

THE *Winney for Congress* CAMPAIGN

In every political campaign, there are a number of interesting occurrences. It seems that the bigger the pursuit - office - the more startling and shocking those events might be. The Bill Winney for Congress campaign had its moments.

Let me share some of the experiences of a statewide campaign for the U.S. House.

REAGAN'S ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT

At one of our first meetings, before I had decided I could, or should, make the time to be part of the Winney for Congress quest, Bill told me he did not want to go negative against a fellow Republican. He brought up Ronald Reagan's stated "Never speak ill of a fellow Republican" claim. I reminded him that Reagan dubbed George Bush's economic plan as "Voodoo Economics." Still, Bill did not want to attack Barbara Cubin.

As the campaign went on and Bill saw and heard Mrs. Cubin mislead or lie to the voters, he relaxed his Rule a little. But only in Laramie County where the Cheyenne Herald wrote about Cubin's record of ineffectiveness, broken promises and lack of legislative accomplishments, did the campaign perform to the level it might have statewide, had the same exposure been possible.

WHERE DID THEY ALL GO?

One of the first truisms of politics is that one should not count on those who encouraged him to run to be there for him once he files for office.

Once a candidate files, they find out their support will come from a very few, but very dedicated and determined, people. It is like being shoved into the line of fire while the shower covers in the foxhole. Words are easier to come by than effort. Encouragement easier to dispense than dollars. Knowing that going in spares some of the disappointment.

BUY WYOMING

Another topic of an early discussion between Bill Winney and myself was that my research had shown that Barbara Cubin spent very little of her campaign funds in Wyoming or with Wyoming media. About half of her spending has been to raise more money but precious little of it found its way into the coffers of Wyoming businesses.

Bill directed that we spend every possible cent with Wyoming businesses, which I did. In spite of constant frustrations with the campaign website, colors on campaign materials, vendors meeting delivery commitments, scheduling broadcast advertising, etc., no out-of-state vendor was used. Not that the businesses we paid money to didn't go outside state borders for the materials - but we didn't.

Can any other candidate for office this primary season say as much?

WYOMING MEDIA

Of all the disappointments in a political campaign in Wyoming, the Wyoming media will almost always rank near the top. They tend to be lazy, indifferent, arrogant, ignorant, uninformed, egotistical and, did I mention lazy?

Production of a broadcast commercial can be like pulling teeth. "Producers" who know nothing about a candidate or where they stand on issues, will try to force their perceptions into the commercials. When you tell them to make corrections or changes, you'd think you had insulted their manhood.

The initial advertising in Wyoming was to introduce Bill Winney to voters by discussing his Navy experience and achievements and by running a series of newspaper ads providing readers with the campaign website so they could read more.

To this day, I can't be sure that all ads were run or whether we have refunds due when they weren't. Based on other experiences, there is reason to be suspicious all ads may not have run - but the cost for a one inch by two column ad is not worth much effort to determine whether they appeared or not.

For the last Sunday, a new ad was prepared to remind voters that Bill Winney was not running as a protest candidate, that his credentials were very impressive on their own.

The ad was to be placed in the Sunday issue of the Casper Star-Tribune. An ad appeared but it was not the right one. A 4 column x 5 inch ad in a CS-T Sunday paper costs about \$650.00 and they picked up a prior ad and re-ran it. It, naturally, could not be made good because it was to be in the Sunday before the election.

Each time we placed cable television ads with Comcast, we had trouble getting them started on the ordered date.

The worst thing about Wyoming media in this campaign was not botching the advertising but an almost universal lack of effort in covering this candidate. The Casper Star editorial board never interviewed him to contrast his candidacy to Barbara Cubin's. Had they done this simplest of assignments, Bill probably would have won Natrona County.

The CS-T had obviously decided at some point early on that Bill was not a viable candidate. In their minds, however, both Bruce Brown and Fred Parady were. Look at the table below. Bill received more statewide votes than either of those two capable men. In the largest county in the state and home of the state capital, Bill Winney received as many or more votes than two candidates who won statewide.

Only a few stations / papers availed themselves of interviewing Bill as he traveled through their communities. Rawlins stood him up after scheduling an interview. Other editors were too busy to meet him or interview him when he visited.

There were notable exceptions. But you could count them on one hand. In the two counties Bill received fair and decent coverage, he prevailed. While endorsements from the likes of the Wyoming Tribune-Eagle may not be a worth a bucket of warm spit, but NO coverage can hurt.

Republicans in contested races

	State Votes	Laramie County
Ray Hunkins	51,959	6,931
Barbara Cubin	50,117	4,880
Joe Meyer	49,466	7,213
Rita Meyer	46,708	7,336
Max Maxfield	43,573	6,041
Mary Ann Collins	37,607	4,941
Bill Winney	33,476	6,036
Bruce Brown	30,722	3,245
Fred Parady	28,757	3,472
John Self	17,684	2,553

Channel 13 in Casper, where the campaign spent significant money on advertising, could not find a way to interview the candidate. Ditto Channel 2 up there. Wyoming Public Television did not show us the courtesy of informing us that Barbara Cubin had refused to debate, even though they were specifically asked, in our acceptance of their invitation, to do so.

Channel 5 in Cheyenne was a notable exception. They initiated contact with the campaign and treated Bill Winney fairly.

"SNIFFLIN' BILL SNIFFIN

An early column of his, which was in more than one Wyoming newspaper, did not acknowledge Bill Winney as a candidate for the House seat. Having failed dismally with his own candidacy, Sniffin evidently didn't feel it necessary to name all candidates. So, I went off on him in an e-mail. He apologized and told both Bill and me that he would "make it right." He never did. I told him he was not only a lousy candidate four years ago but a lousy journalist as well. I repeat those statements.

STRANGE BEDFELLOWS

They say that politics makes strange bedfellows and I have a classic example. When Barbara Cubin said on Channel 5, ten days before the election, that she had never said she would limit herself to six terms, I immediately contacted Paul Jacob, national director of U.S. Term Limits. I had sat on a panel with Paul in Casper a couple years back and thought he could refute her denial. It took a long time to get through to him but he told me his group had a letter from her - after she became a member of Congress - that she would leave the body in 2006. He promised me his Chicago office would find the letter and provide it to me. He did not.

So, in effect, the organization which has fought tooth and nail to enact and retain term limit legislation in many states became an enabler for one of its greatest violators. Strange bedfellows, indeed.

TWELFTH COMMANDMENT - INTEGRITY

With about ten days to two weeks to go before the primary election, Bill Winney was contacted by one of Wyoming's most influential Republicans, who had supported his candidacy from the beginning. He told Bill that one of Wyoming's best known Republicans would support him actively, publicly and financially. Nine out of ten readers of this story would recognize his name. Maybe all ten would.

Bill called the guy. They spoke about Bill's stand on issues for a few minutes. Then they came to an issue the celebrity Republican disagreed with Bill about. He told Bill he was "as bad as Barbara Cubin" and that he would not support his candidacy. We could have prepared for that conversation and told the guy what he wanted to hear. Bill Winney would never consider doing that. Winning wasn't important enough to surrender his integrity.



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