

Don Spector - March 11, 1992

(250 West 57th Street between Broadway and 8th Avenue)

- Spector is WF's national fund-raising person--as distinct from the Washington and Georgia enterprises. He calls these "bases" or "financial bases," and it's his job to work New York, New England and California. From looking at his records, it's pretty much New York, with an occasional trip to California.
- We talked for about an hour. It was a very unsatisfactory interview, with fairly long pauses. He did not seem to want to elaborate or answer at any length and, since the subject was new to me, I wasn't able to hit the right buttons to open him up. The other possibility is just that he isn't very good at talking about what he does. After all, his business--fund-raising--is very much a "doing" and not a "talking" business, and relies heavily on personal contacts--which may not be easy to explain. Anyway, I didn't learn much and he was not a good teacher.
- At the end, he asked me, "Have I given you any insight?" I said, "yes." And he said, "I've enjoyed our conversation. Keep in touch." I probably will. Maybe just getting acquainted will be helpful down the road.
- He showed me his scheduled events with WF, but when I asked if I could copy off the dates, he said he'd have to check with Bill J. before he could let me do that. So, he was very skittish about the whole thing. I concluded that, at the least, he was not used to doing what I wanted him to do. Perhaps, I was the first!
- He was not with WF in 1986. He came aboard in 1990. So he did not have a lot of experience to fall back on. Other Senate clients are Pell, Lieberman and John Breaux. He met Breaux through the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee--for whom he also raises money. And he was on the phone to Sam Gjedenson's office while I was there. I didn't ask about House member clients. But the New England-New York axis is prominent.
- Whatever fund-raising went on before he came aboard was done by Bob Redding and Bill, out of the DC office.
- In this respect, he spoke about the cycle. "We have an expression--'in cycle' and 'out of cycle.' You are 'in cycle' during the last two years of your term. That's when senators do most of their fund-raising. Wyche likes to get out ahead of the cycle, to raise money 'out of cycle' in order to scare people away. But it's so competitive now. And it's frustrating when people say, 'No, you're 'out of cycle,' I can't give.' 'We are 'in cycle' now. And the next quarter will be our busiest."
- "It costs so much to run a Senate campaign these days that I don't know how they survive it. A campaign like Wyche's costs \$5 million. That means you have to collect \$1,000 a person from 5,000 people--which you can't do--or raise it in some other way, from PACs or from small

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contributors."

- "We are very big on development. You can't just call or walk into a big donor and ask him for \$1,000. Especially for some senator he's never heard of. People have to get to know the senator, meet with him, talk to him, ask him questions, listen to the answers, get to know him a little and how he thinks. Wyche is big on that, too, and he's very good at it. We've done a lot of travelling around, meeting with groups, letting them get used to him. The actual fund-raising part of it only takes the last ten minutes of a one-hour meeting."
- "In one hour, he can give them the range of his thinking and have a good exchange. He is so diverse and can talk about so many subjects. Some senators only want to talk about politics--or economics. When he talks economics with the CEO of a big company, he knows what he's talking about--trade policy, discount rates. Because he's interested in it. But he's also interested in the arts, preservation, archeology, baseball--and he's very funny. With Wyche, the CEO gets a front line view; he gets his nickels worth. These big donors don't want to deal with people who walk in and say 'give me \$1,000.' They contribute to Wyche because they feel they know him, and they like what he says. Wyche Fowler is not anybody's 'senator of the week'."
- "He's been around here a lot and people in New York like him. He's strong in the Jewish community. He's been especially supportive of the arts; and we do a big Broadway fund-raiser every year. Jerry Schoenfeld lets us use one of his plays each year. This year it was 'Miss Saigon.' We sell the package--reception at Sardis and the show. So you actually get something for your money! Most of the contributions were \$500 or \$250. We raised \$100,000. We worked hard for three-four months on that."
- I asked him how much he hoped to raise from a days meetings in NYC with WF. He said \$50-100,000.
- He recalled the meeting with Lulette and he remembered it as Wyche had remembered it--as very tough. "We thought about postponing it. He just stood there for two hours and took it. He said, 'I'm in no hurry. I'll answer all your questions and lay out my whole record and you can decide.'" He told them that their quarrel was with George Bush; and he asked them whether they would prefer Mack Mattingly. They listened and a lot of them came around when it was over and said, 'I don't agree with you on Clarence Thomas, but I like what you said and I'm contributing to you.'"
- I asked him, more generally, about the reaction to his Thomas vote among the NYC people.
- "They wanted to kill him. Their reaction was 'How could he?' They could not understand how this progressive, liberal senator could vote for Thomas. They have a very narrow focus; they do not understand that he is from Georgia and that Georgia is not like New York City. They felt that they had become friends with Wyche Fowler, that they had such

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an investment in him, that they had gained so much respect for him, that they liked him so much. They felt like he had betrayed them. We got 400-500 calls in this office alone! They wanted to reach out and touch someone, so they touched us. They didn't understand that he was not from New York, that he represented Georgia and that he was voting for Clarence Thomas as a representative of Georgia, that the black voters in Georgia supported Thomas. They didn't stop to think that a man who had represented a black constituency in Georgia might know better than they did what black people were thinking. The liberals up here wanted 100% from him. They had to learn that he had been in politics for 21 years, and that his record was 98%. They had to learn that he has stood-up from the arts, even though it costs him political trouble in Georgia. I look upon Wyche Fowler as a senator for America. I think people here are learning that, too. But we had to step back for a while until people cooled off after Thomas. We targeted the corporate people for a time instead of the liberals."

- "PACs are set up to give money. That's all they do. It's in their interest to give money. But big individual donors are different. They give because they want to, because they believe in someone or in something. You have no leverage over them. You can't hammer them. You have to be nice to them. You have to give them the chance to ask questions and to think about it."
- I asked him if he ever met in strategy meetings with the pollster and the media consultants. He said no, that they were in touch with each other. He added, "But we are the only ones with a bottom line. They exist at our suffrance. They can do a poll or not do a poll, make a commercial or not make a commercial--when they want to. We may have to cancel our whole schedule if the Senate decides to stay in session." Some little jousting here.
- He noted, at one point, that Monday is a good fund-raising day, since the Senate is not in session and that senators run into each other out in the country--Mitchell and Wyche ran into each other in California.
- Spector has enormous respect and affection for WF--almost adulation. He thinks he should be President and is a real comer.
- Big problem with Wyche and fund-raising here is "Nobody knows who he is. His name is hard to pronounce. All they know about Georgia is Sam Nunn. That's why we have to do so much development work. But people are getting to know him up here. And they like him. They know he takes on Jesse Helms on the arts. He's getting a good strong base in New York."
- "Wyche's strength is that he has focus. He ties things together. He's a senator for America."
- What does he care most about? "Energy. He thinks we need an energy policy. And the environment--and agriculture issues. Those are important to Georgia; he worries about those more than anyone up here does."

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- On the Gulf War, Spector said WF explained that he was not opposed to going to war, but that he wanted a little more time. He also said that the President lacked a strategy for what to do after the war; and he was proven right. He didn't have much trouble on this issue because he explained his position and because he could cite his long history of support for Israel."
- Several times, when I pressed him on the matter of where he got his lists, he said, "There is no magic list. Everybody works off the same general list. Once you contribute, you are listed with the FEC; so there are no secrets. If there was one magic list, I wouldn't be in this business."
- When I asked him if he didn't think WF could be President, that's when he said "off the record" and talked about "Senator for America."
- "Wyche has focus. He tells the story that his favorite president was Polk. He said he wanted to accomplish four things as President. He got elected, did the four things he said he would, and didn't run for a second term. There was no need to."
- I tried to get him to talk about where they were on the way to their goal, but he wouldn't. "We're on target," he said.
- He did note that "the first quarter had been pretty busy, but that the next quarter will be our busiest time." So I asked him whether that meant more meetings for Wyche or more follow-up efforts. "We have two more trips to New York scheduled, one in April and May. After that, things will get very hectic. Most of what we do now will be to follow up with people we have contacted, and to get them to contact their friends. For example, we are writing letters to 30 or 40 Jewish communities around the country, asking the leaders of those communities to contact 10 friends. We send them his record (I should ask him for a sample). We're doing the same with people involved in historic preservation, the environment and the arts--to people who have a stake in him even though they haven't met him." He ticked off a list of cities and states--Milwaukee, Mississippi.....
- Before each meeting with a group, Wyche gets a briefing book and Don gets a briefing book.
- "I have to know his stand on the issues, because I have to be his surrogate."
- He said he had an expanding list of big donors, that a lot of fund-raising was bipartisan, that his position as Assistant Floor Leader and as Mitchell's representative at the budget summit made him interesting to people when they asked about such matters, that his Ways and Means experience was helpful in the same way.