

Wyche Fowler - August 1, 1991

- Bill Johnstone, Laura Parker, Nehl Horton - office 224-3643
- I left Cape Cod early a.m. and returned in evening - to meet Wyche Fowler and talk about my proposal that I write a book about his campaign. I had talked with his aide, Bill Johnstone, in May; and last week Laura Parker called and said they wanted to set up a meeting between us. Johnstone had said in May that if their answer was "undecided or yes" he'd want to meet with me directly.
- Anyhow, we talked for maybe one-half hour and there didn't seem to be any evidence that he was undecided. "My guess is that Bill Johnstone's 'look-over' was the crucial one. And I thanked him afterward "for what you did for me, interceding on my behalf and passing me through."
- WF greeted me warmly as "Dick" and said he was "well aware" of my work and of my desire to write about his campaign.
- He then said that "I've always wished that I had done some writing about my last campaign. I wish I had kept a diary, but it takes a discipline to do it and I just didn't. Just too lazy, I guess, fault myself for that lack of discipline. If I had just taken the time to jot down a few notes, I could have remembered what all those people who didn't think I could win said at the time. No one thought I could win. I was the only one who did. I wasn't about to give up twelve years of seniority in the House and membership on the Ways and Means Committee unless I thought I could win. It was a very interesting campaign--slogging from county to county all over the state. Thirty points down with five weeks to go! We didn't peak too soon--at 2:00 a.m. the night before the election!" (He won by 51%)
- I told him of my developmental interests--in following one campaign from one year out to end.
- He asked me why I wanted to write about his campaign. The reasons I listed were: (1) I wanted someone running for reelection for the first time, not someone who had done it several times over. (2) I wanted someone who would have a close race, not a walk-away without an opponent. (3) I wanted someone whose ideas about politics were respected.
- He smiled and interjected on the last one, "You must have been talking to my one or two admirers." I said, "Well, more than that. There's a fairly extensive Washington underground."
- I added that another less important reason was that I had travelled with Jack Flynt in the early seventies and found Georgia an interesting state. He asked if this was "the first race against Gingrich" and I said, "first and second." He asked if I had written it up and I said, "yes, anonymously." He seemed interested, and I said that Jack's struggle to keep up with a rapidly changing district was interesting to me.

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- He picked up on the closeness of his race idea. "I hope my race is not very interesting. But my races always seem to end up 51%, 52%—not much higher. The Republicans are fighting to get at me—I think there are four of them. The one Phil Gramm wants is ~~Bill~~^{Sam} Isacson, who is Mr. Republican because he ran for governor last time and did better than expected. He got 43%. But I thought he should have done better than that—46% or 47%. There was a third party candidate, a Libertarian, who got 6%. I don't think Isacson will run. But I do think there will be a primary on the Republican side." (Primary is second Tuesday in July.)
- He asked me what I would expect of him. I said that my research would be "off-and-on research," that Bill and I had thought of 2-3 days a month with him or with people on his staff to keep abreast of what was happening. I went on—because of what Bill had said during our earlier talk—to say that sitting in on meetings was not important to me, that I'd like to sit in occasionally, but that it would be "frosting on the cake," but that I would want to have access, at various points, to his consultants.
- Then he said the most interesting thing of our talk, "I don't have any trouble with your sitting in on meetings—for instance, between Bill and myself" (he called Bill Johnstone in from the next office, "Come in here Bill and join us"). "But we don't have very many meetings. Our real campaign staff is right here—the two of us. Bill is a very unusual combination, a person who knows policy and politics. That is a rarity. And we run a very informal campaign—more informal than any other Senate campaign, wouldn't you say Bill?" (Bill nods, but not convincingly.) We don't have a big organization with lots of experts and lots of high strategy meetings. If you followed Tim Wirth or Tom Daschle, you would find a much bigger, more organized campaign staff and more experts. I hope you won't find this lack of organization a big disappointment. Though I don't mean to say we do it by the seat of our pants. I'm the incumbent and so the campaign will be attack and attack me. We will figure out how to deal with that depending on what my opponent says. One of the things I'm working on now is to take the twelve things I could talk about and reduce them to three things I will talk about. People like me but they don't have any idea what I've done or what my views are. So we will have to repeat, repeat, repeat some of these things. But I have to warn you that we do not have a big, well organized staff operation with lots of meetings. I hope you won't be discouraged."
- I smiled and said that everything he said was encouraging, that I too was "an informal guy in my field. I don't sit in front of a computer like my colleagues. I'm a hang around/tag along person," who picks up fragments and puts em' together, relies on experience, etc.
- He said that I'd hear all kinds of people telling me what advice they gave Wyche Fowler.
- I said that he had probably heard everything or read everything I would hear, but that I might be able to string them together and put them in

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perspective.

- Bill interjected and asked me what I'd like to do as next step. I said I'd like to spend 2-3 days tagging along with WF in Georgia in October or September. WF replied that the best time to start would be "on the spur of the moment this coming Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday."!! (My first thought when he said that was, I've only got one suit here!)
- He got the schedule from Laura and got out a big map of Georgia and traced the three days of events for me.
- He's going to North Georgia. "This area is difficult for me. They get all their news from Chatanooga. I've spent an awful lot of time in South Georgia and I've neglected the Northern part of the state. I wanted to get in here before I took off to go fishing with Ted Turner."
- I gulped and said I'd check with my wife. But I think he's testing me a little. That is, if I want to do it, do it. Let's see how eager you are. I feel I should strike while he's in the mood. He seemed very solicitous.
- We made arrangements to check back tomorrow.
- As I left he said, "My friends tell me that when I like to talk, I don't stop talking and when I'm down, I don't want to talk. I guess, like all politicians, I'm abit manic depressive."
- Afterwards, Bill said, "I'm not sure our consultants would appreciate his comments about experts!"
- Then, later, he said, "From his perspective, he's probably right. Most of what he gets from our experts is filtered through me."
- It's obvious that Bill meets often with the consultants. He said he would try to get them all together some time so I could meet them. He said the key people were the pollster and media consultants, with the "national events" fund-raiser of some interest. They have a direct mail person (really a fund-raiser), an opposition research firm that they hired. He also said that of the Washington staff, the key ones were himself, Laura, WF's executive secretary, the legal counsel and the press secretary - Nehl Horton. Bill said something about a press secretary that was or is with Andy Young. Whether that is Horton or not, I couldn't figure out. But Horton will be in Georgia with me, so I'll figure it out.

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