

Mac Collins (R/GA) Washington, DC March 27, 1998

- I called Betty the day before to tell her I'd be in DC and could I come to the office to see how things worked. She said fine. (I was taking Washington Semester kids to lunch.) I arrived about 9:00 a.m. They were expecting me. And Mac was there unexpectedly. A break, because I could ask him about getting hold of his schedules. He agreed to 1993, 1995 and 1997. Ann Jasien copied all three years for me.
- Mac was going over to preside over the House for an hour or so. (He does this once a month, they said.) In his schedules, they denote this obligation as: "The seat under the big flag."
- As we talked about the publication of my book, he laughed and said, "I've got a long rope and a strong oak tree!" And I said, "And I have a delicate neck!" He laughed and said, "I see you understand." We laughed; but I got the message. So I added: "Before I put anything in print, I'll let you see it." He nodded, as if to say OK, but he said nothing.
- I asked him how things had worked out with Henry County and with the transportation staff--from my visit.
- He said they had both gone well and was very pleased. He mentioned transportation first and said they had gotten \$39 million in the bill for Atlanta-Griffin-Macon commuter rail system and that they had gotten some key language ("Betty got it in," he said) to designate the corridor as "commuter rail" since that made it OK under the law--whereas if it had been designated as "surface transportation," it would not have been. He and Betty both emphasized that this was not pork, in the sense that it resulted from the planning and work of the State Department of Transportation. Idea seemed to be that if it didn't originate with Mac, it wasn't pork; and it originated from local planning. Mac just helped the locals. On the \$39 million, "It may get cut a little in the Senate, but that won't hurt too much."
- Betty called the transportation mark-up "a big week, a very big week." They got the rail money and they got language making noise barriers for a certain community eligible that would not otherwise have been. The idea was that noise barrier legislation said that barriers could only be put in when new communities were being built and not for established

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communities. So they had to put words in to help a particular community in the district.

- Their other accomplishment (all this is in the press release) was to get language regarding road signs that helped "Chick a Lick" (2), a chicken company which wouldn't advertise on Sunday for religious reasons. (I notice they were on his DC schedule once.) Betty said they came to her and begged them for help because they had tried to get Coverdell's people to take up their cause and his people said they couldn't get anything done.
- This recounting was part of Betty's theme with me that Mac is a "horse." "When he takes on something, he gets it done. People know that."
- The other example she used was the railroad fuel tax problem. Mac talked about it, too.
- The situation was this: Archer made Mac Chairman of the task force on transportation and taxes. The issue was fuel taxes. Last year his recommendation was that the 4.3% tax on fuel be taken off air, rail and highway usage. The problem was the "offset." Under the budget legislation, any reduction in taxes had to be offset by a corresponding increase somewhere else, i.e., they had to make it clear where the money was coming from. And, of course, no one wants to give up something on the other end. Anyhow, the 1997 solution was to keep the 4.3% tax on airplane fuel, but to put that revenue in the airport, etc. trust fund, so that at least the revenue would be used to help the airline industry instead of just putting the revenue in the general fund for deficit reduction.
- The airline industry is Mac's big concern here. But they also made the same provision for the highway gas tax revenue, i.e., put the money in the highway trust fund.
- However, the railroads have no trust fund, so their 4.3% fuel tax went into the general fund for deficit reduction, and was lost to the railroads. So this year, they come to the committee looking for relief. Betty asks them, "Who's your horse?" "We don't have any." "Well, if you asked Mac Collins, he might be willing to take you on." "You really think he would?" "Mac would be the best person we could get. We didn't think he'd be willing." "So they went to him, he took it on and last week, a provision appeared in the committee mark, abolishing the 4.3% fuel tax for railroads."

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- Mac was pleased with this, too. He smiled, "There was no formal recommendation from the task force. The language just appeared in the committee mark. There never has been a report from the task force. Last year, too, the fuel tax changes just appeared in the committee mark. The chairman takes good care of the committee and holds the Republicans together." He likes to get things done informally. He's a deal maker; and he enjoys it.
- On Henry County, it got resolved when they met the next Monday after I left. It turned out that the Henry County lawyers had secured all the necessary approvals and that when Hankinson found that out, he acceded and gave them the permit, saving Henry County \$2 million because of timeliness.
- Mac: "We held back the information on prior approval till Monday. We just didn't say anything about it during the meetings you attended."
- Brian: "When they found out what the Henry County lawyers showed them, they just looked at each other and said 'What can we do? Let them go ahead.' The agreement said that their mitigation provisions were still inadequate, but that they could go ahead with the project--that Hankinson et al would not take the problem to a higher level in EPA. It was a funny agreement, but we got what we wanted--Henry County saved \$2 million."
- Re transportation meeting during my visit, and Max Cleland, Betty said, "Cleland couldn't get one thing done. He was no help at all." (Again, maybe her view of Mac who does.)
- The other subject with Mac was how he got Clinton to come into his office to look around and sign his guest book--against protestations of secret service and at the chagrin of Democrats. "I'll bet he's never been in a House office before--except for the Speaker's. I told him, 'here's my little office and I pointed to the picture of my committee.' I said, 'that's my committee, Mr. President, the tax committee.'" Mac smiled.
- Brian had his picture taken with the President. Ann starts to take a picture of him and someone and Clinton says, 'you're not going to get a picture that way. You're pointing the camera at yourself!' She was flustered and embarrassed. She said, but she got the picture! Lots of laughs over the whole thing and a little excitement."

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- Re the transportation money, Betty bragged that "Mac got more money in that bill than all but one member of the Georgia delegation--excepting the Speaker." And she went through the amount that each member got and ended, "Linder, the Speaker's best friend, got \$40 M and Mac was next with \$39 m." They do keep score. All of this, of course, was part of Betty's description of Mac as "a horse."
- Mac on Livingston, not a leader, doesn't listen, too excitable, not calm.
- Likely GOP ticket, Bush/Dole.
- I spent most of my time in Mac's office talking with Kirk and others about the office's outreach.
- Brian said, again, that in December 1995, when he came on board, the office had one computer terminal and interoffice e-mail only. In essence, no technology for connecting with constituents.
- Now, they have a data bank of 50,000 names of constituents who have contacted the office.
- Kirk went through the types of contacts--total of 14,000 in 1997--in descending order of their "importance" in the eyes of the office. Importance gets defined by the care of the treatment. NB All casework is done in the district.
- 1. A hand-written letter about an issue from an individual constituent. "An individual letter gets a more tailored response. And the response is filed with the letter."
- 2-3. tie, typed letter or faxed letter from an individual about issue.
- 4. E-mail - they average 60 "contacts", i.e., pieces of individual mail per day, 10-12 of these are e-mail. And it is growing. Their e-mail is set up to reject all non-Georgia hits. Today, 59 e-mail, came today most from Georgia and out of district.
- 5. Mass mailing from the district. He had on the table a big stack of faxed letters from bank employees on the matter of credit union reform, the hottest topic in terms of mail in 1997-1998. Faxes come from business back home, postcards from interest groups in D.C.--1,000 contacts on issue!

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- Now they are advertising a classroom on the web and Sari is putting civics material on the web.
- Sari has a list of 200 people to whom she e-mails her weekly press release. She gave me a media list. It's media plus people like me.
- So it's personal data bank, web site, e-mail that begins to get at the technological revolution in the office.
- Betty and Brian say Mac is tight with the dollar and progress is slow.
- Mac does not use frank to mail to groups. He has one year-end mailing which is done by an outside firm. That goes to all constituents and is only mass mailing.
- Mac also talked some about his failure to get protection for his textilers from sub-saharan competition. He says there are three big textile mills left in district, Springs, Thomaston and ? The bill had something to do with threads of one kind or another.

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