good reason. They aren't single issue voters. Other things are more important--my voting record for example."

Going down in the elevator Dick and Andy and I talked a little bit about Peter Hart, how badly he felt about the results and we talked about what might have happened if Hart had polled later in election. They concluded that there was just no way they could have learned anything in time to react and do anything any differently. Hart might have been more right but Clark wouldn't have been helped. And, as Dick said a couple of times, the thing Hart couldn't predict, no matter when he polled was who would turn out.