

Jim Corman

October 25-26, 1974

Friday

9:30 Tour of New Horizons
(mentally retarded workshop)
11:00 Spanish Radio Station for Patti Corman's spot
12:30 Common Cause interview
2:00 Trip to Nadel Headquarters with Betty Howard

Saturday

8:00 Breakfast Forum with businessmen at
Van Nuys Airport
9:30 Precinct Breakfast at Los Angeles Valley College
12:00 Lunch - Senior Citizens Group, Calvary Baptist
Church, Pacoima
1:30-4:00 Handing out pens at Swap Meet in San Fernando and
2 shopping centers in Sylmar

"Now I know how Chet Holifield used to feel. I used to scramble and scratch and I'd look at him and he was so relaxed. If an incumbent has any brains at all, I don't see how he can be beaten."

"Maybe you can earn your keep by going over and finding out who my opponent is, what he looks like and what he thinks he's doing. I've never met him or seen him." His name is Mel Nadell.

Jim, obviously, is finding it hard to campaign and kept saying "We've got to get you out to the bowling alleys and shopping centers!"

He called a business group that we are going to see "a bunch of hoodlums." Very unsympathetic to business types.

They are going to drop 135,000 flyers and they have a "door knob hanger" advertising the ticket. They worked on registration and they'll work on getting out the vote. Otherwise, a few engagements, but nothing very strenuous.

"We're a very artsy community here. A few years ago, they built a theatre-in-the-round. And do you know what it turned into after a couple of years--a wrestling hall. I guess that tells you something about the state of culture in the San Fernando Valley."

At dinner Bob and Sarah said they could see a primary challenge coming from State Senator Alan Robbins. But Bob thinks Robbins knows that a lot of Corman's margin is Corman and not Democratic and thus is hesitant.

I asked him where the money came from that financed his opposition. "From the State Republican party and the Republican Congressional Campaign Committee. Locally the San Fernando Business and Professional Men's Association, or group of Republican fat cats. They raised a lot of money against me. They were the creation of E.K. Hiestand. The Van Nuys green sheet was influential in that so long as they opposed me the businessmen raised money to beat me. But when the newspaper supported me, the money to my opponents stopped. It tapered off with Hayden and went to nothing with Wolf and Nadel. I guess they still help Barry Goldwater, Jr. some." (When we went to Nadel headquarters, they said he didn't even have money for posters.)

He talked about the master²redistricting. Said he wanted a compact district, that he got it in the legislative (Phil Burton) bill and also in the master plan. His district has changed about 15%. He lost a little of ~~R~~aseda and got a little of Northridge. He said he wasn't in too much difficulty since he was surrounded by Republicans.

"The worst redistricting was when they took away half of Van Nuys and North Hollywood."

newsletter //
"I'm not doing much--just enough to learn that people are friendly and that they like my newsletters. Any congressman who doesn't send out all the newsletters he can has got to be crazy."

He kidded Ben about his billboards (like Frenzel and Wiggins). "One thing you haven't done yet in the campaign--show me one of my billboards."

representation
"People can be mad at you, but if they don't see a chance of beating you they will keep it inside. If I looked vulnerable, the right to life people would be on me like a hem on a junie bug. (And the gun control people too. There aren't so many of them but they write and want you to answer their letters.)"

Patti did an appeal in Spanish over a Spanish radio station. Jim says that her spanish is "icing" on the cake" when she gives out pot holders in spanish area and chatters with people in spanish.

Common Cause guys came in like little tin soldiers and Jim explained why he couldn't support total public financing, 8 year limit for chair^{man}, Billing-Martin Bill and he told them to get busy on tax reform. They had a good relationship, but he's not like them in background. They are liberal and he is liberal. They are liberal of the head and he is a liberal of the

heart. Every answer of his showed him to be protective of his position in Congress and he wants them to join him on substance and get off the procedure stuff that hurts him. He was very frank, too, with them about it.

When he learned that Patti was going to do a broadcast in Spanish he made an outline for her. And the outline was entirely in terms of what he had done for the spanish-speaking group. Started by saying he had worked 14 years for racial justice and civil rights. Then to the specific things--anti discrimination in jobs, education, bilingual education, support of farm workers' right to organize, public service jobs, health care, more doctors in Barrios, etc. It was an old liberal kind of approach. Spanish held in coalition by promise of federal help of one sort or another. Jim was born poor and has strong feeling for the disadvantaged; and sees federal help as the key.

Irene Slater was President of San Fernando Valley PTA when Jim first ran--couldn't take part. Then in his next 2 races she headed up his Womens Division, was then working at YMCA. Then she came to work for Jim. Always active in community volunteer groups. She has dozens of awards from civic groups.

Jim was quite open about his divorce and remarriage. "Patti tolerates campaigning very well; at least she doesn't think she's the candidate, the way Carol did." Which hits it right on the button. He spends a lot of time when he's with his wife kissing and hugging her--without much regard

to who is around. (Which reminds me that Chuck Wiggins and Betty-- whom he married 2 years ago hold hands all the time when they are walking into a meeting or on the street.) Maybe Southern California breeds that kind of thing--divorces and open displays of affection. I don't know what it has to do with politics, however. Patti Corman pitches in and hangs around a lot. Betty Wiggins goes and sits, but rarely says anything. The last time I saw her she was asking John, "Do you think Chuck is upset because I'm not taking as much interest as I should?" She was around with us part of every day and she just kind of sat there wherever we went, smiling prettily. I don't think she really liked the campaigning. Patti likes it a little better. But both are lovey-dovey in public. Maybe that helps win votes! By contrast with Charlotte Conable who rarely shows up or Marge Zion who only goes to parties or Nancy Johnson whose a real good campaigner or Ruthie Thone who is likewise a good campaigner. I've never met Ben's wife, Dave's wife, Bill Frenzel's wife and only met Lou Stokes' wife once briefly. I guess the wives are a story in their own right. For me, they constitute a difficult obstacle. I get along much better with candidates when the wives are not along. They just demand a lot of attention--except maybe Ruthie Thone and Nancy Johnson--and that takes it away from me! Especially, if there is staff and wife along, that is tough. Wife needs attention; staff gives it to her; staff tries to impress boss and so talks all the time (Foote) and Fenno can't get question in edgewise.

How about the idea that there are 3 kinds of candidate subjects--
(1) Open - Conable, Corman (2) Closed - Spence, Jordan (3) Protected -
Wiggins, Zion.

At businessmen's meeting, he met with public officials first. Republican members worried about regulation of independent oil producers. Corman said, "Do you know what the definition of a small oil man is? A man 4 feet 10 with his pockets full of thousand dollar bills." No sympathy with businessmen.

He called the group "A group of self admitted community leaders who claim they deliver the vote--the Eastern Van Nuys area. They are group of small, relatively successful businessmen. In a weak moment, I agreed to meet with them. There will be 6 or 8, but they claim 40."

WIN - "Who is Nadel?"

On Ways and Means, we don't wear WIN button. Someone said it means "Wilbur is Naughty." Joke as he started meeting - adjusting microphone - "A microphone is like a spittoon. You don't know it's there till you miss it." (Hungate) Other one he used from Hungate all day is "Someone asked me if I was a Senator. I'm not a Senator. I don't drink a lot."

Pressure from girl scouts and ministers in district when they tried to close loophole in giving appreciated assets to charity. He kept telling the businessmen that loopholes are hard to close.

Told them "I have to cram a 2 month campaign into 2 weeks, so I'll have to be running along." (But he stayed to answer many questions.) The questions all have conservative bent. Take government off our backs. Jim told them that we pass laws because free enterprise doesn't regulate itself. Takeoff on General Motors--they won't go any farther than they had to. Mostly he was on the defensive, giving a little on each question.

You can tell attitude from offhand remarks and the little jokes that develop within the group. Jim's comment on little oil man. Wiggins on OSHA - looking at plant and seeing no yellow lines "OSHA hasn't been here yet."

After meeting, "There were a lot more there than I thought there would be. They were the businessmen of West Van Nuys and Sepulveda."

Re Robbins. "He's created more public support for himself than anyone whoever ran out here in the valley. People who know him don't like him. To me he's as phony as a three dollar bill. He spent over \$300,000 to win that State Senate seat in the special election--and the total spent by all the candidates was over a million. If he ever ran against me, he could give me fits. I'd need \$100,000 and three months of campaigning to win. The first free ride he has is 1978 and he may try then. The only thing that will keep him from running is if he thinks his talents are better suited to the Senate or some other office. People say he wants to be mayor of the San Fernando Valley when it becomes a separate city. But he can't in his wildest dreams believe that will happen. He's gotten a lot of popularity; but I can't warm up to him."

Then he talked about how good he was on direct mail to separate groups. "They ^{p. 19} pull out individual groups, the barbers, the teachers, the Italians or whatever. Then they vary the message to suit each group. That's a very sophisticated approach. And that's where the money is spent here--not on TV. Direct mail is the big thing." There was an article in the paper this a.m. about Alan Robbins and his mailers of the sort to Italian voters. Robbins has big money, ambition and uses sophisticated techniques.

"One of the things I've promised myself I'm going to do before this campaign is over is to find my opponent and introduce myself to him. We've collected over 40,000; and people are going to ask me what I used it for. If I've seen my opponent, I can tell them I actually had a campaign."

Corman to Bob Cline (his '64 and '66 opponent). "I owe you a vote of thanks for that 1964 donnybrook, because you financed my next three campaigns. Once people saw I was in trouble, the money came pouring in."

Re Robbins, I asked Jim where his hard core support would come from if he had a primary and Jim said immediately, "Organized labor. I can't imagine that organized labor would ever abandon me for him. There will be a few disgruntled ones who may support him; but organized labor will be my base of support--even though he is in a position to score some points with them."

Who would support Robbins? "I don't know. The public that thinks he's such a great State Senator. He gets editorials in the Los Angeles Times praising his rape bill. All it said was that a rape victim's previous sex record could not be used in evidence in a rape trial. Sophisticated know how little he did, but the general public thinks he is a hero. Redistricting in 1980 could help him too, if we got a new district."

As we left the precinct breakfast where he and Robbins spoke, he said "I wanted to use my slogan but I didn't dare--Corman cares, Robbins rapes." Bob Rubin had said a couple of nights ago that Robbins was not good on the hard liberal issues like civil rights but would tend to make his record by finding some issue of his own, like rape. Doesn't see him as a hard core liberal of the 1960s like Jim is.

Jim attacked Ford's economic program. "He asked us to clean our plates and pay more taxes. If we pay more taxes, it will be easier to clean our plates because there will be less food on them. He wears a WIN button. To him it means 'Whip Inflation Now'. John Simmons had a better name for it--'What Insane Nonsense.'" And he blasted (in every speech) the effort to deregulate gas at the well head. Then into the need for tax reform, which is his major policy interest. But he has no particular solution--more a hit and miss approach than a conservative would have. Still, he tells them how complicated it is. Still, it is the rich who should pay more taxes and he always cites the case of the millionaires who pay nothing--used Rocky as an example.

broad humor

Jim is personally very earthy--loves to tell jokes--favorite expletive is "shit" (not in public), has more fun talking about sex than any Congressman I know and is very open about it. At the senior citizens meeting at Calvary Baptist Church in Pacoima with a mixed black white audience, he told joke about man who comes to door and wants place to sleep for night. Woman says "Are you a Baptist?" "No, I'm a Methodist." "I'm sorry we only rent rooms to Baptists." "You only rent rooms to Baptists?" "Yes." "How come?" "Baptists are so narrow we can sleep them 3 to a bed." His humor is one device he uses to keep him close to audience. He had Hungate as his dinner speaker and loved his Missouri humor and quoted it often. Also valued humor as key to his parties in Washington which he and Patti described as the best they know of--called Barber Conable "a great sit down comedian" and seemed to feel that was the best thing he could say about Barber. "If we have Barber and Vanik over to the house, we don't need anyone else. That's a great evening."

When I got there, nearly the first thing he said was how worried he was about Andy Jacobs, and just before I left, as we were going back to the office from Sylmar, he said again "Poor Andy Jacobs. If he would only have used pens and newsletters." I then asked him if he regarded these 2 key weapons of his as something particularly fitted to the Valley or something universal. He said "They're useful everywhere except where you have to use television. Here, no one uses TV, because you have to buy into 18 markets--for 18 congressmen--to hit one. But in Indianapolis where you have one congressman, I imagine TV is necessary. And that's what Andy is spending his money on. It's not so much the content that matters with my newsletters--though sometimes the content is better than the other things. I send six out every year--postal patron. And the last one before election is double size, listing the margin "for" votes and "against" votes during the Congress. The name identification is the thing. It's like selling a bar of soap. People won't buy it if they only hear about it once. They have to hear about it over and over." Bob Rubin said it was amazing "how many people know him." I think that means "recognize his name." What he gets here is a kind of mass ID.

Jim does not snap-up opportunities to analyze his district in demographic terms. I asked him if the San Fernando Valley was a "silent majority" area, since Evans and Novak and sent Pat Cadell into the Valley to search out such voters and since the LA Times that morning had listed S. F. Valley as politically interesting. He said "I suppose so. It's a typical suburb, and most people live in suburbs now. We don't have any

upper-upper income areas in the district but they are upper enough in Northridge to make them conservative Republicans." I said I was thinking particularly of blue collar silent majority types and he said "That would be true in the eastern part of the district. You saw the small houses we drove through on our way to New Horizons yesterday. The further east you go in my district, the lower the income." But he didn't jump into discuss their political views of their other characteristics. It's not the idiom he uses spontaneously. That idiom is much more a party matter, I think. He did not, however, tell me that new district was better party-wise than old. But Irene Slater said it was 61% Democratic and "better" than previous one. New one is 21st district.

While I'm on subject of Irene, she told me that Harvey Wertz had been ill and out of the campaign, that he was the one who had pushed Jim to campaign and had scheduled him hard. "Sarah is doing it, but she just isn't doing it." Irene felt that if Harvey had been there, Jim would have been campaigning harder. But I think he would have resisted it. When we quit at 4:00 on both days, he was yawning and tired. "I can go all day and all night if I have a nap in the middle of the day." When I was there in 1972 he took naps. That may be one good clue to his perception of this campaign.

One of the most interesting bits of campaigning I've ever done was at the San Fernando Swap Meet Saturday afternoon. It was a flea market, really, but the biggest one I had ever seen. The people there were for the most part poor Mexican-American or poor black. The sellers were white or Mexican-American. They were selling everything imaginable. Jim and Patti

would work opposite sides of each street (they had street names and sellers were sat out on streets. There must have been close to 300-350 separate stalls in the place.) and I would walk down the center of the street with the boxes of pens. "We" handed out 2000 pens in a short period of time to people Jim would not ordinarily reach. How many would vote, I have no idea, but some surely knew him--old more than young, white more than brown or black. The feature of special interest is that Patti speaks fluent spanish and would walk up to the Spanish speaking, greet them in spanish. 'Buenos tardes' or 'Hi there.' May I give you a pen for my husband Congressman Corman (pointing to his name on the pen). Please remember to vote for him on September 5th." All this in spanish. One little girl shouted "She speaks Spanish" and people would say "we heard you speak Spanish" as word spread around the area. Some people complimented her on her spanish. Usually she had to interrupt them as they walked along trying (it seemed to me) to avoid interaction with others and a rather *sad* looking *lot*. I guess 50% of all the people there were Spanish speaking. (The girl in the radio station told us that in 1980(?) 50% of California would be Spanish speaking. Anyhow Patti turned out to be a superb campaigner. "Do I look like I like this? I do. I have no fear of it. " She said Jim was a little reluctant to ask her. She suggested some TV spots by her and he said no. But I told her that in a close campaign she would be worth her weight in gold. She's very attractive with nice smile and good sense of how to approach people. Jim said she was a "semi-invalid" for quite a part of her life

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order

that she worked hard on her Spanish then. She later said she spoke it for the first three years of her life--somewhere I'm not sure.

After the "Swap Meet" we went to Sylmar first to see Marge Walker a young black girl who is devoted to Jim and who runs a women's shop "Marge's Pant Tree." He's worried about her going under financially and she told us how tough things were. It's a new shopping center and business hasn't begun to flow there yet. Also, no one is buying." We've got to get the Republicans out of there. It's terrible. The Democrats believe in keeping the money moving around, you know, so everybody gets a piece of the action. But not these people; they're terrible," Said she shouldn't afford to buy boxes to put Xmas gifts in because they were too expensive. She took us around to meet some other store owners (Pizza shop especially) and we handed out a few pens. Then we went to another shopping center and handed out the rest--2500 for the day.

While we were in Sylmar Jim talked about the earthquake. "This whole area was hit by the earthquake. We had 20 people killed and had losses of \$500,000,000. We lost 4 hospitals in the area. One street was moved 12 feet--you looked down this straight street and all of a sudden there was a jog in it. Many houses were so damaged they had to be torn down."

Then he told story of Nixon. "I only went to the White House once while Nixon was President. About 100 of us went down for the signing of a social security bill. And it was right after the earthquake in my area. When the President came along, I was standing with Chet Holifield; and Chet said 'Mr. President, this is Congressman Corman, the man whose district

was hit by the earthquake.' And do you know what the first thing Nixon said to me was? 'We didn't get hit in San Clemente!'" Jim thought this showed total callousness toward the life and property that had been lost and great self-centeredness.

Jim got his ID in the Baptist Church through the Pastor of the church. Rev. Hillary Broadus--a black man who had nearly died from a heart attack recently. When they met, Jim hugged him and told him how happy he was to see him. Then "I called the hospital and they would say, he's nearly gone. They were getting ready for the funeral. I said I hope it's a good big one." They laughed heartily and Rev. Broadus said to Jim "I see you wore your black suit today." More doubling up type laughter. Rev. Broadus introduced Jim as "A man who always goes to bat for us and hits a home run." Jim called him Hillary. On way out Jim described the pastor as a deeply influential and loved man in the area--had build a day care center next to the church and was running this senior citizens program. A community leader, through whom Jim got ID.

"If you tell me how long you've been in California, I can tell you where you came from. The wealthy farmers came from Iowa before 1929; then in the early 1930s, the people from Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas came. That's when we came with the Okies. If you come from New York, Chicago or Newark, you probably came after 1946."

Wiggins family came to California in 1850.

"I make it a rule never to let a constituent buy me lunch in Washington. Lunches are so cheap there. If I buy him lunch, he won't

feel so bad when I ask him to contribute \$50 and come to my fund raising dinner."

Jim has sense, always, that he struggled to get where he has. He pointed out a little pink bungalow house as we drove along and said how he and his first wife had looked at that house and how they had thought if ever they could live in it, that would be their dream. Betty Howard--after we went to Nadell's headquarters where she heard how rich her Jim was--said "If she only knew how poor we were"--both their mothers had been widowed early and the two of them were brought up together in considerable poverty.