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SOME PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE WAYNE MORSE RE-ELECTION
CAMPAIGN OF 1968

A Memoir

The purpose of this paper

To fill in some chinks in the historical record for the possible benefit of future researchers. Beyond that I have no axe to grind. I worked for and admired Wayne Morse but it is not my purpose here to extol him. It's simply to present the facts as I know them while I'm able, since to the best of my knowledge I'm the last person still alive with extensive first-hand knowledge of the Morse campaign.

Newspaper and magazine articles about Wayne Morse in 1967-1968 abound. In them, collectively and allowing for bias, a comprehensive history of Morse's 1968 campaign can be traced out. In addition, there is a good account of the campaign in Mason Drukman's excellent biography of Morse (Oregon Historical Society Press, 1997). This paper is intended as an addendum to the otherwise available material, to which I refer the reader for further information.

About the author

I was a salaried employee of the 1968 Re-Elect Wayne Morse Committee for seventeen months, from June of 1967 through election day in November of 1968. My duties were diverse. I was hired as Morse's press assistant but as the campaign progressed that turned out to be an almost negligible part of the job. I worked directly under Charlie Brooks, who ran Morse's Oregon field office and was also his campaign manager. Brooks's office, which Morse used when he was in Portland, was on the top floor of the then federal courthouse building on Southwest Broadway between Main and Madison streets. I always thought there was some question about the propriety of my occupying federal (that is, tax-supported) space since I was paid by the campaign committee and was not a federal employee, but that never became an issue in the campaign. It did, however, give me a unique vantage point: along with Charlie Brooks, I was the liaison person between Morse's senatorial staff in Washington DC and his campaign staff in Portland and his campaign volunteers around the state. It also put me in daily personal contact with Morse when he was in Portland and, logistics and job duties requiring it, I traveled with him throughout Oregon on frequent occasions. In short, I was situated as the proverbial fly on the wall for the entire duration of the campaign.

It needs saying that my input into the campaign was minimal. I was the green kid in the inner circle, my previous

experience being limited to two years as the political reporter for the Eugene Register-Guard. Although my opinions were welcome, and I offered them freely, they were merely thrown into the general mix for whatever they might have been worth. I had no authority on my own to set or implement significant policy. Almost four decades have now passed since the campaign and I'm aware that memory can be fallible when peering back through the mists of time. In the following pages I shall do my best to limit my statements of fact to what I can document or to what I recall with confidence as to its accuracy.

Finances

We had enough money. So did Packwood. I wasn't involved in the financial aspects of the campaign so I can't speak with authority about dollar figures, but I doubt that anyone else could either. No politician wants to be charged with trying to buy an election and since the financial disclosure laws were looser than, and easier to evade, well-funded candidates generally didn't declare all the money they raised or the in-kind services they received. In my opinion, it's unlikely that an examination of the contribution and expenditure reports would give an accurate financial picture of either the Morse or Packwood campaigns, both of which were undoubtedly under-reported.

I mention this because although money didn't play a part in the general election, both campaigns being sufficiently funded, it did affect the primary election (I'll return to this point). When I first joined the campaign, in June of 1967, we already had a bucket shop operation underway. From it we were mailing out what we called the "x" letter. This was a fund-raising letter prepared on Robotype machines, computers not yet being available for the task, which typed and addressed each letter individually. The "x" letters were sent out by the thousands to people living outside of Oregon who had written to Morse supporting his position on Vietnam. The modest individual contributions that came in from the peace movement helped, cumulatively, to finance the

campaign during its early stage. Later we relied on traditional sources of financial support.

The "x" letter project was underway, I should point out, a year before the primary election would be held. At the time we had no idea who the Republican nominee would be in the general election, about which Morse was relatively unconcerned. He believed if he survived the Democratic primary he would be re-elected in the general election without a serious problem.

I mentioned in-kind services. Allow me to illustrate with an anecdote. During the general election we were approached by an organization representing the direct-mail industry. They were on the East Coast but I forget in what city. They wanted to help Morse by printing a campaign brochure at their own expense. We would prepare the copy and layout and send it to them for the actual printing back east. They asked how many brochures we could use and I checked with the person in charge at our campaign headquarters. She said at best she might be able to get 75,000 distributed but since we were getting them free we might as well double that and ask for 150,000. So that's what I did, but the gentleman on the other end of the telephone wouldn't accept the number. He said, and I paraphrase, that he felt it would be insulting to Morse to offer such a paltry amount. He told me they'd go ahead and print 300,000. But he phoned me back later and said he'd talked it over with his people who, he said, wanted to give Morse serious help and were therefore

increasing the print run to 600,000. I objected and told him we were campaigning in Oregon, not New York, but he was unswayed by my argument. He was so unswayed that he phoned me back one more time and said that to show their sincerity they were going to double the number again and print 1.2 million.

Which they did. And as I recall, when the eighteen-wheeler carrying the cartons of brochures arrived in Portland, it took a crew of volunteers the better part of an afternoon just to unload them. I doubt that we managed to distribute even the 75,000 we'd originally contemplated. I doubt, too, that the printing costs were ever declared as a campaign contribution.

Ironically, the brochure contained a statement ("For every dollar Oregon pays in federal taxes, we receive \$1.50 in return") which became an issue that later worked to Morse's detriment in the campaign. Sometimes you can raise money, or get it free, and end up losing votes because of the way you spend it.

The Primary Election

Politically speaking, Morse came out of the primary election a wounded candidate. His margin of victory over Bob Duncan was so narrow that it wasn't until a week after election day that the final outcome was certain and he was able to claim the nomination. As a result, and contrary to any reasonable analysis of what had been a successful primary election campaign

strategy, Morse decided on his own to take a different approach to the general election. It's my opinion that in that decision lay the seeds of his later defeat, as I shall now try to explain.

Bob Duncan was a formidable opponent. In October of 1967, well before the primary election, we commissioned a public opinion survey with Opinion Research of California. We purposely used a firm from outside of Oregon to eliminate any bias and get the best poll we could. It showed Morse losing to Duncan by eleven percent in a head-to-head matchup, with nine percent undecided. Faced with an uphill battle, Charlie Brooks envisaged what he called a "new era" campaign. By that he meant we would rely heavily on paid television, with an emphasis on praising Morse through theme and image advertising rather than on informing the voters about his stand on various issues. Brooks also decided, and Morse agreed, that Morse wouldn't respond to any attacks Duncan might make against him, and that he wouldn't appear on any television talk or panel shows. This was, for lack of a better term, a lay-low strategy. We intended that our paid media would carry the campaign, which is in fact what happened.

It should be noted that Morse was accustomed to an old-time, traditional style of campaigning. Stump speeches were his forte. He was a talker. An orator, actually, or as he often referred to himself, an educator. It was by talking and taking his case to the voters in person that he'd gotten himself

elected in 1944, 1950, 1956 and 1962. There was no way he was going to stop talking and when I say we had a lay-low strategy, that's a relative term. My records show that from June of 1967 through the primary election in May, 1968, Morse came to Oregon on twenty-nine separate occasions, traveled 19,000 miles by car throughout the state and visited virtually every county, many repeatedly. Nor did the lay-low strategy mean that we wouldn't get Morse's record out. He insisted that it be documented and made available to the public, which we did by printing what we called the "blue book" (from the color of its cover; in the general election we re-issued it in an ochre-colored cover). It fell to me to write and edit the blue book, a job that took me four or five months, off and on, to complete to Morse's satisfaction. The blue book was 136 pages long and had an index on its back cover listing ninety subject headings. It was subtitled "A 1968 handbook for Morse workers" and Morse apparently believed people would actually study it like a textbook. Personally, I thought it was a counter-productive use of time and money since if anyone was looking for a reason to vote against Morse, all he had to do was look through the blue book and he could pick from ninety reasons, all furnished by us. But Morse thought the blue book was a wonderful campaign item. We distributed thousands of them.

Nevertheless it was our paid media advertising, television especially, that did the job for us. We had abundant financing

and Duncan didn't and that was what turned the tide. In late March of 1968, five months after our initial public opinion survey, we commissioned a second poll by the same firm. It showed a dramatic shift in our favor, Morse now leading Duncan by almost ten percent. It's my opinion that if Duncan's campaign had been better financed, and assuming they'd spent the money effectively, Duncan probably would have defeated Morse in the primary. As it was, the election was a squeaker.

But the conclusions Morse drew from it were startling, at least to me. Again I have to paraphrase, but I was present at the following conversation and remember it well. Morse told Brooks that, one, our polling had been worthless; he said our numbers showed him comfortably ahead and yet he'd barely won, and he decreed that we wouldn't do any polling in the general election. Two, he claimed that our lay-low strategy had almost cost him the nomination and that he wouldn't be muzzled in the general election but would go back to the style of campaigning that had gotten him elected four times previously. In effect, he decided that Brooks's brilliant campaign strategy hadn't been brilliant at all and he wanted nothing further to do with anything that sounded like "new era."

It's my opinion that if Morse had gone back to Washington DC after the primary and just stayed there, he probably would have been re-elected without breaking a sweat because Packwood wouldn't have had an in-person target to shoot at.

I thought what we needed to do in the general election was more of what we'd done in the primary, not less, but that wasn't to be. Morse didn't take Packwood seriously--he didn't "run scared," as the saying has it--until late in the summer, by which time our campaign was in chaos (I'll return to this point). Without a poll, without even a campaign strategy to guide us, we were flying blind by then.

Two other factors that influenced the primary election result need to be mentioned:

One, there was a third candidate on the Democratic ballot. Phil McAlmond, a self-starter and non-politician, was an enigma to us. He entered the race as an anti-Morse candidate but apparently had a change of heart during the campaign and ended up liking him. McAlmond was no threat to either Morse or Duncan but he had the personal financial means to put on a visible campaign which resulted in his receiving about 17,000 votes. It's reasonable to speculate that if McAlmond hadn't been on the ballot, a good portion of his votes would have gone to Duncan. Since Morse only beat Duncan by about 10,000 votes, one could make the case that McAlmond's presence on the ballot was a deciding factor.

Two, and to the best of my knowledge this incident is not mentioned in any account of the primary election, the Bobby Kennedy campaign pulled an unconscionable stunt that I'm convinced cost Morse thousands of last-minute votes. The three Democratic presidential candidates were

Kennedy, McCarthy and Humphrey. For obvious reasons it would have been suicidal for Morse to endorse one over the others and he refrained from doing so, even making a point of so stating on his page in the Voters' Pamphlet. Yet on the Saturday before election day the Kennedy campaign sent out a mailing to all registered Democrats in the state that included a recommended slate of Kennedy delegates to the Democratic national convention. Without Morse's approval or even his knowledge, they put his name on the list. Voters received the mailing on Monday, May 27, the day before the election. I stopped by our campaign headquarters that day and found the phones ringing nonstop, the calls all coming from McCarthy supporters who, outraged that Morse (as they believed) had come out in favor of the usurper and their arch-enemy Kennedy, were letting us know that Morse had lost their vote. It was a disaster. We were blindsided at the last minute and couldn't do anything about it for lack of time. It's reasonable to assume that the McCarthyites who phoned, or at least those who were able to get through the jammed phone lines, were just the tip of the iceberg. For that reason I believe, although there's no way to prove it, that the Kennedy mailing cost Morse several thousand votes he otherwise wouldn't have lost.

Any damage Duncan suffered by McAlmond's candidacy, it seems to me, was more than compensated by the windfall he must have received due to the Kennedy mailing. I can't help but speculate that if it hadn't been for the mailing, Morse

would have won the primary by a more comfortable margin--and on election night instead of a week later--and in that case he might have had a better appreciation of our campaign strategy. And if so, he might have allowed us to conduct the general election campaign along different and successful lines.

Vietnam

The advantage of Vietnam as a campaign issue was that we didn't have to spend a penny of paid media to promote Morse's position on it. His opposition to the war was so well-known that we could just let it sit out there on its own and have whatever effect it was going to have. Morse, of course, continued speaking out against the war at every opportunity during the campaign. Conventional wisdom has it that his stand on the war cost him the election and in later years he would even sometimes refer to himself as a war casualty, but I hold a different opinion. Two years earlier, in 1966, Mark Hatfield had successfully run for the U.S. Senate in Oregon as a dove (against the same Bob Duncan), and by 1968 popular opinion was turning against the war even more.

In my view, Vietnam only hurt Morse to the extent that it reinforced his image as a cantankerous individual always spoiling for a fight, but that reputation had been hurting him for his entire career and he'd always managed to survive it. Besides, he was

adept at playing off the flip side of the image, presenting himself as the lonely, independent champion of Everyman. In my day book for Oct. 4, 1968, is the notation that a reporter for ABC News subjected Morse to a hostile interview, ending with the question, "Isn't Wayne Morse the issue (in the campaign)?" Without missing a beat, Morse shot back, "I'm always the issue. That's why I win." Yet in the general election campaign he didn't like it when Packwood made him the issue on Packwood's terms, not his own. He thought that by criticizing him personally, Packwood was conducting a dirty campaign. But it was Morse who'd set himself up for the attack. Vietnam didn't beat him. Packwood did.

The Press

I don't want to make more out of this than it's worth, but it needs mentioning: Morse received a bad press. On a Sunday morning after I accepted the job on Morse's campaign but before I actually began work, I spent three hours with Morse and Brooks at Morse's home in Eugene. My notes from that day (May 21, 1967) read in part: "About the press, he was dolorous. Said there is a 'design' against him. Said Wash DC press corps is hostile, and so is Oregon press. Said when his name is mentioned in a favorable way in syndicated columns, Oregon editorialists excise the paragraph. 'I can show you too many examples for this not to be a coincidence,' he said with a tone in his voice that he anticipates the argument that

he is being paranoiac. 'My press relations are nil,' he said. 'They don't exist.'"

During my first day on the job Brooks put me on the phone with Morse, who was then in Washington DC, and asked me to give him an assessment of the press situation. At the time Brooks was trying to sell Morse on the lay-low strategy and wanted my support. I told Morse what I believed to be true from my personal observation. I said there was a climate of opinion against him in the press, that he was one of those public figures that reporters felt free to take potshots at with the tacit approval of their editors. But I wasn't telling him anything he didn't already know. That was just the way things were in the campaign, one of the givens that we had to live with.

I said earlier that the damage caused by the Bobby Kennedy mailing didn't get any mention in the press. Not quite true. Drew Pearson gave it five paragraphs in his syndicated column which appeared in the Oregon Journal of June 5, 1968. But they only appeared in the early, street edition. By the time the home-delivery edition was printed, the five paragraphs were no longer in Pearson's column. They'd disappeared.

I also said earlier that Morse was careful not to endorse a candidate in the Democratic presidential primary. Yet in late 1967 stories appeared in the Oregonian that carried the following headlines: "Morse To Back LBJ Candidacy" (Oct. 7); "Morse Ready To Back Kennedy For Top Spot" (Oct. 24); "Morse

To Back McCarthy Bid" (Nov. 27).

In my day book for Aug. 29, 1968, is the notation of a reporter for the Oregon Journal "telling me that dayside crew hates SM (Morse)--says to bring stuff in at night--'When Bill Knight (publisher of the Journal) sees Morse's picture in the paper, he gets physically ill.'"

In my possession is a letter dated Nov. 24, 1967. It was written by Steve Green, who was then a stringer for the Oregon Journal. He wrote it at my request, since I wanted it for my files, and he asked me to keep the information confidential. But after almost forty years I suppose I can break my promise. In part, the letter reads as follows (Orlando Hollis was the retiring, longtime dean of the University of Oregon law school):

"Dear Ron:

As you know, on November 17, I covered the Orlando Hollis recognition dinner at the Eugene Hotel as the area correspondent of the Oregon Journal.

The Journal ran my story and a photo of Dean Hollis. However, I thought you would be interested in knowing that I was instructed by the Journal that Senator Morse was not to appear in any photographs taken of Hollis. This, despite the fact that Morse was keynote speaker of the event, a long-time friend of the Dean and Hollis' predecessor in that position.

In-as-much as I have never been given instructions of this type before in my three years with the Journal, I

asked who was responsible for the directive. Two different newsroom executives advised me that the order came directly from William Knight, publisher..."

Yet Knight's animus didn't prevent the Journal (on May 20, 1968, a week before the primary election) from publishing a three-column wide, six-inch deep photograph beneath a four-column headline saying, "Pickets Blast Morse In Union Row Here." The story was specious. It derived from a local squabble among members of the electrical workers union. No strike was in progress, no union spokesperson was identified in the story, and the photo wasn't even of union members. It showed three of their wives, also unidentified, carrying placards. The gimmick was clever on their part since by dragging Morse into the story they got their press coverage, but the Journal was way out of line in collaborating with them.

On Feb. 1, 1968, Morse gave a speech in Corvallis. The Oregonian reporter who covered it was Stan Federman. In my day book is the notation that Federman told me that on his return from Corvallis he was instructed to keep his story about the speech down to only four or five paragraphs.

On Aug. 7, 1968, the movie, "Paint Your Wagon," was being filmed on location in the mountains west of Baker. For publicity purposes of their own, the movie people offered Morse a cameo part (they gave him one line of dialogue which ended up on the cutting room floor). We were able to coordinate Morse's appearance there with a campaign swing through Eastern

Oregon. It made for a good feature story. On hand at the location that day were, among others, director Josh Logan, producer Alan Jay Lerner and movie stars Lee Marvin and Ray Walston. We flew a handful of Portland reporters to the location and the event got us a story and photos in Time, Newsweek and even (no doubt to Phil Knight's distress) the Oregon Journal. But the Oregonian declined to assign a reporter to the story. They told me they might have sent someone "if it wasn't a political year."

I was in Washington DC, doing research for the "blue book," during the congressional Christmas recess of 1967. On Jan. 4, 1968, I had a visit in his office with Mark Hatfield, who told me the following anecdote. He said that when he was running for the Senate in 1966 he was interviewed by the Oregonian's editorial board. They asked him how he could take the same position on Vietnam as Morse. Hatfield answered that there was a distinction. He said his opposition to the war was based more on moral grounds, Morse's more on constitutional grounds. To which Mike Frey, the publisher of the Oregonian, replied that he didn't care about the distinction. "If Morse is for heaven," Frey said, "I'm for hell."

Most of the newspaper publishers in Oregon were Republicans and had never forgiven Morse for what they considered his apostasy in quitting the Republican party and becoming a Democrat. In the primary election every daily newspaper in the state that endorsed a candidate endorsed Duncan. In the

general election Morse got one endorsement from an Oregon daily (the Coos Bay World). All the other dailies that made an endorsement went for Packwood. Morse's re-election campaign would have been a lot easier if we'd gotten a fair shake out of the press, but the press didn't cost us the election. We did that to ourselves.

The General Election

Early in 1968, well before primary election day, I was contacted by Henry Carey, a Portland lawyer and acquaintance of Morse's. He asked me to deliver a message to Morse, the gist of which was as follows. He said a man named Prosterman, who had worked for a government agency in Vietnam, had a plan to end the war there through a program of land reform. He wanted to present his plan to Congress and, failing that, he intended to share it with Packwood. Carey told me he thought Prosterman just wanted a hearing, which Morse could easily give him and at the same time deprive Packwood of a campaign issue. I passed the suggestion on to Morse, who rejected it out of hand. He told me, and forcefully, to get one thing straight: that Packwood was not a problem. He said that Duncan was our problem and that if we got through the primary we wouldn't have anything to worry about in the general election.

Immediately after the primary, State Treasurer Bob Straub met with Morse in Morse's office. I was present. Straub suggested to Morse that he debate Packwood right away. He said

that nobody paid any attention to politics in June and that by debating Packwood early Morse could take the debate issue away from him. Otherwise, Straub said, Packwood would keep the issue alive during the whole campaign. Morse answered that he wasn't going to debate Packwood at all and he instructed me to issue a press release to that effect. As I recall, I talked him out of the press release. But at that stage of the campaign Morse simply didn't have any interest in Packwood. He didn't consider him a serious threat.

As late as September, in fact, he apparently didn't even know what Packwood looked like. The following quotation is excerpted from an article by Packwood that appeared in the May, 2000, issue of Brainstorm magazine:

"Even though by Labor Day the polls had Sen. Morse and I running reasonably even, he still barely knew my name and could not physically recognize me. Nothing better illustrates this than an incident at the Pendleton Roundup in September of 1968...

"Virgil Rupp was the photographer for the East Oregonian, the Pendleton daily. He knew that Sen. Morse and I had never appeared in a picture together. He was unaware that Sen. Morse and I hadn't even met each other or shaken hands during the campaign. He asked if I would go up, tap Sen. Morse on the shoulder, extend my hand, introduce myself and let him take a picture. I agreed. I went up to Sen. Morse, tapped him on the shoulder and

extended my hand. He, of course, instinctively took it. I said, 'I'm Bob Packwood.' He attempted to withdraw his hand immediately, but it was too late and Virgil Rupp got the picture he wanted..."

I need to say a few words about the Packwood campaign as best I understood it from the outside looking in. It wasn't about issues as such. It was about getting Packwood elected. One of the things I learned from working in politics was that if you're ever running a campaign for office and have a choice between hiring a political scientist on your staff or hiring a psychologist, hire the psychologist every time. Because your goal is not to educate the voters about government, it's simply to motivate them to vote for Candidate A instead of Candidate B when they're in the polling booth. Packwood, who understood that, deserves credit for taking on Morse when no other Republican of prominence was willing to try. He was a virtual unknown when he filed for office but he had a campaign strategy in mind.

His campaign slogan was "People for Packwood." What did it mean? Nothing and everything. Sometime that summer one of Packwood's supporters tried to explain the Packwood campaign to me. He told me, with the sly smile of someone who'd been given a glimpse of esoteric knowledge, that "the campaign is the campaign." It sounded like Zen. Or more to the point, it sounded like Marshall McLuhan's "the medium is the message." What it translated to was that Packwood's campaign was generating

publicity by virtue of the fact that it was generating publicity. In the phrase of a later time, it was like being famous for being famous. His campaign boasted of his having thousands of volunteers. Whether he had them or not I don't know, but it didn't matter because he said he had them and if people believed him, that was as good as having them. His people put out a periodical campaign newsletter with articles in it that publicized...the campaign. Sample headlines from The Packwood Express ("All aboard for Washington") of August, 1968: "Campaign Headquarters Moves To Northwest Portland," "Lawn Signs To Spark Major Effort," "County Chairmen in the Spotlight," "News Pamphlet Goes State-Wide."

Packwood packaged himself as an energetic, dynamic, personable young man with great potential who was spearheading a grassroots movement. Out with the old and in with the new, his campaign said, and that was about all it said. But it was effective. To a stump speaker like Morse, who considered himself an educator, a defender of the constitution, a fighter for the underprivileged and a senator in the traditional and noblest sense of the word, the New Politics of Packwood's campaign would have been mystifying--if he'd even thought about it. But, as we've seen, he disregarded Packwood to the extent of not even being able to recognize him when he ran into him in public.

During the summer Packwood continued doing whatever it was he was doing--a lot of travel and speaking and pressing the

flesh, I suppose--and we continued whatever we were doing, which wasn't much. Morse was still ahead in the race, as far as we knew, but the events of the time weren't helping us: the King and Kennedy murders, civil unrest, the continuation of the war in Vietnam, the disastrous Democratic convention in Chicago, the erosion of Morse's support by organized labor...all of those were discouraging enough but then fate delivered our campaign a double blow that threw us off-balance and from which we never recovered.

Charlie Brooks's wife, Marge, was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. In mid-August, Brooks left the campaign for a while so that he and Marge could spend some time together in his home town of Sixes, in Curry County. In his absence, Brooks arranged for a man named Elwood Taub to come out from Washington DC to run the campaign. Taub, unfortunately, was incompetent at the job. I'd met him previously. He'd been affiliated with the campaign in some manner back east but I was never clear on what it was he was supposed to be doing. His background seemed to be in the labor movement and possibly Democratic politics. I can't imagine why Brooks, whose judgment was usually exemplary, thought Taub could manage the campaign. Taub was a bureaucrat, not a creative thinker, but he had no qualms about exercising his authority and with him in charge our campaign not only lost its morale but it lost whatever minimal effectiveness it previously had.

Meanwhile, Bill Berg, Morse's longtime administrative

assistant in Washington DC, had also fallen ill. Earlier in the year he'd come out to Portland, where in late March he'd undergone abdominal surgery. He never regained his vigor afterwards and by summer it was clear that Berg, too, was dying of cancer. Thus, at the very time when Morse should have been gearing up for the final stretch of the campaign, and when he was finally becoming aware that in Packwood he had a serious challenger, he simultaneously lost his chief aides in both his Oregon and Washington offices.

A word about Bill Berg is necessary. A former lawyer and law professor in his own right, he was an exceptionally able man who'd first worked with Morse as early as 1937. He'd been Morse's administrative assistant since 1952 and, in Mason Drukman's words, he was "probably the only person in Washington Morse ever trusted, and the only staff member who addressed him by his first name." It was painful to all of us to watch Berg failing, but for Morse it must have been especially difficult.

August and September were not good months for us. From Alaska came the unsettling news that voters had turned out Ernest Gruening, who alone with Morse had been the only U.S. senator to vote against the Gulf of Tonkin resolution. Packwood continued getting traction out of the issue of Morse refusing to debate him. And following the Democratic convention in Chicago, which left the party a shambles, a poll published in the Oregonian showed Nixon leading Humphrey in Oregon by

a big margin. The same poll showed Packwood and Morse running dead even. Given the circumstances, our campaign strategy should have been to stick with our game plan but the problem was that we didn't have a game plan. We'd thrown it out back at the conclusion of the primary election. Neither did we have a poll of our own we could rely on nor, for all practical purposes, did we have a campaign manager. My day book for those months reads like a bad soap opera:

- Aug. 9 -- Marge appears very ill
- Aug. 13 -- Charlie and Marge to Sixes
- Aug. 15 -- Berg relapse
- Aug. 20 -- Gruening defeated; Humphrey nominated
- Sept. 9 -- Berg very sick, irrational
- Sept. 10 -- Berg dying; sent for sons, mortician
- Sept. 20 -- Oregonian poll shows Packwood even with Morse
- Sept. 27 -- Marge sicker
- Sept. 28 -- Berg dies

Our campaign was rudderless. During Brooks's absence, Phil George and I tried to take matters into our own hands (Phil George was a fellow campaign staffer). We picked Morse up at the Portland airport one afternoon but instead of driving him home to Eugene, which we were supposed to do, we took him to a room we'd reserved in a Portland motel. Effectively, we kidnapped him. We'd compiled a list of action items that needed an executive decision to get the campaign back on track and, Brooks not being available, we brought it to Morse. We

didn't get anywhere. George and I were the senior campaign staff workers, except for Brooks and Taub, but we didn't have the clout to influence Morse. He was offended by our presumption, in fact. He cut the meeting short, almost as soon as it began, and insisted on being driven to Eugene immediately. I wish I'd kept a copy of the list. As I recall, there were a dozen or so items on it, I think probably chief among them that Elwood Taub either be fired or else sent back to Washington. Our kidnap meeting was a complete failure, and it was about that time I first began to understand we were actually capable of blundering our way into losing the election.

And then in late September Morse made the calamitous decision to give Packwood the debate he'd been clamoring for. A joint appearance, Morse called it, I suppose not wanting to elevate Packwood, but as far as the press and the public were concerned, it was a debate. The decision was Morse's alone. None of us wanted him to give Packwood the exposure. When he told me to issue a press release inviting Packwood to a joint appearance, I told him he couldn't do it and for the first and only time in our relationship he blew up at me. He let me know in no uncertain terms that he was calling the shots, not me, and he ordered me to do the press release. It's my belief that Morse wasn't himself when he made the decision. His rationale was as follows: that Humphrey was trying in vain to get a debate with Nixon; that since Morse had shared a platform with Humphrey in Portland (on Sept. 27),

he would be hypocritical to act the same way Humphrey was accusing Nixon of acting, and that therefore he owed Packwood a debate as a matter of principle and consistency.

In my opinion, all of that was just verbiage. Bill Berg died on Sept. 28 and it was either that night or the next morning that Morse decided to debate Packwood. His emotions had to be in turmoil at the time. He'd just lost Berg, he'd already lost the better part of Brooks's constancy and good judgment and he'd finally come to realize that his re-election was in jeopardy. It seems clear to me that in his beleaguered state of mind he retreated to the comfort zone of a familiar habit and decided to do for himself what we were apparently unable to do for him: he'd rescue the campaign with his own oratory.

One bad decision followed another. Packwood, who unlike Morse stood to benefit from the debate, would undoubtedly have agreed to almost any terms we put forward. Likewise, virtually any venue we approached would have been glad to host the debate because of the publicity it was sure to generate. Brooks argued in favor of holding the debate at the University of Oregon but Morse vetoed the idea. He said a University of Oregon audience would be noisily on his side and Packwood would gain a sympathy backlash. Instead Morse decided on debating at the Portland City Club, which he claimed would provide a neutral audience.

On the stump, meanwhile, Morse was showing the strain of

a bad summer. His speeches had always gone long but he'd always kept them sharp and on target. Not now, however. At noon on Oct. 14 he spoke to a group at Newberg and a note in my day book says, "Bad, rambling, defensive speech." It also says, "Capt. Queeg." I remember the occasion well. Morse spoke beyond his scheduled time but he tiresomely went on and on in what seemed to be a desperate attempt to sell himself to the audience. The crowd began leaving, at first in ones and twos and then in larger numbers, until finally he was haranguing only a remaining handful. And still he went on. It was painful to watch. Mrs. Morse, who was sitting next to me in the audience, leaned over and whispered, "Can't you get him off the stage somehow?" I told her there was no point to it by then; the damage had already been done, there was no press in attendance and, I said, maybe this will help him get it all out of his system. On the drive back to Portland that day Morse grumbled, "I might as well go back to Washington. I'm not doing a goddamn bit of good campaigning out here."

Would that he'd followed his own advice. The City Club debate was scheduled for Oct. 25, a mere week and a half before election day, and by that time our campaign had disintegrated into chaos. We'd taken to bringing in visiting dignitaries for support, which was a sure sign of trouble. Sens. Byrd and Yarborough swung through town before the debate, Sens. Mansfield, Muskie and McCarthy after it. By mid-October our campaign headquarters looked like a hippie commune. Through some surreal

machinations I wasn't privy to--I think this was an Elwood Taub production--we'd apparently imported some "professional" campaign workers to run a door-to-door canvass. One of them was a man named Don Rothenberg, who had to work sub rosa because, as I got the story, he was or had been a known communist. It was his bizarre idea to hire a caravan of buses in the Bay Area, load them with college students and bring them up I-5 flaunting banners that said, "Berkeley Students for Morse." Even Morse saw the folly in that. "Mercenaries," he sneered. "Packwood ought to pay for their transportation."

So that idea was quashed. But still, a horde of young people somehow ended up infesting our campaign headquarters and certainly some of them were from out of town because they were sleeping there (and also, I found out, buying all kinds of personal items which they charged to the campaign). A young woman named Wendy, who was brought in from somewhere back east, was supposed to be coordinating their dubious activities but not to any helpful effect that I could discern. By then, however, I was pretty much staying away from the headquarters. The scene there was reminiscent of what I'd heard about the previous winter when the youth movement got "clean for Gene" and earned their merit badges tramping through the snows of New Hampshire. This was Oregon, though, not New England, and we weren't trying to elect a president. We were trying to re-elect a well-known senator who was going to stand or fall based on his own image. The kids' hearts might have been in

the right place but their disorganized, feel-good children's crusade only added to the entropy of our campaign.

And then there was the debate. Highly promoted ahead of time, it was held before a crowd of about a thousand people, with live television coverage. Morse did nothing to prepare for it. Literally nothing. We didn't have a single staff meeting with him. He was a skilled public speaker accustomed to thinking on his feet, however, and considering that he walked into the debate cold and ad-libbed his way through it, he did a good job. But not as good a job as Packwood, who did prepare. Packwood had rehearsed and memorized two-minute answers to various questions which he made sure would be asked by planting them in the audience. His supporters had been given blue and pink cards with the questions written on them, one color if it was Packwood's turn to be asked a question, the other if it was Morse's. Morse walked into a set-up, in other words, and the hullabalooed joint appearance turned out to be essentially a showcase for Packwood. The consensus was that Packwood won the debate but he would have won it even if he hadn't stacked the deck. Since the public expectation was that Morse, the veteran orator, the fabled Tiger of the Senate, would crush his inexperienced and callow young challenger, all Packwood had to do was show up and demonstrate that he could speak in complete sentences and he would have won. That was straight out of Poli Sci 101: when you're well known and your challenger isn't, don't give him a platform.

The debate hurt us seriously. Packwood filmed it, and from then until the election he used excerpts in his television commercials, Morse looking old and tired and sounding garrulous. Worse yet, Morse made a big point of talking about an issue he never should have touched, namely his claim that "for every dollar Oregon pays in federal taxes, we receive \$1.50 in return." Packwood had challenged him on the statement earlier--not on the grounds that it wasn't true, but on the grounds that all the other western states did better than Oregon--and Morse couldn't stand the criticism. He'd been defending himself on the subject before the debate, the subject came up during the debate (in a planted question), and he continued defending himself on the subject after the debate. Thus in the final days of the campaign when the last of the undecideds were making up their minds, Morse, who'd invested twenty-four years in establishing his reputation as a champion of the little guy, perversely insisted on offering himself up as a champion of the pork barrel. And not even a very good one. He couldn't have sabotaged himself more if he'd tried.

I thought that even after the damage the debate did, Morse was still marginally ahead of Packwood. I had no data to support that opinion. It was just a seat-of-the-pants feeling. But Morse had begun the campaign with such a surplus of votes that I didn't think we'd squandered them all yet. Not quite. But then he found another nail to put in his coffin, and in my opinion that was the one that sealed his

fate. In the closing days of the campaign some supporters with access to money--Gerry Pratt and Glenn Jackson were the two names I heard mentioned--came up with the funds to film and broadcast a special thirty-minute television commercial. The commercial was unscripted and it was all Morse--no interviewer, no voice-over, no cut-aways; it was strictly Morse pitching himself to the viewer, one on one. We filmed it at his home in Eugene and it turned out to be just awful. In it Morse came across as old, tired, defensive, desperate and boring, almost as self-damaging as he'd been at his Captain Queeg speech at Newberg. Nobody watching that commercial could possibly have been swayed to vote for the man lecturing them from their television screen. The first time I saw the commercial broadcast I argued for taking it off the air on the grounds that it was driving votes away, but I didn't prevail. It kept running and doing its damage until by election day it didn't really matter anymore. Our campaign, which for months had been collapsing like a balloon with a slow leak, had finally run out of air.

Afterthoughts

In 1968, Wayne Morse won a primary election he couldn't possibly have won and he lost a general election he couldn't possibly have lost. Conventional wisdom and received lore has it that he was defeated for re-election because of his stand on Vietnam, with the City Club debate being a decisive

event, and also because of his age, his personality, his erosion of support by organized labor and his non-endorsement of Duncan against Hatfield in 1966. In my opinion, all of those handicaps were surmountable (except for Vietnam, which I never considered a handicap). As Tip O'Neill famously said, "All politics is local." Morse lost to Packwood for specific reasons, not sweeping generalizations, and in this paper I have tried to explain, as I personally saw and understood them, the events that caused our general election campaign to take a wayward course.

A case can be made that the Morse-Packwood contest was a watershed election in Oregon history. It marked most visibly, perhaps, the transition from the politics of the old to the politics of the new. Henceforth television, and the developing technologies of videotape and the computer, would play nothing less than a major role in any serious political campaign. If there was a hero in 1968, it was Packwood. He got lucky, to be sure, but he put himself in a position to benefit from the luck. And he knew how to take advantage of it. Morse, on the other hand, after getting a baptism in the new politics during his primary election campaign, ignored them to his detriment in the general election.

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