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Bill Johnstone: December 16, 1991

- I went to Washington expecting to get a look at some of the campaign finance detail. It wasn't long before I realized I was not about to get all I wanted. But I'm not sure but what I don't need as much as I thought I did. Bill gave me two sheets of contribution data that he works from. They contain information on sources of contributions and expenditures with information on recent months. I'm trying to get information in the same categories from 1987 to the present. Bob Redding is up to his ears in financial work, and Bill did not bring the stuff to the office. We'll see.
- Bill began by saying that he had targeted \$2.5 million for the end of this year and, "I'm worried that we won't make it. The money is coming in very slowly now. We have less than half the money in-hand from the fund-raiser you went to. We think it was our biggest total ever, \$700,000 or \$800,000. But we haven't seen half of that yet. We're talking now to our biggest givers who have not yet maxed out for 1991."
- He was on the phone with Harriett Muldauer, who has come to town to talk end of the year finances and plans.
- His target is \$6 million. "I made a guess based on what I thought we would need under the worst of circumstances, to be competitive. We may not have to raise that much. We may not even be able to raise that much. Because we are behind schedule, I'm holding one week of television in abeyance. We have been up-front with all our vendors, in telling them that if we don't meet our budget, that the eleventh week of TV will be the first to be cut. We have budgeted for eleven weeks--for the last eight weeks and for three weeks around the time of the primary. And its the eighth week out that will be cut first."
- "We are budgeting three weeks around the primary in case some unknown Democrat enters the primary. We don't want to exert a lot of activity on the primary, but we don't want someone coming in and getting 30% of the vote. One of the things Mattingly did well last time was to go on TV immediately after we had won the primary. It took away a lot of the momentum we should have gotten as a result of having avoided a run-off. It gave him a good start and we were hurt. We don't want anything like that to happen to us this time."
- Re the coordinated campaign, he said they had agreed to let the Executive Director of the Georgia Democratic party be the manager, because the state party people wanted it that way, to save money. He said the state party had been very cooperative on other matters; and he thought he ought to accede to their wishes on that. But he said he didn't think it would work because the Democratic party of Georgia is in debt; and he felt this person would have a conflict of interest that would drown her because she'd have to spend too much of her time keeping the state party afloat financially.
- He said, "Right now, I'm the only member of the oversight committee who is active."

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- "Right now the only job of the coordinating committee is to collect information to present to the vendors so we and they can decide how to proceed with the campaign."
- I mentioned the voter file as the main thing. He agreed. "That's an ongoing process. We have a disastrous situation there. We lost the records of 75,000 of the best Fowler voters from the 1986 campaign. They were in the custody of the state committee; now they are gone. That's a huge loss. Wyche doesn't know anything about it. There's no reason he has to know and I haven't told him." He went into what happened in more detail, but I didn't get it--or pay much attention to it--about safeguards, understanding, etc.
- He talked about how Mattingly out-spent WF two-plus to one. How Mattingly was still out of money when he needed it, and had to borrow money for the last week and ended in debt. He said Wyche has "an iron clad rule that he will not go into debt any time for any reason. So we saved enough money for the last week. Mattingly had to match us and when he needed it, he didn't have it, so he borrowed and went into debt."
- "Wyche's rule about going into debt is a help to budgeters. But the Senate Democratic campaign committee told us that it showed we didn't really want to win badly and they held money back. They said, "Your race is too close. If you really want it, you should borrow." When they finally did release it, it came too late to help in the last week. We did use it to substitute for the expenditures we had."
- Re PACs giving to the winner after they failed to give during campaign, "In the campaign culture that exists here, the genteel way to get on the good side of the winner is to help retire the campaign debt."
- I asked if there weren't groups watching him now to see how he's doing with the ideas that they'll give money if he looks strong and withhold if he doesn't. "The banks--with whom Wyche has not had good relations--supported Mattingly heavily last time. This time some of them have given us some money. But they have not maxed out. I think they--and others like them--are waiting to see whether they will give us some more or hedge their bets. The good news is that they apparently have decided not to give it all to the other side as they did last time. Our hope is that, at least, the business community will hedge."
- We talked about polls. They cancelled the fall 1991 poll to save money. They had a July poll and picked up some information off the state polls since then. In 1988, they did a state-wide poll and in 1989, they did something else by way of poll. And they have others going back--mostly partied, from 1990 governor's race and other congressional races.
- The things he looks at are job performance and favorability; and he has a chart for these over time which he will let me see if WF signs off on them.

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- He wants another poll done fairly soon because he structures the poll to tell him how WF is doing by media market, and he wants to know how WF is doing by media market "just in case," we have to go on TV.
  - I asked him what would make him go on TV. "The worst case scenario would be if certain people got the idea that Wyche Fowler was slipping or was not moving forward; if the money people or the media people perceived that we weren't doing as well as expected. Then we would have to go on TV, just for symbolic reasons, not to take any action...Right now, the campaign only exists for a very small group of people--money givers and a few media people--very few."
  - "My greatest fear is that all the recognized candidates will collapse and some very wealthy businessman will come along with unlimited funds, be very successful in the Atlanta suburbs, and make us spend more money than we have in order to combat him."
  - Money wise, his idea was that "we need to be competitive." Challengers need to get to a "threshold." It doesn't help incumbents to be more than competitive. Idea seemed to be that being competitive is the incumbent's threshold.
  - "We ought to be better off this year. We don't have to run a competitive primary, and we won't be out-spent 2-1."
  - He accepted the idea of the continuity from campaign to campaign. "In the old days, they used to say you could govern for four years and campaign for two. But the money alone drives you to campaign for six years. If you need to raise \$3 million, it's pretty hard to sit there for four years--while all your colleagues are out raising money and building up their campaign chests all around you--and say that you will wait for four years, that everything will work out all right when you start raising money two years out. Besides, the kind of people being recruited into the system nowadays are not the kind to sit and wait. We think of the campaign as a six-year enterprise. I know Wyche thinks of it that way even though right now he's pretty frustrated. He looks at our \$6 million target and sees that, after all this work he's done for five years, we are still only a little more than a third done. His view is, "Is this all my work has brought us?" This year he insists we end with a surplus so he won't have to campaign at the beginning of his next term."
  - "If we have to cut back on the budget, we'll have to take it out of TV. I've already told you about cutting the eighth week out. The purchase of Atlanta TV takes 40% of our total budget--not counting production costs, consultant costs, or the purchase of TV time any place else in the state...Atlanta TV covers 60% of the electorate."
  - "We have 8,000 steady Fowler contributors. We solicit them every couple of months all year round; and every solicitation brings in about \$50,000. That's a good steady source of income for us."
  - "They use focus groups to test reactions to our media." Will do some in

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Atlanta. I'd like to go.

- They expect to raise \$150,000 from the fund-raiser in connection with a play preview in D.C. tomorrow night. That is the big preoccupation of the office right now.
- When we talked about how little attention the media was paying to anything, he got a little upset in talking about lack of media attention to politics. "There is almost no regular political coverage in Georgia. And in some cases there is no coverage at all. Only one of Atlanta's three major television stations has a political reporter. He is the only reporter in Georgia who follows politics, Tim <sup>F. B. Guy</sup> ~~Wagay~~ (2). One of the Atlanta TV stations did not cover one single campaign event in 1986 until election night. Then she showed up and told us she had come to cover the campaign. We told her "thank you very much." Whenever we travel outside Atlanta, we get coverage as a local event by a general assignment reporter who knows nothing at all about politics. And its never by the same reporter twice. The Atlanta Journal/Constitution tried to reform itself when they brought in the New York Times people. But that happened, unfortunately, between campaigns. Now that the campaign is about to start, they have fallen back to their previous state. They have turned politics over to a very junior person. Unfortunately, Wyche has taken a strong dislike to the person who will be covering the campaign... Our campaign consultant, Frank Greer, who was with us in 1986, has said many times that political candidates get less mileage out of free media in Georgia than almost anywhere else in the United States. That helps incumbents. It gave Mattingly just the kind of campaign he wanted--a campaign waged entirely by advertising. If he had not made the mistake of agreeing to the televised debate, he would have won the election. I believe the debate cost him the election. Afterall, we only have to explain a change of 12,000 votes."
- He said that there was currently some dispute as to when to take their upcoming poll. Spector wants it when he doesn't have anything else to do! Greer wants it when it won't be contaminated by the State of the Union Address (one of their polls went into the field right when war was declared). WF wants to wait till his challenger has gotten some definition so the results will give him some campaign leverage against his opponent. Bill's position is that "the dynamic of the campaign will not allow us to wait as long as Wyche wants to wait. Our polls are structured so as to give us information on job performance and favorability in various media markets. And I need to know how well he is doing in each media market in case we have to go on television for some reason or other."
- At lunch (we went to Armands Pizzeria) he talked about location of the voters.
  1. Their weakness is in the Atlanta suburbs, and they need to keep Republican margin down there.
  2. South and central Georgia casts about 25% of the white vote. They should do 10% better there than last time - 25% more.

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3. In all the areas outside Atlanta, he won't have to confront the anti-Atlanta feeling as he did have to in 1986. That's because Coverdell comes from Atlanta.

4. He ought to do better in Savannah area and south of there since Mattingly got a "home boy" vote there last time. That was his territory.

- He said both he and Fowler had heard rumors that Coverdell was having trouble raising money. We agreed this was not a great year for money raising anywhere. And the thought that Coverdell might be having trouble made Bill feel better, since he views the whole thing as keeping competitive.
- We talked about Bill Shipp, because he had a column saying that Coverdell might quit the race. "Shipp is not reliable. He used to be Wyche's friend and drinking buddy. But now he is not friendly. His only interest is in promoting a close race. He will write anything if he thinks it will produce a close race."
- They have a "campaign office" which Genie (woman across way from where I was working) keeps talking about. It's at 444 North Capitol, Room 711. It's handling the FR event tomorrow. I know, but I don't know what else.
- He also told me they had some "opposition research" done on Coverdell; and that they had found some things that would be useful in the campaign.