

7/28/92

Bill Johnstone - June 29, 1992

- I went to talk to Bill before the conference on Congress.
- He was still talking about their decision to go or not to go with the spots around the time of the Republican primary. They have not made the decision yet. Now, the plan is to have focus groups on July 7, in suburban Atlanta to test reaction to a number of spots they have made. If the reaction is favorable, "do they move people" and the money is coming in ok, they will go on the air with the good ones for two weeks from July 17 to 30. Republican primary is July 21st. If the Republicans have a run-off, they may not go thru with it. The alternative is not to go on at all until the 25th of August, and then stay on till election day. He says "I'm leaning toward that plan." But a lot depends on WF attitude. They don't have to make a decision, now, he says till the day before the Democratic Convention - July 12th. Greer is putting together the spots to show focus groups. (Haddon~~W~~ says they'll have about 7 or 8 and pick a couple to use.)
- Bill shows me the "grp" schedule and the fund-raising situation. The DNC just gave them \$100,000, the second \$100,000 out of a total of about \$560,000 for which they are eligible. "I don't ever expect to see the full amount,. We've promised to do an event for them in exchange for the \$100,000 they just gave us. I expect if we want to get the next \$100,000, we'll have to do another event for them, and so on. There's a lot of competition for money this year from the DSCC, with two races in California and one in New York. "We have one million in the bank now, so we'll have two million for the next reporting period. That was our goal. But I'm not sure we can meet all our targets from now on out. We've been running behind the last few months." (He shows me a bar graph month-by-month: expectations vs. results.)
- He calls all this period "<sup>u</sup>on holding action" until Republican primary. Coverdell has announced \$750,000 taken in so far and has spent half of it. "He has a big overhead, a big staff budget in anticipation of a lot of fund-raising success. But he hasn't mounted a campaign to match his overhead.
- Coverdell ducked a couple of Republican forums. "If Coverdell wins, I'm going to insist on debates, lots of debates, Lincoln-Douglas type debates. And I'm going to insist that they both stand-up, because he's short. Last time, Mattingly set the rules; now it's our turn to set the rules. He made us a proposal on spending limits, but I notice he's said nothing about debates. That's strange for a non-incumbent. But we noticed he ducked a couple of forums with the other Republican candidates."
- "Knox's main issue is anti-abortion. Among the other three, there is no distinction on the issues. I wish we had some poll results to help us in trying to figure out what's going on among the Republicans, but we've had nothing. They're all moving around the state. The papers say

C:\FOWLER DISC #4 - JOHNSTONE-1

Coverdell is ahead, but ~~that~~ that's strictly on the basis of the money. Barr and Knox seem to be at ~~2000~~ 2000. Tanksley is the only one who has been on the air, but he hasn't been on enough to give him much benefit. He has some money in his family, but not big money. He could put in maybe \$100,000, but not a lot more."

- "On the basic facts, it could be a close race." He means Republican strength, incumbency, economy, etc.
- He tells long story with great gusto about Wyche at the ball park. "It was a highlight of the campaign for him no matter what happens. He talked to Ted Turner's folks and asked them to give him one more appearance as a TV announcer during the Braves-Cincinnati series in May(?). They agreed to do it on a Friday night, which turned out to be the turn-around game in the series, when they won three in a row after losing the first game. He was to be on in the sixth inning, with Pete VanWeren and Joe Simpson doing the announcing. When sixth inning came, Pete says to the viewing audience, "Before we talk with Senator Wyche Fowler, we want to show you the replay of a catch he made that will make every highlight film." And he puts on the screen a slow motion replay of a foul ball that went off the screen and kicked over near the dugout where Fowler reaches up and makes a clean, one-hand grab of the foul pop. Everyone around cheers. Then he holds up the ball. More cheers. Then he throws the ball up into the crowd and gets cheered again. All that had happened in the third inning of the game! At that time, they put it on the big screen in the ball park. Then in the sixth inning, they showed it again in the ball park--in slow motion replay. In the booth, Joe asked him if he had ever caught a foul ball before, and Wyche said he had caught one at an Atlanta Cracker game long ago once and named the player--someone any Cracker fan would know that showed what a ball fan he was. Then Pete asked him, "How did you keep in practice all these years?" Wyche said, "It's not difficult. I have a much harder time catching the bricks that people would throw at me!" They ran it again on the newscasts that night. The Republicans must have died!"
- Bill says that Jay Rockefeller, who saw it on TV, tells all the senators about it and "that one week, Wyche basked in the glory of it among his peers. I'm sure nothing in the campaign will top that."
- Bill said, again, that all the Republicans could say was that each one would be better at defeating that liberal Fowler; and I asked him how they dealt with the liberal charge.
- "In 1986, the Atlanta label was more damaging than the liberal label. This year we will have a more straight-forward liberalism in contrast. This time, three of the four Republican candidates are from metro Atlanta. So we'll have two candidates from metro Atlanta--almost unheard of. Atlanta was our biggest single disadvantage in 1986."
- Re the liberalism thing. "Our first defense will be to get him out among the public, let people see him, listen to him, talk with him. He doesn't sound like a pointy-headed liberal. He sounds like Georgia. It will be Paul Coverdell who comes across as a silk stocking, country club

Further  
W.F.  
C:\FOWLER DISC #4 - JOHNSTONE-2

type. Wyche is more Georgia red clay than Coverdell. His values are Georgia values and he is grounded in the state. That is our most important defense (against the too liberal charge) that he is so good in relating to folks, ~~as~~ <sup>much</sup> that he is so good as a candidate."

- 2 of 3 -  
messages  
- that was  
his plan
- "Our second defense is our advertising message ~~and the messenger~~. Last time Sam Nunn lent his popularity to Wyche. He did a spot for Wyche. It wasn't a great ad for ~~political~~ <sup>political</sup> values. Nunn insisted on doing it where he wanted it done. But it was very helpful to us. We hope for more this time. Last time he felt a little restrained because Mattingly was a colleague. This time there is no "club" problem. Sam Nunn is overwhelming, the most popular politician in the state. The second most popular is Max Cleland; and he has promised to do a spot for us. So has the Governor, and so have all the retiring members of Congress. We will put them to work in areas of the state where they are strong. They will make a team that will lend credibility to the theme that his values are Georgia's values." (Haddow says the campaign will be "about values.")
  - "Our third defense will be our choice of messages." He points out that Democrats often make the mistake of assuming that people know they are patriotic, pro-family, etc. because it's obvious that they are, when in fact there's some suspicion out there and Dems have to say it over and over. Wyche will do that. "Democrats make a big mistake by taking it for granted that people will see that you are a solid fellow with decent values," when in fact they need to be told. Idea is that Republicans talk this way naturally and Dems don't.
  - Also, they "will emphasize issues with a non-ideological content" like education and environment.
  - He says that Wyche's upper bound in terms of votes is "in the mid to high 50's" and "lower bound is about 40." This means that "1/5 of the electorate--mostly white--must be reclaimed." I'll vote for him because he's more Georgian than his opponent, even though I disagree with him. He's a good guy. I see him at the ball park."
  - "We will try to put Wyche into the commercials as much as possible. That is what worked best in 1986--with two exceptions, the Sam Nunn testimonial and a senior citizen ad on social security."
  - He talked about the spotsx Greer did last week--one with senior citizens at a town meeting and one with students on education and environment. They will be shown to focus groups. Another one to be shown will be a montage of newspaper headlines saying what he has done.
  - "As long as we find something that's effective, I'm not opposed to doing TV for two weeks in July. It will be good for our fund-raising and for our supporter's morale."
  - He knows Coverdell will get \$535,000 + from GOP if he wins primary. But he thinks Coverdell will need all the money he has collected so far if he has to go into a run-off. The idea is to spend enough but no more than you have to in the primary in order to have maximum left for

C:\FOWLER DISC #4 - JOHNSTONE-3

general election. But that's a dicey decision. He says they won primary by 1600 votes in 1986. A perfect hit. "That was the only result Wyche would not have been mad at."

- When Bill talked about going to Atlanta, he talked about "gearing myself up for the awful daily attack and counterattack of the campaign--reading the opposition research." He seemed to want to put it off as long as he could. He'll go later if there's a run-off. Can say in close touch with consultants if he's in DC.