

REFLECTIONS

It all began one Fall Day in 1951, when I received an invitation from Governor Sherman Adams to attend a meeting of a group that was to be formed, called The 100 Club, with a view toward considering the candidacy of the then NATO Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower for President of the United States. This was the very first year that the New Hampshire Primary was to be the "first in the Nation", and in which a "beauty contest" was to be held for the Presidential candidates, and for the election of Delegates, either Pledged to a candidate, Favorable to a candidate, or Unpledged.

Governor Adams informed The 100 Club that Senator Styles Bridges was soon to make a trip to Europe to discuss the candidacy and the possibility of Dwight Eisenhower running for the Presidency on the Republican Ticket. In the meantime, we were to organize in order to show support, and to give encouragement if, in fact, General Eisenhower might consider making the run. Senator Bridges made his trip to Belgium and came back with a favorable impression that the General would soon resign as NATO Commander and seek the Presidency against Robert Taft.

My assignment, as a young Legislator, was to be a Town Chairman, and organize Carroll County. From that experience, I soon became hooked on Presidential politics and participated for the next thirty years. General Eisenhower ran in New Hampshire and won handily over Robert Taft, thanks largely to the superb organization by Governor Adams and Styles Bridges. The re-election of President Eisenhower in 1956 was run mainly from the Headquarters of the Republican State Committee, and I joined the staff of the State Committee in order to work for his re-election.

In 1960, the Vice President of the United States, Richard M. Nixon, showed his New Hampshire popularity by sweeping the New Hampshire Primary, with Wesley Powell as his Chairman, and I served as Chief Executive Officer for the campaign, and after the nomination, as his New England Coordinator. Nixon was defeated and many of us were very bitter about the electoral process, feeling that irregularities in Illinois cost him the Presidency. Years later, I had the opportunity to reminisce with him about that campaign, and I know he shared those same feelings, but he said at the time, to contest the Illinois election might be very divisive at a time when international crises might soon be upon us. In reflection, he was right.

In 1964, I was invited to fly to Washington and met with Senator Goldwater and Norris Cotton and, together with House Majority Leader Walter Peterson, we were invited to take charge of New Hampshire's Goldwater efforts. The very first informal polls indicated a 61% favorable rating for Senator Goldwater. However, it was all down hill from there. His national staff was hastily assembled and was long on dedication, but very short on the national issues and it appeared to be insensitive to social concerns. If commitment and organization could win a campaign, this had to be the one, as the New Hampshire volunteers worked long and hard. However, the combativeness of the conservative policies of Senator Goldwater, and the liberal policies of Governor Rockefeller soon developed an animosity between the candidates that was politically devastating, but great fodder for the national press. As the two candidates attacked each other, the void was filled by Henry Cabot Lodge, our neighbor from Massachusetts who, not only swept the "beauty contest", but took every Delegate to the National Convention.

New Hampshire was a disaster for both Goldwater and Rockefeller, and the harder we worked, the less progress was made in both political camps.

In 1968, I was asked by former Vice President Richard Nixon to be his Campaign Director, with Governor Wesley Powell being his Chairman. From an organizational standpoint, this was a relatively easy campaign as the former Vice President had spent considerable time mending fences in the First Primary State. This was the first campaign in which television played an important role, and it is my opinion that with the Humphrey/Muskie superior public relations, and with the all-out support of labor, that if the campaign had lasted one more week, Nixon would have lost. This was my first experience as a Delegate to the National Convention, and I was appointed a Coordinator for seventeen Eastern States.

The 1972 Nixon-Agnew ticket was perhaps the easiest campaign of all. The President had just returned from China and he was at the height of his popularity, even though the shadow of Watergate would soon entangle the President and destroy his credibility. Historians may very well look upon the Nixon Presidency as a turning point in our diplomatic relations with China and the Soviet Union.

As the President resigned, and Vice President Ford stepped into office, the campaign of 1976 was soon to be upon us. Midsummer of 1974, I received a visit from John Sears who, in my opinion, is the most brilliant political strategist of any person I ever met, and he persuaded me to join with him on behalf of Ronald Reagan. This was a very hard-fought campaign - but not divisive - as was the Goldwater/Rockefeller debacle. Councilor Ray Burton and I had set up a political mailing and telephone operation called Direct Mail Services, and it was our responsibility to handle all the direct mail and telephone banks in the State. We were disappointed to have been beaten by President Ford by some 1,000 votes.

In 1978, John Sears invited me to participate in a strategy session at the home of Senator Howard Baker to talk over the possibility of Senator Baker running in the New Hampshire Primary. Senator Baker and I had an excellent rapport, and I soon joined his campaign effort with a view toward edging out the favorite, Ronald Reagan. My rationale (in which I was completely wrong) was that Ronald Reagan's age would limit him in the Presidency. Former Governor Walter Peterson soon joined us in the Baker effort and took over the campaign activities while I, once again, became a technician with phone banks and direct mail. Of all of the candidates, it is my sincere opinion that Senator Howard Baker would make the best President of any that I have ever seen, listened to, or worked with. This is not to take away from President Reagan, who has changed the direction of the country to a more stable economic base, but the jury is still out on foreign policy.

The romance of New Hampshire's early Primary will, in all likelihood, soon be over. Pressure from the political parties for Regional Delegate selection is growing, and the proliferation of candidates in New Hampshire is bordering on the ridiculous. It has been an exciting era, and New Hampshire has been in the forefront of the Making of Presidents. This has not been by accident, but by a sincere interest of the New Hampshire populace. As a former Nixon staffer told me, the people of New Hampshire are more interested in politics than they are sex, and I am not sure that is altogether beneficial.

It has been a great experience, and I look forward only to the next thirty years of campaigning, and after that, the younger generation should take it over.