

July 1
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Howard Mead - July 1, 1992

- We went to lunch and talked about Georgia politics. He didn't seem to know about or keep in touch with Wyche's race--not in any way that added to my knowledge. The Governor was tied up with the change in the flag.
- He agreed with Haddow (and I think Fran Weis, too) that Tanksley would be the best candidate. He reasoned well, I thought. "Wyche's problem is that from what people tell me, his negatives are high--not dangerously high, but not good. If your negatives are high, then you have to try to drive the other guys negatives up: Lee Atwater, Roger Ailes style. And you can do that best if the other guy has a record. Coverdell has a record--20 years in the State Legislature, Peace Corps. You can attack him. Tanksley has no record. That's a big problem."
- The other interesting thing he said had to do with the Georgia press.
- "The Georgia press is user-friendly. They are not tabloid journalism. Their attitude is not red meat, screw you. They all want to be like Teddy White to be on the inside. So they will write things pretty straight if you talk to them. Wyche's problem, from what I hear, is that he wants to talk only when he wants to talk. And sometimes when he wants to talk it's to complain to the press that they didn't get it right when he did talk to them. So he's prickly. And he doesn't hold press conferences. I'd say that among Georgia's Big Four--Sam Nunn, Newt Gingrich, Zell Miller and Fowler--Wyche gets the least press coverage. But that's because he doesn't give them anything to write about."
- When I asked Howard if WF was about as liberal as you could be in Georgia and still get reelected, he said, "You could be a lot more liberal than Wyche and still get reelected. He could have voted against Thomas. Do you think the blacks would vote against him if he had voted the other way? Do you think he has to worry about the striker replacement vote the way he does? The unions couldn't do any harm to him here. Unless it's just to collect money in Washington." He was making vote calculations that had as their premise "what he can get away with." He noted that the Thomas vote had cost him at home--in Atlanta I presume. And it has. Fran said the Thomas vote had cost him some volunteers on the phone bank.
- He gave me names of press people to talk to. "As far as the Atlanta news line is concerned, 75% of it is set by what the Atlanta Constitution Journal says, 15% is set by Bill Nigut on Channel 2, and 10% by all the rest of the media." He says Nigut is influential but not insightful or original.

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