

BILL WHITE

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Laura Logan, Margaret Ray, Courtney Williams.

I asked Bill "How's it going? and he rubbed his hands together and flashed a too-broad smile--"Just beautifully. Everything is just fine." He said it mockingly as if he were parodying that which he would say to the press, in a situation where he knows it's not all that great. Toward the end of the interview, he said "I'm worried." And that seemed closer to the truth.

I asked him what stage he was in and whether the events of the fall were important. "The events of the fall were important for the process of differentiation. Glenn got differentiated from Mondale as far as the party is concerned. The exchange with Mondale showed how they differed on what kind of party they wanted the Democrats to be and who they thought ought to run it. The next step is to move beyond the party to the voters and differentiate Glenn from Mondale as to what they want for the country. We haven't done that yet. That's the stage we're in. And when we're through with that we'll talk about what we want for the world and then the solar system, and then the universe." He laughed.

I asked him if the clash with Mondale didn't come on them sooner than they expected. "We knew it would come, but it came sooner than we expected. It killed once and for all the idea around town that John Glenn wouldn't get in there and mix it up. That helped us. But it didn't happen the way we planned it. We went too far with the Carter emphasis. We wanted to say that the choice on Reaganomics was whether to try something different or just follow the failed policies of past administrations--

*My milk
fridge*

all administrations, Johnson's guns and *butter*, Nixon and OPEC, not just the failed policies of Jimmy Carter. But it came out as an attack on Carter and that hurt us. This campaign won't be won by the things we've planned. It will be won by our reaction to the things that come up that are not planned. We are positioning ourselves to take advantage of events as they arise." *A veiled reference to what I later learned was a more Bill was left out.*

The impression I got from them was a very strong sense that the campaign was not under control--less so than most. I formulated a proposition to the effect that they were just waiting and probing and testing without having crystallized exactly where they were going. He nodded and said "We all are." I wonder. I later got the impression that they were, to some important degree, waiting for Mondale to stumble.

I probed for what it was that they felt would move voters. I said "primary voters." And he said do you mean caucus voters or primary voters?" And I said "Do you see a difference?" and he said "Yes." But that got dropped.

He gave an example of "positioning". "I still think people are very interested in valence issues--character, integrity, trust, things like that. But I don't think those issues will work by themselves. They have to come up in the context of other issues, and then they will work. For example, and this is off the record, we are just waiting for Walter Mondale to tag John Glenn as the tool of corporate interests. Mondale is a lobbyist for corporate interests, he made that deal with Feigenbaum(?). He 's the special interest person. We're ready to nail him to the wall on corporate interests. In that context, the character issue would be important. And we may get some help from the media--like Mary McGrory's

article asking 'will the real Walter Mondale stand up', telling how he says something in public and another thing in private. But if we just went out and said Walter Mondale is a tool of the corporate interests, no one will listen. If we catch him being holier than thou, we can jerk him back real quickly on that one."

getty ready to hit the law!

I found this example naive--even discouraging. Mondale won't attack Glenn that way, because he doesn't have to. He won't come on as "holier than thou" because he knows that Glenn will beat him on that score. Glenn needs something positive, not an essentially negative maneuver like "positioning" to pounce on a Mondale mistake.

I asked him what he thought John's best theme was. He asked how abstractly I wanted the answer and I said "very." He answered "He can provide leadership for America" and smiled. I asked for something a little less abstract and he said "John Glenn is a man who can provide leadership in a time of rapid change. He can adjust to the future and help the country adjust to the future." He might have said more, but I don't recall. But he did not say anything specific.

I asked him how they were doing in certain southern states--Ala., Ga., NC and he did not answer. He talked generally about their problem. "Nobody outside of the state of Ohio knows anything about John Glenn's record. All they know is that he's an astronaut and he's running for President. And those two things taken together are a negative. The meat in that sandwich (here he put 1st two fingers apart like scissors) is what he stands for. And our ^{job} ~~part~~ now is to put the meat in the sandwich. We need to make the connection between astronaut and President. The voters will not do it for us. It's a little easier to make that connection in the south where their views are more likely to be similar to John's."

At some point, he noted that there's plenty of room to grow in terms of votes.

"There's plenty of room for us to work in. We don't have to undo anything from the past. We need to expand the electorate, get the middle Democrats excited about what's happening to them. We have to say to them, this is your party. Look what happened to it under the leadership of the ~~extre~~emes. Do you want it? Well, then take it back! Take back your party from the extremes. Your leadership doesn't represent you, the rank and file. It's a kind of populist appeal, but we can't call it populist." That was the closest Bill came to defining a theme that might reach people. When he said this he got mildly enthusiastic.

I asked him if the press had decided how to play the Glenn campaign. "The press has not decided what they think about the Glenn campaign. There is no pack journalism. There might be if some big overriding event occurred, but not yet. There is conventional wisdom--but that's not as bad--that the organization is weak, that Glenn isn't tough enough politically. You hear that. But basically each journalist has his own ideas and is trying to write a story. They have not yet decided, as a group, how to treat the Glenn campaign."

I mentioned Mary McGrory's idea that "J.G. hates politics" and asked if the reporters weren't giving John a hazing and forcing him to run a kind of gauntlet to see if he can take it. He did not bite. He said "That's just Mary McGrory editorializing."

At the end, as we talked back and forth about the situation, and I said I thought John was "in the doldrums" right now, he agree. "I'm worried. We've lost ground to Mondale in several polls among the Democrats--even though we are holding up well head to head with Reagan. It was the result of the tremendous publicity Mondale got in October."

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I reminded him of Muskie's endorsements and he shot back (as if he was very aware of Muskie) something to the effect that Muskie never went anywhere.

I asked him what he'd look for if he were going out to Iowa as I am. And he didn't cotton to it very well. He said "Talk to people after he speaks and ask them what they thought and whether they felt differently after they had heard him speak--and then tell me" he laughed.

He also said "See how serious he is when he speaks--well I don't mean serious, he's always been serious--but see how hard he is trying to get his message across." And he also said to see whether the advance man is doing his job

I asked whether the media accounts of the organizational shakeup were correct in calling it a difference between the media and the organization types. "That was overdone. There never was any difference of opinion between the emphasis on ^{media and the emphasis on} organization. Joe described it that way to cover up the fact that he was fired. And he was fired not because we didn't have enough organization, but because we didn't have the right kind of organization. It was too far flung and not targeted sufficiently on the early states. We were using a shot gun when we needed a rifle. And we didn't have the right people in some cases. We had always planned to have a reexamination, in October, of how things were going. When we took a look, we didn't like what we saw. Joe didn't want to go along with the changes we recommended. His statement was self-serving."

I asked about the pros and cons of running for President from the Senate and I mentioned that Baker and Dole made that case. He only

mentioned the problems. "The first problem is time. You have to campaign and at the same time vote and attend to your other duties in the Senate. The second problem is mindset. You can't run for president with the mindset of a Senator. Take Grenada. The President had to make a set of decisions, one, two, three. The normal senatorial response is to look at all sides of a question before acting, to gather information to talk with others. It's a deliberative mindset. That won't do if you're a presidential candidate. If you are a candidate, you don't have the luxury of holding a hearing. People want to know immediately 'What would you have done?' It may not be desirable, but that's the way it is. It's hard for a Senator to learn to react that way."

*not
Palm
Punch*

I asked him if another problem wasn't the ability of your opponent to pick out individual votes--nerve gas, Reaganomics." "We let that one get too far ahead of us before we shut it down. We learned our lesson. We did shut it down--for good. But next time we will shut it down real quick. We tried to explain each one--B-1, tax cut, nerve gas--going into all the details of each one. Here are the two kinds of gas, two tanks, they mix, it's safer and so forth. That was a mistake. We should have said 'Yes I voted that way because that's what the country wants. You're the one who is wrong on that issue.' Don't explain the vote, don't defend the vote, don't tap dance around. We learned that lesson."

Obvious question I should have asked but did not. "What's difference between being AA & Campaign Manager?"

This was my first trip to the Glenn headquarters. It seemed busy--a warren, with people coming and going. A guy was waiting with me; and he

finally got someone to talk to. His name was Kraus. He had just written a book called "Future Presidents." The Glenn guy asked him to tell him "in a nut shell" what the book was about. They talked till I left for my interview. When I came out 1/2 hour later, the Glenn guy was carrying half a dozen copies of the book back into the warren. What he was going to do with them. I have no idea. But the "peddler" was typical of what must happen in a campaign. It's like a bunch of salesmen descending on some new company to sell them ~~w~~idgets.

Kirk talked over coffee about Bill. "Bill White is still a problem. Nobody likes him. He and Kathy Belle can't stand each other. Joanne said that if Bill hadn't gone over to the campaign headquarters, she would have left. Her husband said she used to come home crying at night from the way Bill treated her. She was afraid she would get ulcers Joe Grandmaison quit because he couldn't get along with Bill--no matter what they said publicly. Bill ^{is in it} ~~isn't~~ for the power. When he went over to the campaign, he wasn't supposed to be the manager. It was supposed to be 'for the interim.' But he couldn't let go. He loves the power. The senator is in it because he wants to do good. He wants the power to use it for a purpose. To Bill it's all just a game."

He said John hadn't had ^a joint staff meeting in 6 months, but that he had one to prepare staffs for staff shakeup and tell 'em how important the mission was. Kirk found JG in good spirits and thought the meeting was helpful, since the office staff never sees him and needs to, if morale is to be kept up. Says Ed is down and discouraged. Dan D. had open heart surgery and is part time. Several times during our talk, Kirk raises possibility that John might be V.P. candidate. He never talked as if John would win.