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*Ans: He's still away + me to do better*

Fattah (D/PA) October 13-15, 1996

Naylor  
Thera Connelly, Greg Nylan, Lydia Sermans

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- He is solicitous during the fund-raiser, brings the organizer over to meet me and stands there with us while we talk. He is Ed Notebart, the administrator of the Philadelphia Children's Hospital and a long time supporter--back to CF's unsuccessful run for Congress. At his talk, CF jokes that he ran as an independent when he lost and "afterward, Ed gave me the best piece of advice I've been given in politics. He said, 'Next time, run as a Democrat.' (laughter) I took his advice and everything has been fine ever since."

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- I don't get much up front encouragement or direction from him and his staff. No one told me about the ward meeting. No one actually said it was ok to go to the fund-raiser. It turned out that he had a newspaper interview this afternoon that I could have gone to had they wanted to extend themselves. I get one day, as if it is all they can manage. No one tells me what to do on Tuesday morning to hook up with him. They aren't hostile. He seems to like the idea of the book. But the atmosphere and the ambience are miles different from Jim Greenwood and his staff. I am treated at arms-length here. Greg Naylor, his chief of staff, drove me back to my hotel, however, after the North Philly meeting. Thera asked him to.
- At the fund-raiser, CF gave a Democratic talk "from soup to nuts this has been the most anti-urban Congress in very long time. When you see their program--misguided and wrong--you can understand why they were out of power for 40 years and why they should be kept out of power for another 40 years or so."
- PA! Going from the lower Makefield gracious, spacious living room talk of Jim Greenwood to the cramped, dingy club room of the Ward 28 Democratic party talk by Chaka Fattah just about spans the great divide in America. The club room was a narrow room (not as wide, but a little longer than the living room--which held 80 people) in a broken down, graffiti riddled, boarded up, run down (Thera says 'rackety,' 'rough') neighborhood. Thera--an ex-radio reporter (16 years) and who had seen it all--was shocked when she saw the tiny front with one small window covered with the Clinton/Gore signs. You go up a couple of steps, a man opens a beat up door and you enter a narrow room--two folding chairs on either side of a center isle. There are about six rows of chairs, then a lectern and then at the end a large desk. The leader sits at the desk and speaks from the lectern. It is poorly lit. There's no food. They are passing out sign-up slips for a Ward 28 bus ride. There are about 20 people, mostly women, all black, a couple of kids taking it all in.
- I'm the only white face until Channel 17 comes in to interview two women near me. "Are you supporting Clinton?" they ask one. "Yes." "What has Clinton done for you?" "A lot. We have pavements and things. But there's a lot of things we don't have." When the interviewer had gone, the leader (Anthony Clark) sitting behind his desk asks, "What did he ask you." "He asked me what Clinton had done for me." She says "he's done shit" and she shakes her head and people laugh. "And what did you tell him?" asks the leader. She demurs, "I just told him," she says. And then she says to the people around her, "He's done nothing for me. But everyone else lies to the TV so why shouldn't I. I don't even have a job." (The interviewer also asked the lady in front of me. She says "He's the best for our people. We don't really have any

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choice.")

- The interviewer leaves and the leader starts the meeting with a prayer. Then we just wait for "the Congressman" to come. They clap when he comes in and he delivers a rousing, up with Democrats, down with Republicans, no holds barred, rock 'em, sock 'em, get out the vote, vote straight ticket, smite the enemy speech. He speaks with great conviction in a strong <sup>veto</sup> ~~race~~. He says he is their representative but he is also their leader. He talks like a leader. It's a little pathetic because they seem so dispirited and sad.
- Outside, he says to me, "That's different (from the fundraiser in the glitzy law firm conference room). These are the foot soldiers of the party. They do the work. This is where the rubber meets the road so to speak."
- He began his talk by telling them they were the foot soldiers. "I started out as a committee person, so I know the work you do and how important it is."
- Re election: "We have a lot to gain and we have a lot to lose." Needs to be in the majority. "I've been in the minority all my life."
- He emphasized the "three likely" Supreme Court appointments. He blasted the districting decisions, the scholarship decision of the Court "with their robes on."
- "If you don't have majority black districts, you'll have majority white districts." Talks about how blacks were "kept out" of Congress by districting "7% here, 5% here, 10% here, but no power," 137 years since Alabama had a black (he often says African American) congressman. "They ran all the blacks out after Civil War."
- Re scholarships: "They left black students out because of race, but they won't let you include them in because of race. I ask you, is that logical."
- Re Republicans: "You know they tried to shut down the government and they tried to cut Medicare, Medicaid, student loans, job training, affordable housing. They turned the common people against them because of what they tried to do."
- Re Gingrich: "He's the speaker, but he's not speaking for the poor, he's speaking for the rich."
- Calls Clinton "the lesser of two evils" and then lauds him because he "stood up" and saved Medicare, etc. with his veto.
- "The Democrats are not perfect. But the Democrats are a whole

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lot better than what the Republicans have offered up."

- "The number one priority is jobs--jobs, jobs, jobs." (And the group repeats that with him.)
- "We need to punish the Republicans for what they tried to do. No Republican should get any vote where people are alive and live in our community. There are no exceptions. Across the board, cut them out for every office. Vote straight Democratic."
- "Gingrich's was an agenda against everything we want to see in our community."
- The Republicans produced "the most vicious attack on working people in the history of the country."
- Re union ads: "The Republicans don't like them because they are telling the truth--exactly as it happened."
- To constituent: "if I zigged when I should have zagged, let me know."
- "Your leader is carrying your pail of water to the table. He calls me all the time on your behalf."
- The law firm Cozen and O'Connor had a Jewish founder--Sam Cozen. He had lots of awards from Jewish groups on the wall of the room we were in.
- When we got in Thera's car, she had a "club" fastened to the wheel. "Two cars have been stolen from my block. Thank God mine hasn't been stolen. I have an alarm system, but so did one of those cars. The little theives know how to get in and dismantle the alarm system and take off the club. And I live in Germantown. It's supposed to be a safe neighborhood. Well, there are good parts of Germantown and bad parts of Germantown. (As we drove) Ordinarily I would listen to KYW to get the news, but they broke my antenna."
- Thera: "I keep a close watch on my kids--even though I have a full time job. some of these kids just hang around on the street, no one is watching over them. My mother didn't let me wander around the streets and I didn't let my kids go out where I don't know where they are. They are good kids. My daughter is 13. She's straight A's. My son could be, but he's so busy trying to prove he's not a nerd who studies all the time that he's not doing as well as he should be. It's a crazy attitude. He's 17 and I wish he worked harder so he could get one of those scholarships! (She pokes me in the arm.) But he's never been arrested. I keep my kids close to home." She's married, speaks admiringly of her husband. She

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graduated in journalism from Marquette--full of enthusiasm. She had a radio talk show, which she still keeps a little. She's on radio 7-9 Sunday a.m. Says she used to do politics, but doesn't because of her job. "People say 'you're a Chaka person.'" She's been with CF since June. Had a lot of experience with her radio job--covered Clinton's inauguration live, covered events live from Brazil twice, went to Africa, covered Mandela's visit live, etc.

*personal forum*  
*check ? notes*  
- Hardest thing to get people to understand is that Congressman has to be in Washington. "Every group wants the Congressman to attend their event. The most common complaint I hear is you tell the Congressman he can't be around here more often. He didn't come to our meeting. When I explain that he has to vote and if he didn't, people would be after him, they are understanding. But some people still complain. Before I took this job, I didn't understand how hard the Congressman works."

- The next day, Ted Kennedy came to town and talked at a senior center. Thera went, CF didn't. Afterward, "All the other leaders were there. Everyone asked me where the Congressman was. I wished he could have been there." She told CF that she told the mayor who told Ted that CF sent regrets. CF nodded as if to say ok. He never said he wanted to be there. I don't think he cared. But Thera did.

- At the club house, CF says re PA, "We've got a Republican governor, we've got two Republican U.S. senators, we've got a Republican state assembly, we've got a Republican state senate, we've got a Republican attorney general, we've got a Republican auditor general, we've got the most Republican state in the United States!"

- The next morning, I sat for a long time in front office while "clients" came in and went upstairs to see him or to another office to see someone else--immigration was one. They speak of them as "clients," not "constituents."

- Later, he talked about constituent service. First, he spoke of his rule "Anybody who wants to see me can see me. They will be told that there are other people in the office who can help them. But if they want to see me, they can. It's much better to go too far in this direction, than to go too far in the other direction and have people calling in to talk shows saying 'I tried to see my congressman, but he won't see me.'" *radio input*

- He also talked about some crazy constituent requests he's had. This morning, he had a 67 y/o woman come in and tell him she had gone to Gambia for four days, met a 26 y/o man there and married him. She wants CF to help get him into this country. He doubts he can do it. "I asked her what she would do if her request were denied. She said that her retirement check would

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go wherever she went, that she didn't need the United States. She said the next day, she would buy a ticket, go to the airport and fly to Gambia."

- Later still, he told of some reunion of a family that he had made possible. "When you do something like make another person happy, it makes you feel good. But in the largest scope of things, where politics is concerned, it is meaningless. If I help 1% of my 580,000 constituents in some way, it is a drop in the bucket. It makes no difference. It really doesn't help me."

When I put that sentiment (so different from what I hear elsewhere--because he is a lot more certain than most just what does help him) together with his very strong emphasis on personal relationships, it helps me to see that there is a big distinction between a constituency service emphasis and a personal relationship emphasis. He uses "leeway" a lot to describe what he gets through personal relationships. and I think others would purchase leeway through constituent service.

I asked him whether--given the needs and wants of his district--people expected too much of him, whether they didn't have unrealistic expectations. He said no and he focussed mostly on the players. "People don't have unfair expectations of me. That's because I've been around so long--six years in the assembly, six years in the state senate and now two years in Congress. All the major players in the district and in the city know me personally. Bob Haskins, where we're going now at PNC Bank. He and I have known each other and worked together in various projects for 15 years. People know that I've taken the lead on drug free schools, high rise housing, putting together \$23 million to save the city. People know how hard I work in the community. Since I've been in Congress. I've gotten more publicity, more profiles in the Inquirer, Time Magazine, The Hill Magazine did a story on me and one on Jon Fox. You would have thought he was in the minority and I was in the majority. My constituents were happy and upbeat. ~~He was~~ <sup>this was</sup> not. In my case, it's the reverse. I get the benefit of the doubt. If something good gets done, I get the credit. If something doesn't get done, people know it was something beyond my control.

- "A lot of politicians play the cynicism game. I try to do everything I can to combat cynicism. People say to politicians, 'I only see you at election time.' I do just the other way. I try to be around more often when there is no election than when there is--the reverse cycle. And I try to get around to places at my suggestion, not their's. People like it a lot better if you come to them on your own without an invitation. I'm not an ambulance chaser either--looking to

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get credit for what others have done. I don't go to cut ribbons unless I have had a very major part in whatever is being celebrated. In the high rise housing, I let the local people take the credit. And when I do something, I work through other people, not all by myself. That helps produce good feelings all around." He's grown old in the district.

*PNC* - "At ~~PNC~~ the other day when I met the editorial board of the Inquirer, the first question they asked me was about campaign reform. I said that was not one of the issues I hear a lot about in my district. I don't think they liked that. But they endorsed me anyway."

- He described his opponent to me as "a conservative Republican" who "believes in something" and is "very emotional" but "a little nutty," "crazy" and "entertaining." "He's different from the usual lawyer they put up, a time server who doesn't take himself seriously. This guy takes himself very seriously." "The conservative Republicans in the district will fit in a phone booth."

*7.7* - "I watched this guy perform--rigid, extreme conservative--government do nothing, hands off the needy, let 'em sink or swim by themselves. He made no effort to make contact with the voters, just wanted to hear himself talk. People got a little stirred up and he loved getting negative reactions. Called self "most handsome candidate in the race," and said "still around, you'll see me again." Not <sup>with</sup> my ink, really--except as a commentary on poverty of Republican party in a solid Democratic district. The story here is not a party shift, but a personality switch re Fattah is a new type."

- "We talk about the issues, but it's not the issues that matter. It's personal relationships."

- "The other day I had breakfast with the party chairman at the Holiday Inn on City Line Avenue. We talked in a leisurely way for two hours. It was at my suggestion. That two hour conversation was ~~with~~ <sup>more</sup> than anything else politically. He's an official of the carpenter's union; he didn't go to college. He would not be very happy if I said to him that I had to cut off our conversation and go over and talk to some Penn students."

- What was important about this story was that the breakfast was at Chaka's invitation, that it was long and leisurely. He and Brady are old personal-political friends. (I'll tell the story later.) They have different jobs to do. "His job is different from mine. He's trying to keep the party afloat. I'm trying to keep my career afloat. I'm interested in policy. He doesn't care about policy. The issues don't matter a bit to him." The Brady breakfast has to be set in

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the context of his emphasis on personal relationships.

- I asked him re the four places we went on Tuesday, if he had to go to only one, which one would he go to. He said "the Candidates Forum, the Coalition of 100 Black Women."
- The DNC Bank PAC meeting, "I could postpone it or move it around. Don Haskins would understand."
- The AFT-COPE candidates meeting, "I don't have a real contest. That's why I did not speak for long." (It was a "statesman-like" talk he gave.) "I went as a courtesy to show them that I haven't gotten too high up. Again, it's more important to come around when you don't need them so they'll be there when you do need them."
- Re the 24th ward, he said that they would have two or three ward meetings before the election and that he could make it another time. Re the 100 black women, he said (and this was after we talked at the union meeting and he told Joe Hoeffel how he targeted women in his Blackwell primary race). "If you divide the people by district into four quadrants, male/female, black/white the best voters, the ones most likely to vote are black women--by far. In my primary race, we targeted black women more than any other group. We sent them mailings, we knew they were the group that would respond. We did well among men, but we paid the most attention to the women's vote. And it worked. These women in this group, the 100 black women are business and professional women and they are a real force in the community."
- He didn't do well on strongest supporters, but black women may be the closest I could come to answering my question--or least based on his comments.
- In a general answer to my question of which of the four he would give up, he said that he would have to make a calculation in each case, based on personal relations, political need and how recently he had been with any given group. I asked him who helped him to make sure he didn't get out of touch with people he should be in touch with and he said, "I have the smartest political operator in Philadelphia on my staff. Sondra McArthur. She tells me what I need to know. She runs my political operation; it is separate from my office. She is paid out of campaign funds. I know that there's a thin line sometimes between legislative and campaign staff. People go back and forth. I didn't want to mess up on that in my very first term in Congress. So I kept them separate."
- When I ran for state rep, "no one knew who I was. They couldn't pronounce my name."

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- 1992 or 1994
- "In 1992 when I ran, only 57% recognized my name." Some sense of how he built up his visibility--slowly. Now, he sees himself as being more visible than ever. A slow visibility climb.
  - Several times he stressed the importance of taking the initiative in starting and maintaining the sorts of personal relationships that mattered, i.e. being around more when it's not election year, taking four ministers to dinner, suggesting the breakfast with Brady. *1993*
  - With respect to what he would like to have achieved in that respect, he said, "I was more successful when I was in the state senate than I have been since I've been in Congress. There are more people and less time. I've done 75% of what I need to do in my district. The important thing is not to be reactive, but proactive. I've been a little more reactive and a little less proactive than I want to be." *1st meeting company*
  - All this initiative activity produces "leeway, flexibility in what you want to do."
  - His relationship with Brady. CF runs for state rep. in a district that is half white, half black. He runs against the incumbent (Piscarelli) who is supported by the party organization. He is opposed by Ward 24 the ward from which the incumbent comes. And he loses overwhelmingly in that ward. The blacks there go with the party. But he wins. A few weeks after the election, comes the election of ward leaders. The defeated state rep. wants to be elected ward leader and so does Brady (I forgot what position he holds) but some intermediary "called me and asked if I would meet with Brady. I said yes. I knew that if Piscarelli became ward leader, I'd face him again in two years. He came over to my house, we talked. He said that if he was elected ward leader, he would support me as state rep for life, he would never oppose me. I agreed to support him and I agreed to call all the black committee people from the ward on his behalf. When I called them, they all said how happy they were that I had won, that they were really for me all the time and so forth. Maybe they were. When Brady called them to ask for their support, he found out that I had already called, that I had kept my hand. He won the ward leader's job through the solid support of the black committee people. And he is still the ward leader and the chairman of the Philadelphia Democratic party. We have remained personal friends ever since. Politically, we may not always agree, because our jobs are different." After he regaled me with this long, embroidered story I said, "I suppose you could tell me a story like that about personal relationships in every one of the other wards." "Yes I could," he laughed. *1st meeting to announce the party*

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- As we left the Ward 24 meeting where Brady introduced him effusively, we walked through a parking lot filled with pretty nice autos. "They look pretty prosperous here. If Bob Brady has two jobs, one goes to the 24th Ward and one goes to the other 23." His impression was that most were on the payroll. When I asked if there were any questions, he whispered to me, "If they ask questions, they don't work tomorrow." (Not for quotation)
- "Ward 8, where we were last night, is a much smaller ward--it has only 20 divisions compared to this ward's 120 divisions (check numbers). If their leader was party chairman, they'd be a lot more prosperous than they are."
- Brady: "He has a tough job trying to keep the party afloat when it has been reformed and lost all its jobs. I'd be surprised if he had more than 200 jobs left--mostly in the court system."
- The party raises money via a dinner before the election and a summer picnic. It costs \$350,000 to run an election and keep a headquarters. CF figured \$70,000 to print ballots and about \$150,000 for "street money" on election day--to the people who get out the vote. Brady worries about the ward leaders. They elect him, he keeps them happy.
- In the candidates meeting, there was a big hostile clash between Dem and Rep candidates for state senate. The incumbent, Roxanne Jones, had died after the primary. The ward leaders and committee people from the district had chosen Ms. Kitchens. (That's where the party has some power--they make the nominations in case of death after primary. They also effectively nominate and elect judges.) Her history was that she had been the party's nominee for state rep some years ago, had won and was taken out in the primary after one term. She had gotten a job with the President of the Philly City Council, John Street. She was a former welfare mother, whose husband ditched her, she had gone to school and pulled herself up. She was very inarticulate and not very bright, but nice. And she had been nominated by the party to fill the sudden vacancy on the Democratic line for state senator. As friend and candidate of the City Council Pres, she obviously had it wired. It was tantamount to election. (Her angry Republican opponent railed about her past record, but only succeed in winning the sympathy of the audience for Ms. Kitchens. We talked about it afterward as an insight into the party. "The party never picks good candidates. You can't expect a bunch of ward committeemen to nominate a Rhodes Scholar. And when the party is challenged, they always lose. She's a nice person and she'll be a good Democratic vote. And they gave her a four year job. The fact is, the party doesn't care about what the state senator does. It's just another job they

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hand out like any other bit of patronage. She will probably be taken out in the next election. When they are challenged, the party always loses. I should know."

- So, it's mostly a shell; but it can cause trouble and so CF keeps in touch with the big boss and goes to all the ward meetings. He says he's half way through the 24 of them now.
- Re Ward 24, he was their state rep (4 wards), their state senator (12 wards) and now their congressman (24 wards). Wards are divided into "divisions" (precincts) and two committee people.
- When he speaks of leeway, he gets some of it, he says, because "I am the highest ranking African-American elected official in the city and the highest ranking African-American elected official in the state and that gives me a higher standing in my district. Because of that, people give me added leeway in what I do here and what I do in Congress."
- On the strength of the 24th Ward: "On election day, they turned out the vote. When I ran for state rep, my opponent beat me in some of those divisions 400-2, 300-4. The machine controls the vote. Then when I was the party candidate next time, I won those divisions 400-2, 300-4. Black, white, Irish, Jewish, Italian, it doesn't matter. If you're the party candidate, the machine will produce the vote. If you want to challenge the party--as I did--you'll have to build up your margin in some other places."
- This trip had more about the party. Last trip had more about the community. Two different contexts and concerns. Nice example of benefit of multiple trips. Camp. trips reveal party.
- When we went downtown to the bank PAC talk, his car smelled like something was burning. So when we left, we stopped to get some oil. As we left, he said "I don't know anything about cars. I don't know anything except politics. That's all I've cared about since I was a kid."
- It's hard to know whether he's maintaining or expanding. With an 80% margin, he has to be maintaining. There's no where to go. His talk is about keeping in touch. What is his "I visit one school every week." Is it maintaining or expanding?
- "I was invited by a Jewish group to come talk about "the problem between Jews and blacks. I said I didn't know there was a problem, that this was the first time I had ever talked about such a problem. I said that the people who were working together to solve problems were too busy to have a problem and those who weren't working wanted to make it harder for those

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who were. I worked on scholarship programs with \_\_\_\_\_ and with housing programs with \_\_\_\_\_. I voted against the first foreign aid package that came to us when I got to Congress. It had money in it for Israel, which is the number one priority for Jews. Before they even knew what I was going to do, I suggested a meeting so that I could explain my vote. When I explained that the money for Africa had been cut out, they said they understood. We had no problem and I voted for the final bill when it came back from conference with the money for Africa restored."

- "I've begun to give some serious thought, policy thought to the problem of all religions and ethnic groups in the next century and how we are all going to work together. Hispanics will be largest minority. Race and religion have been used in this century to divide us. In the next century, we will need to make them work to unite us."

- "Ironically, it took Jack Kemp to open up the debate on urban issues. He has made it legitimate to discuss the future of our cities, because he cares about it. Until he came along, the Democrats had ignored the problems of the cities. Did you know that the Democratic platform did not even contain the word "urban" in it? I offered an amendment to put it in and they accepted it. When it comes to policy, I work with Republicans like Jack Kemp and with (Rep) Chris Shays. I like Jack Kemp."

- I should note that he used the word "comfortable," again, several times in talking about how he gets around. He is, he says, comfortable with all the people in his district; and with his district.

- He drove his son to Hilton Head this spring to play tennis. Says he wanted to drive so his son, who had never been south, could see that part of the country. I used the term "roots" and he agreed, but he didn't use that word.

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