

lots of reconstruction here.

Wyche Fowler - Washington, D.C. - March 23, 1993

- "Not until one hour before 11 o'clock (election night) did I ever think--not for one minute had I ever thought--that I might lose."
- He went on to say that "my disappointment did not last long, not more than a couple of days. I remembered how it felt after the Andy Young race in 1972. So I had lost before. My parents took it very hard. They had gotten so identified with 'my son the doctor,' 'my son the lawyer.' Donna took it very hard. But I'm with _____. He notes that life is not a plan, but a journey. His Ithaca is a dream, but even if you don't reach Ithaca, you can't be despondent, because it was Ithaca that gave you the dream." (I probably don't have this right. But the "journey" idea was the essence of it. You just keep going.
- Several times he returned to the idea that the roof had not caved in for him, "My self esteem is intact. I did everything I could do the best way I could, honestly, legally, ethically."
- "I don't think I'll run again. But people do have plane crashes. And, as you know, things aren't like the old days when you had to stay close to home. I could go to India and run for governor--provided I had friends that would help me to raise \$3 million. I could reintroduce myself--even reinvent myself." *strange*
- He said he hadn't talked about it with anyone, and hadn't read about it. So I said, "What random thought might you have about what happened." And random thoughts are what I got. But the first random thought was about the media.
- When I said people called the campaign "lackadaisical" he said, "I haven't read anything about that. What did they call it?"
- Then he said that a few people "who were brave enough" called and told him that he wasn't himself and didn't work as hard as before. But he said, "I worked just as hard as I ever did. I did not lose for any lack of effort on my part." He made this point especially when I suggested that maybe 1986 was the aberration and 1992 the norm. He took it as a suggestion that he didn't work as hard this time. He rebutted that idea a couple of times.
- His first and major point throughout our conversation was the media and the media's unwillingness to call PC to account for his ^{early} ads. "Our biggest problem was the media. We were on TV for six ^{early} weeks with nothing but positive ads. Then Coverdell came on with his negative attack ad claiming that I had voted for the pay raise. It was a lie. The media should have stepped in then and there and said so. But they didn't. When the media takes a stand like that, it usually stops politicians from going further. Instead, they gave a signal to the Coverdell people that they could say anything they wanted to--that there would be no block, nothing to hold them back. Then, when they got more negative and we hit back, the media criticized us for going negative. In the end, they endorsed me in the most backhanded way. That was their revenge for

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the time I took them to task for their hands-off attitude...You were there when I went ballistic with Sherman, who had those three pages of the court hearing and was going to write his story on the basis of those three pages. You remember how mad I was when I went to see the editors after that. That visit was the point when they turned on me. And they just let the negative attacks on my character continue. I did everything I could--I laid out all my expenses, all my receipts, gave them all the information I could about the bank business. There has to be a referee, and if the press doesn't do it, who will... Later, when their campaign spent \$500,000 of illegal money on television during the last three days of the runoff, the papers didn't say a thing. When you lose by 17,000 votes, that illegal \$500,000 makes a huge difference. Actually, you only need to turn 8,000 votes. So the media hurt us there, too."

- "My friends know how hard I worked for my daughter." At another point, he said that the media didn't step in to counter this idea or rumor that he was "wife beater."
- In short, his views that the campaign was one of character assassination and if the media wouldn't help him, there was nothing he could do.
- At a couple of points, he said, "There has not been one story about my Senate career ever printed in the Atlanta press, and there never will be."
- "My problem was that I never could develop a base. All our polls and interviews showed that people did not know what I had done. The press never told them. All they ever heard me talk about was baseball, because the media interviewed me at the ball park. When I passed my historic preservation bill and my alternative energy bill--two bills signed by a Republican president and a measurable accomplishment for a first-term senator--the media said nothing about it. There may have been one three second mention. I tried to go around quietly to the papers and the television stations to tell them about my record, but they never wrote about it. If they don't mention it, how would anyone know what I've done."
- I posed my "Georgia first" idea at some length. "That was our original idea of what the campaign should be. We even picked out the things I had done for each area, beginning with Marta. About a year-and-a-half out, that was our plan. Then our later polls seemed to tell us that it would sound like too much pork, and that was not what people wanted to hear, that they wanted to hear about the major policies. So we switched. We were moved by the superior intelligence of new information. Maybe it was a mistake. You could be right."
- Re what he'll miss: "I'll miss the friendships on the Hill. I won't miss all those town meetings where you say the same things over and over to the same few people--most of whom are mad at you anyway. What a waste of time, when you could be reading and thinking." Well, if that's your view of town meetings, it would be hard to make them the centerpiece of your campaign.

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- I asked him about votes that hurt. "Oh yes, the Clarence Thomas vote hurt me with the women--in both elections. Some of the groups came back (in the runoff), but once they had sent out all those messages the first time, there wasn't much they could do to turn everyone around."
- War vote? "I don't think that hurt me much...I don't think I've ever told anyone else, but I would have voted for the war if it hadn't been Sam Nunn's resolution we were voting on... After a few months in the Senate, I didn't think I ought to vote against him."
- Not too flattering about Sam Nunn. We recalled his hogging the spotlight at Dalton. And WF is now upset at Sam for giving Clinton all that trouble on gays. Should be doing it quietly, not on floor of Senate. Sam will love Coverdell, because he'll vote with him, and "Sam won't have anyone pulling him like I did into those areas he didn't want to get into--housing, mental health."
- "I'm the first person in history to be defeated by a coalition of gays and the religious right."
- I asked him if he underestimated Coverdell. He brushed it aside. "He was nothing. Maybe I underestimated the viciousness of the people running the campaign. But PC was nothing. He doesn't think. He's a disagreeable party-type person, the kind I don't like--even in our own party--the kind who only knows people who wear a big 'R' on their foreheads." (Still utter disdain and total unwillingness to even look at Coverdell to see what might be there! He could never admit to being defeated by a guy like that.) But he, again, said Atlanta Constitution had pro-Coverdell columns three times a week.
- I asked whether his work with Mitchell hurt in anyway. He laughed at that and said no, as if that was a silly question.
- We talked for an hour and a quarter; but mostly about his future, and why he would do this and not that. He talked with Dave Bonior about the job as head of AID. "You remember from our battles over Nicaragua and El Salvador, that my main interest was always in foreign affairs. I didn't do it in the Senate, for domestic political reasons."
- He'd like AID; and has heard rumors about himself and his doing a little lobbying with Bonior and Obey. When we talked about his 'lackadaisical' campaign, he said Metzenbaum had told someone, "Wyche is a good guy; but he doesn't have the energy level." WF didn't like that.
- Would like an Ambassadorship--but only Indonesia, India, Turkey and (maybe Spain). It's the cultures that attract him and the swing nature of these countries between west and Islam.
- Wants to find something "worthy" to do. But if he can't, will take some corporate boards and get some money to free him up.
- "Everybody in politics is ambitious. Most of them when they take one

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job, are looking ahead to the job after that--two jumps ahead. I'm not like that. I only think about the job I have--and so I've never thought about what I would do next after the Senate." (I don't believe this for a minute!)

- "I don't care about the money. If I weren't married, I go off somewhere to read and think or go to work in a leper colony." I believe that - a little!
- "In some ways, I'm glad I'm leaving at age 52 rather than at age 58. I have more time left. As you know, I was not going to run again in 1998--because I refused to raise any more money. Maybe I should have said that in my campaign--announced my own term limit."
- In general, I have to say, I don't get very good material from losing candidates. Everything he said today, he had said during my travels. All I found out was that he was consistent in terms of what he thought the minuses were--even though he never thought they would dominate.
- When posed theories of the Republicans as a factor, he said, "No, all things being equal, I should have won. If the media had done their job the way the should have when he started lying, I would have won. But once they let the bar down, there was nothing I could do... Not one article about my Senate career has ever appeared in the Atlanta papers--and one never will."
- In this day and age, losers are very likely to blame the media. Mark Andrews did, too. But, like MA, Wyche and the media is a chicken and egg problem.
- "I've never worked for anybody else in my life. I'm such an independent cuss, I'm not sure I could!"
- "About two weeks out from the election, when our polls showed we were slipping because of his attacks, we had to decide what to do--whether to go negative and, if we did, how far to go. Well, we decided to go only half way. We went with our mildest negative ad. As you know, I always felt uncomfortable about going negative. I knew we would have to, but I didn't want to. Alan wanted us to go with our toughest ad to hit him hard right away. I didn't want to; and we didn't. He says now that if we had done that, we would have won. Maybe he's right."
- "I wish I had taken a six month sabbatical--to read and think and fish, and figure out what I wanted to do. But Mitchell twisted my arm to come here to see I couldn't get some agreement and support here for a campaign finance bill. He and David Pryor said they would get something for me with the administration, and I said no. Now, I think there are some things I might find a challenge, one or two ambassadorships--and they've dangled a couple--or as head of AID, which I've heard rumored, though I haven't been approached directly. I think I'm a good salesman. I can sell anything if I believe in the product. I think I could sell AID to the Congress. I've had at least 20 invitations from Washington law firms--one of which was for \$500,000 a year--but when I told them I would not lobby my former colleagues, they lost interest. I will not stay in Washington and lobby on Capitol Hill... It's nice to know I can

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fall back on the law. I could always go back to Atlanta and go to trial school. I know how to try a case. The guy coming in after you is going to offer me a a job with a law firm, and I'm going to tell him, no." And then he went into the comment that he had never worked for any one else.

- He had a phone conversation with an Atlanta friend whom he urged to think about putting him on a "couple of corporate boards."
- All in all, he's thrashing around trying to figure out what to do with his life.
- ✓ - "The NRA hurt us in south Georgia. They did three mailings down there. I got \$150,000⁰⁰⁰ for subsidies for those peanut farmers and they still voted against me because of gun control."