

# Short Circuit

*The Overselling of Television in Politics*

By

Larry S. Gibson



1996

## PROLOGUE

Right now, any candidate with enough money believes he or she should spend as much of it as possible on the electronic media. Television and, to a lesser extent radio, are thought to be the most effective ways to campaign in virtually any race - any time.

I respectfully dissent. I have no ideological predisposition against radio and television. I believe they have a place. I have used them in many campaigns. I just think that place is overstated and oversold by most political consultants and commentators.

My dissent is not based on some notion of ideological purity. On the contrary, it is purely pragmatic. I do not think that campaigns primarily focused on paid media are usually the most effective way to persuade voters.

Furthermore,, I believe this pre-occupation with television and radio ads comes at a price. It is quite often counter-productive. Poll after poll shows people feeling more and more alienated from politics and political figures. There is no sense of affinity or identity.

Much of that alienation can be attributed to a style of politics which relies on paid political commercials on television and radio. It leaves a candidate no alternative but to chase after big money, and it ignores or dismisses voters' intelligence in favor of vacuous thirty second sound bites. It is a formula which can be defended *only if there is no other way*.

Which brings me to the second part of the conventional wisdom I hope to shake by the end of this story. Professor. Robert Putnam in his essay *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital* and others despair over the declining civic involvement in America. People do not join; they do not participate.

I do not dispute Putnam's observation. I just do not think widespread apathy is *inevitable*. Of course, if everyone follows the conventional wisdom that people are so alienated that they will not participate even if given the chance to do so, then it certainly *looks* inevitable.

However, it is not. Feeding an alienated, uninvolved America thirty second doses of electronic media is not the only way, or the most effective way, to nourish the American political campaign.

There is another way. That is the story of this book.

Over the past twenty-eight years, I have run over a dozen campaigns in Baltimore and Maryland. I have always relied heavily on volunteers, on direct voter contact and on messages with real substance. At first I had no choice. In 1968, when I ran the campaign of the first African-American to win a City-wide election in Baltimore City, there was not enough money to do it any other way. We needed volunteers who could go door-to-door or leaflet, and we had to convince voters that it was important to focus on a

judicial race for the first time.

In later years, as the campaigns grew bigger and more important, there was more money and more visibility. We had enough money for lots of television and radio at times. I certainly had enough highly-paid consultants urging me to pour every dime into another 30 second spot.

Most of the time, I did not follow that advice. Sometimes I used television and radio. They have a significant place in some campaigns. But I have always continued to rely on the volunteers, direct voter contact and substantive message. I did not abandon my first way of doing things.

On the contrary, I refined and improved many of those original techniques. Starting from leaflets, I graduated to booklets, campaign newspapers, books, info-videos and even baseball cards with substantive messages.

I have consistently believed that people who vote are willing to listen, to read and to learn.

In the end, I think this campaign style, with its continued belief in voter intelligence and people as a key way to communicate with, and organize, other voters, will increasingly influence elections all over America.

Even if television and radio were all-powerful over the past twenty years, I believe that traditional electronic media are going to be less effective means of communication in the expanding computer age. The diversity of sources of information - as well as the decreasing number of people who watch network television - are already compelling candidates to find other ways to communicate with voters.

Using people and written material to communicate substantive messages and get out voters has always been effective. It is just a fact which has been obscured by our fascination with "the box."

Most importantly, more people-oriented campaigns make for a better body politic. People who work in campaigns are empowered rather than alienated. They are believers in the ideas they espouse and the people they elect. Moreover, if they do not get what they want out of a particular election, they know one thing that the "couch potato" does not: how to elect someone "the next time" who will better represent their interests.

One bonus is that the quality of the candidates is better. The candidates who can motivate volunteers and deal with substance - and are willing to make the effort to do so - seem to have become good officeholders for the most part. While it would be difficult to demonstrate this proposition by any mathematical correlation, my experience firmly shows that people with an information-based campaign turn out better prepared, and generally better-attuned, officeholders.

I know that there are others in America who already share my views. One of the best kept secrets

of American politics is that my way - our way - has been working year after year in hundreds of races across the country.

The old way of politics is the best way, even in our electronic age. It is not so much that election campaigns based on the electronic media *should be out*. It is that people and substantive talk are, *and should be, in*.

Read the next chapters with this theory in mind. I know that, at a minimum, you will come to share the pride of the people in Baltimore and elsewhere in Maryland who took the Founding Fathers message of a citizen democracy to heart.

Their increasing success and growing political power is the story of the maturation of African-American political involvement first in one city, Baltimore, and then elsewhere in Maryland. That story - even without a larger message - would be worth telling as an example of the American Dream coming true for people long denied their share of the pie.

I tell this history to honor them, and to share with you the genuine fun and satisfaction I personally have had along the way.

And I tell you this story because my civics teacher may have been right after all: the most effective way to get elected is to have people talk to other people.

*Chap. 1:*

*Things Go Better with Coca Cola*

August 16, 1968 was 134 days after the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., was gunned down in Memphis and 71 days after Robert Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles. It was the week before the riotous Democratic Convention in Mayor Richard Daley's Chicago. It was the long hot summer after an incendiary spring of riots in Baltimore, where I lived, and many American cities.

It was also the day my friend Randy Carroll sat at a typewriter and wrote letters to several large, establishment corporations. The letter sought their help for a fledgling group of political activists who were supporting a neophyte candidate, an African American named Joseph C. Howard who had set out to do the hitherto unthinkable - run a successful City-wide campaign in Baltimore.

It was a time of raw, exposed nerves and inflammatory, unforgiving rhetoric. At least that was the way it was for most people in the summer of 1968. Not for Randy. While some others might be calling for filling their soda bottles with gasoline, all Randy wanted was Coca Cola:

*Our organization, YOUNGMENFORMITCHELL, HOWARD and WILLIAMS is seeking a donation from your company in support of our campaign.... We endeavor to show the Negro community that much can be gained through the exercise of a United political block. We offer, hence, a means of combating the riot with the ballot.*

*WON'T YOU HELP US?*

*This is the first time in Baltimore that a concerted effort has been made by the young Negroes of the community to register voters, get them into the polls, and give them a real sense of political power which rests in their hands.*

*In short, we are asking contributions from Coca Cola of products for our headquarters and at our affairs....*

That letter captured Joe Howard's campaign: straight-forward, pragmatic, detailed and committed to using "The System."

And using it better....

Similar letters were sent to a dozen other companies in Baltimore. I do not recall that any of them responded favorably. But our goal, our purpose - and our style - were set.

## *The Radical Vision of Tradition*

Randy Carroll, David Allen, Dan Henson, Roberta Gill and I, along with the other young college graduates who would wind up in the Howard campaign, had been raised on the rising expectations of the 1960s. We had been told that it was now time for "Negroes" to become part of the American political landscape, and we took America at its word.

We could have chosen other paths. There certainly were other routes offered.

My classmate from Howard University, Stokely Carmichael, now Kwame Toure, and other leaders advocated black nationalism and varying degrees of separatism from the rest of America. After the brutal ups and downs of the 1960s, and especially with Dr. King's assassination, many African Americans thought Stokely was right.

But for some reason none of our little Baltimore group saw much future in his vision. Separatism and nationalism were dead end streets. No one was going to subdivide America, and, although I would later travel extensively in Africa, I had no interest in moving there to live.

The idea of America could work. Equality made sense. But that meant equality in fact, not in theory.

Voting was good because everybody could do it. Supreme Court Justice Earl Warren was correct when he said that the most important decision the Court rendered in his tenure was *Baker v. Carr*, the "one man, one vote" decision. Voting alone, however, does not make for equality. Real equality requires participating in every aspect of the political process - effectively. Certainly, as effectively as anyone else, and more effectively if possible.

My friends and I were going to out-think, out-organize and out-campaign everyone else in Baltimore. Our objective was to create in the African American community more political power than it had ever had before. Public policy was going to respond for the first time to black people's needs and demands.

We were never secretive about our goal. At the beginning of the Howard campaign in 1968, the *Baltimore Afro-American* profiled the Young Crusaders:

The [Young Crusaders] promises to blanket the city with an intensive door-to-door campaign, according to Larry Gibson, the young lawyer who is acting as coordinator for the effort.

"We are going to form a vehicle through which the political power of the black community can be expressed and realized," Gibson said.

...

Mr. Gibson said the members of the Young Crusaders are primarily young people who have not generally been involved in political activity - "people who think of themselves as independents rather than as Republicans or Democrats."

"It's almost a coalition of the uncommitted - a lot of people who are with us ordinarily consider politics to be the white man's game, played in smoked [sic] filled backrooms. For them, this is a test of the system," he said.

Joe Howard won and I have been running campaigns in Baltimore and elsewhere ever since. It has never been my full-time profession or avocation. I have taught law, practiced as an attorney, traveled a great deal and served in the Justice Department during the Carter Administration.

But I keep coming back to politics. In 1970 in Baltimore, we elected a State's Attorney (Chief Prosecutor), a court clerk, another judge and Congressman Parren Mitchell. In 1971, we tried to repeat our city-wide success and failed. In 1972, Congressman Mitchell faced a serious primary challenge which we beat back. In the General Election, we devised a unique election day game plan which gave George McGovern one of his few urban victories. In 1974, we took for granted the re-election of the State's Attorney whom we had so proudly elected four years before - and we lost - despite a massive write-in effort in the general election which was the largest in Maryland's history. We bounced back with a smashing victory for Jimmy Carter in Maryland in 1976. In 1982, 1987, 1991 and 1995, there were successful campaigns for Kurt Schmoke, first as State's Attorney and then as Mayor. Along the way, there have been several winning - and a couple of losing - Gubernatorial campaigns, more Presidential elections and a campaign that elected the County Executive for Prince George's County, a Washington, D.C. suburb.

I have learned a great deal from all those elections. With every new race there was a new office or candidate or issue. *But the basic principles that served us well when I started still work well now.*

### ***"Charm City" in Transition***

Now, back to Baltimore in 1968 to set the scene for that letter of Randy Carroll's....

Baltimore in the late 1960s was going through several complicated transitions all at once.

Baltimore was called "Charm City." That is a term that requires some interpretation.

Baltimore used to be a manufacturing city. The harbor did not have the world-class tourist attractions it has today. Around the port were steel mills, drydocks, factories and rail yards. The

neighborhoods away from the water were filled with block after block of identical two and three story rowhouses, often with their signature marble front stoops. In those houses were the white ethnic and black workers who had flocked to the City between the late 1800s and the mid-20th Century, attracted by the prospect of good jobs in one of the booming industries.

Until the development of the Inner Harbor in the early 1980s, few really appreciated how physically attractive Baltimore could be.

What made Baltimore "Charm City" were its traditions. To this day, fruit and vegetable peddlers, called "arabbers," steer their horse-drawn carts through parts of the City selling their wares. The City itself still employs "hokeymen," who clean the streets and sidewalks with brooms and drag the collected debris in hand-drawn dust carts. The citizens still bargain loudly with the butchers, fishmongers, fresh fruit and vegetable vendors and bakers behind the hundreds of stalls in the public markets downtown and in older neighborhoods. Unlike other cities where farmers markets have recently been re-discovered, Baltimore never forgot. Lexington Market, located downtown, is the oldest continuously operating public food market in the United States.

People also are acutely aware of where in the City they live. There are over 100 names applied to different areas of the City. Baltimoreans are highly territorial. Blocks are recognized as part of this neighborhood or that one, and a Baltimorean does not think you have done something for "their" neighborhood if the good work is two blocks over the line.

The attitude about neighborhood is the same in both black and white communities and in both poor and middle- and upper-income areas. Although this neighborhood awareness started in the last century among the residents of the rowhouses in the old part of the City below North Avenue (which used to be the northern City boundary), this community spirit has carried over to the communities of suburban-like single family homes built in the northern third of the City in the mid-20th Century.

When it comes to politics, Baltimore can be just as distinctive.

Baltimore was the most "Northern" of southern cities, or the most "Southern" of the old northern, industrial metropolises which had grown up in the 19th Century. It was the only one south of the Mason-Dixon Line, and the only one which had been segregated - right through the early 1960s.<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, African Americans have voted in Baltimore since the 19th Century. There have long been a few black officeholders as well. The Fourth Councilmanic District on the near westside of the

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<sup>1</sup>The pattern of segregation was a curious crazyquilt. Although schools, restaurants and housing were clearly segregated, other facilities were not. Busses were not segregated. African Americans could attend games at Memorial Stadium. They could shop at downtown department stores, but t could not try things on (if they did, the clothes had been "bought.")



City had been a majority black district for several decades, and African Americans had been elected to the City Council and state legislature regularly since the 1950s.

By 1968, the African American community in Baltimore was old and established. Unlike many northern cities, which did not have substantial black populations until the migrations of the 1930s and 1940s, Baltimore historically had been home to a large African American community, who had come from the neighboring farms and plantations of slave-holding Maryland. In 1900, Baltimore had 79,258 African Americans out of a total population of 508,476. By 1960, the number had grown to 328,512 out of a total population of 939,024.

It was indeed a community. The City's churches tied people together, but there was far more going on. Morgan State College (now Morgan State University) and Coppin State Teachers College, both located in Baltimore, and nearby Howard University in Washington had created a core of well-educated teachers, managers and professionals.

The community was close-knit. White and black Baltimoreans - it is a biracial tradition - sit on their marble stoops or front porches watching what is happening in the street and talking with people passing by. Not much got by unnoticed in old Baltimore neighborhoods.

Baltimore's current Mayor, Kurt Schmoke, had the City adopt the slogan, "The City that reads," but it was more than late 20th Century hype. White Baltimore had *The Baltimore Sun*, a powerful newspaper run by the civic-minded Abell family that for decades was home to one of America's great journalists, H.L. Mencken.

Black Baltimore had an equally powerful focus. Two old black Baltimore families, the Murphys and the Olivers, built *The Afro-American* into a major newspaper, with a circulation of approximately 40,000 during the 1960s. If you were black but did not take the paper, you still wound up reading it. It was the staple of every barbershop and hairdressing salon in Black Baltimore. *The Afro* claimed that each copy was read by an average of four people.

Even though most of the African American community was working class, there was a black business community. White banks in segregated Baltimore were not inclined to make loans to black businesspeople, but the community developed its own lending institutions. A few were formally-organized thrift institutions, but some were more nonconventional, like those who had earned real money as bookmakers or in the numbers rackets and then turned their success around to help start dozens of legitimate businesses.

CENTER THE BOOK, FOLD UP BOTH SIDES—FOLD AGAIN TO FORM POCKETS.

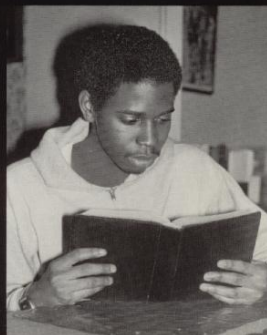
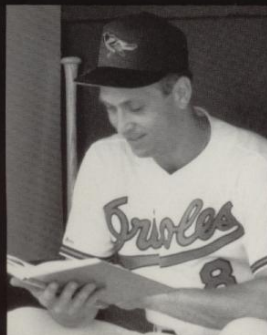


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OPEN BOOK AND TUCK ENDS INTO COVER POCKETS.



# Baltimore

THE CITY THAT READS



The City that Reads – textbook wrapper

## *The 60s Generation in Baltimore's African American Community*

All of these small signs of progress were a foundation for the events of the 1960s. When the civil rights movement started to create opportunities in education and the workplace, African Americans in Baltimore were ready for their chance.

I went to Baltimore City College, which was one of the City's elite public high schools. I did a lot of running at City College. Some of it was on the track and cross-country teams, but a different kind of running had a more lasting experience. I was the first "Colored," "Negro" or "Black" person (depending on who was reporting things) to be elected an officer of a graduating class.

I was not alone. During the 1960s, dozens of smart black students made it through the City's schools and went off to college, including Ivy League schools that had previously seemed beyond reach. David Allen and Randy Carroll, both of whom figure prominently in the early campaigns, were with me at Howard University.

All three of us had gone on to law school after college. David went to the University of Maryland and Randy went to the University of Baltimore, after a stint as an engineer. I went to Columbia. When I was sworn in as members of the Bar back in Baltimore in 1967, there were only two other blacks admitted, and the entire Monumental Bar Association, the black lawyers association in town, amounted to no more than fifty people.

Our success was important for how we - and dozens of other young African Americans - thought about politics. We all felt as if we had taken on the world, learned its rules and won at its game. We were empowered. It was one of foundations of the 1968 campaign.

At one level, integration had come more easily to Baltimore than to other cities which had been officially segregated. By the 1960s, Baltimore was controlled by Democrats who were backed by the large unions that had organized the City's steel, shipbuilding and construction industries. In addition, the political organizations drew heavily from the large Irish, Italian, Jewish and Greek communities, which gave it a far different cast from cities further south. When it came to ending formal segregation, the barriers went down without much overt resistance.

But the feelings lingered. The ethnic communities in the City did not welcome the civil rights movement. It threatened them.

Some of the signs were clear. Alabama Governor George Wallace had run in the Maryland Democratic Presidential primary in 1964. His states' rights and anti-civil rights message was loud and bitter. He did well in the white ethnic northeast and southeast sections of the City, sending a loud and disturbing signal to the African American community that its white neighbors strongly opposed its progress.

In 1966, George Mahoney, the Democratic nominee for Governor, ran a super-heated campaign opposing the then-recent spate of civil rights legislation, particularly anti-discrimination fair housing laws. His slogan, "A man's home is his castle," said it all. He also ran well in northeast and southeast Baltimore, just as Wallace had done two years before.

Mahoney's opponent was the Republican Baltimore County Executive, Spiro T. Agnew. While Agnew looked like a better alternative to the African American community than Mahoney, his performance in office quickly changed people's minds. Following the riots after Rev. King's death during April, 1968, Agnew had angrily called the black leaders of the City into his office. He expressed no sympathy for their concerns and instead denounced the African American community harshly in a televised harangue. Rather than heal divisions, his attitude made the racial tension only worse.

By the time of the Howard campaign, Agnew had become anathema to most of the black community. After his nomination as Nixon's running mate during the summer, his rhetoric was anti-civil rights and hostile. The Baltimore African American community wished for Nixon's defeat, but inheriting back Spiro Agnew was going to be the "bad news" side of the defeat's "good news."

While not always as obvious, the administration of justice in Baltimore in the mid-1960s was a source of racial tension. Of course, the problem was not new. When it came to the police, Baltimore had never been particularly liberal or far-sighted.

In late 1964 and early 1965, the police conducted a massive search for the Veney brothers, who had robbed a liquor store and killed a policeman. Over the course of the next several months, officers engaged in warrantless searches of literally hundred of homes in black neighborhoods. When a lawsuit sought to enjoin the "Veney raids," the police promised to conduct only searches based on warrants. Then, they lied to obtain the warrants, repeatedly asserting that the Veney's were in town, when, it later turned out, they were hundreds of miles away. The community was angry, but there was no redress beyond an injunction issued by a federal appellate court in 1966.

In 1966, the Ku Klux Klan held a rally in Patterson Park in southeast Baltimore. After the rally, several Klansmen assaulted blacks in the neighborhood. The ringleader received a light sentence. The African American community saw obvious discrimination between that case and the treatment of civil rights demonstrators.

In the spring of 1968, the memories of the Patterson Park incident were stirred in the aftermath of the Martin Luther King riots. The Baltimore police treated black rioters harshly, and the authorities prosecuted them severely. It was bad enough to prompt Mayor Thomas D'Alesandro, III to create a commission to investigate how the authorities had responded. However, nothing happened. The community knew it was not being taken seriously.

Then there was the matter of the "indicted corners" of Baltimore. In response to complaints that certain corners were gathering places for "lawless" blacks, a local judge, Howard Blum, took it upon himself to authorize police sweeps on corners he chose without worrying about the normal constitutional niceties. Blum would simply announce that anyone was found standing on a given "indicted corner" could be arrested without further justification - such as the commission of a crime. While the tactic would create outrage in the 1990s, at the time the victimized African American community was simply resigned.

Juries reflected the same racial bias. Few jurors in the Baltimore City pool came from the part of the City below North Avenue, where most of the black community lived. That discrimination carried forward into the grand jury as well as trial juries, leaving African Americans convinced that blacks were clearly treated differently by the system than whites.

Judicial appointments were another sore point. Successive governors had not appointed many black judges, and there was only one in Baltimore in 1968, Harry Cole, a local elected official who had been appointed to the Supreme Bench in January of that year.

As the summer of 1968 approached, only three of the 37 sitting judges in the various Baltimore City courts were African American,<sup>2</sup> even though almost half of the City's population was black. When three vacancies occurred during the summer, Agnew could have tried to smooth over the brewing controversy by appointing a black judge.

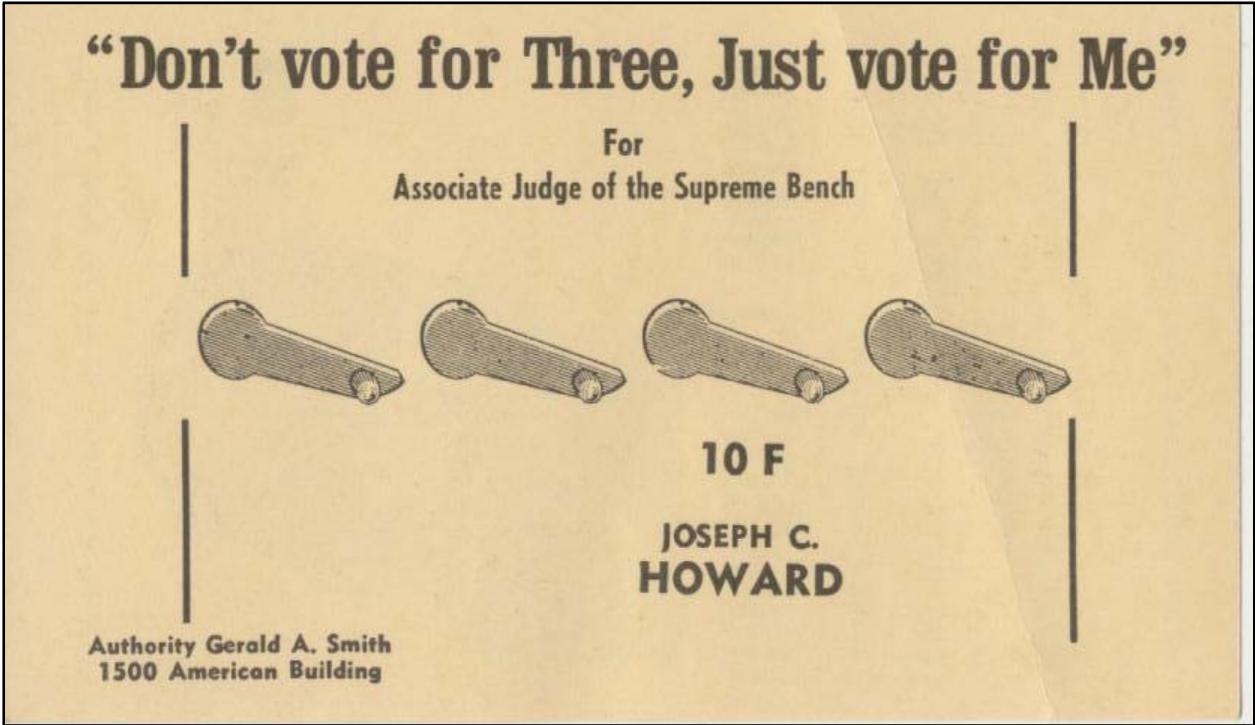
Spiro Agnew, however, never seemed to want to smooth anything over, at least when it came to race relations. He could have appointed an African American, or, in one case, he could have left the seat open, allowing it to be filled in the upcoming election. He did not do either; he appointed three white males. The message to the black community was clear - again.

### *Joe Howard - An Inevitable Choice*

Into this stewing pot stepped an extraordinary man, Joseph C. Howard. He had grown up in Iowa, the son of a lawyer who had practiced in Des Moines for 35 years. Joe earned his law degree at the University of Washington and had come to Baltimore, where he had started off as a probation officer. After a few years in private practice, he had joined the State's Attorney's Office, which is the title of the chief criminal prosecutor in Maryland's jurisdictions. By 1966 he had worked his way up to Chief of the Trial Section, a first for an African American in Baltimore.

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<sup>2</sup>Baltimore City is a separate political jurisdiction from Baltimore County. As a consequence, it has its own court system, with judges drawn exclusively from inside the City's boundaries.



Joseph Howard sample ballot, 1968

While at the State's Attorney's Office, he had decided to go head-to-head with the powers in Baltimore. It was about racial discrimination. As the Chief of the Trial Section, Howard could see what most blacks in Baltimore suspected intuitively: black criminal defendants were treated more harshly than whites.

In 1966, Howard wrote a report entitled "Administration of Rape Cases in the City of Baltimore and the State of Maryland." His review of sentences handed out to black defendants revealed a startling disparity. Those found guilty of assaulting other blacks received sentences averaging two years in length. A black guilty of raping a white, however, received on average a sentence of 16 years. Death penalty verdicts were more disproportionate, as were sentences of life imprisonment. Black rape victims were re-victimized by their treatment by the police and courts, and the light sentences imposed upon their assailants..

The judges on the Baltimore City bench responded negatively. Rather than listen to the message, they decided to shoot the messenger. They refused to swear in Howard as Chief of the Trial Section, and in effect suspended him from his position before them.<sup>3</sup>

Today, Howard's study would hardly seem like the opening shot in a major war. However, in 1968 in Baltimore, it was incendiary. One of the City's white daily newspapers, the now defunct Hearst-owned *News American*, included an anti-white poem in a story about the report. Various political leaders took to calling Howard "anti-white." We might now think that it is absurd to believe one of the chief prosecutors in the City was attempting to incite something with such a technical - and factual - analysis, but perspectives and fears were different then.

Howard did not yield or recant. Eventually, the Bar Association and the State's Attorney's Office reviewed his findings and agreed in his conclusions. The Grievance Committee dismissed the complaints against him, but by then he had left the State Attorney's Office to become a part-time Assistant City Solicitor.

Joe Howard had confronted the Man. He was smart, courageous and a warrior. He had taken on the system and won. He was a "bad brother."

Most importantly, he was a winner rather than a whiner. He had vaulted to a place of prominence in the community not because he was a victim, or even because he was a voice of the victimized. Although both of those things were true.

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<sup>3</sup>It turned out that judges had no authority to terminate a prosecutor's employment, and there was no requirement that a judge administer the oath of office. However, that legal issue was not resolved until the late 1970. Now, state's attorneys are sworn in by the Clerk of the Court.

He had become a symbol because he was a man of action, a doer. He had delivered, first with his rise to prominence in the State's Attorney's Office, then with his study and finally with his victory over a racist, backward Bench.

Howard stood in contrast to many other so-called leaders at the time (and since then, too). He did not spin out grandiose schemes for public consumption. He did not promise more than he could deliver.

On the contrary, he did not talk much at all. He had simply gone about his business and done it better than anyone else. He had not decried discrimination without proof. He had done his homework, proving the discrimination with a careful study that its opponents could not shake. Then he stood up for his work and himself. To us young professionals, he was a leader worth supporting.

Although stolid, Joe Howard was "charismatic." By 1968, the country was growing tired of rhetoric, even though we were treated to some of the most memorable speeches of the century in that decade. The question that had begun to nag people in Baltimore (and elsewhere) was whether the lofty visions of the Civil Rights Movement, the War on Poverty or the Anti-Vietnam War Marches would ever be translated into something concrete, something better. Joe Howard's study was small in comparison with the great issues of the day, but it was concrete and it was a specific place to begin to improve.

He was a hero.

It now seems almost inevitable Joe Howard would decide to run for the Supreme Bench in Baltimore City. It was also inevitable that he would draw the enthusiastic support of many of us young African Americans who believed that we had the ability to make a difference.

### *The Thoughtful Care and Feeding of a Most Valuable Resource - People*

In the summer of 1968, I was finishing up a clerkship with Judge Frank Kaufman of the United States District Court for the District of Maryland. Working for Joe Howard was an easy decision. The Democrats were on the road to losing the Presidency, and with it, the country was going to lose whatever momentum was behind the civil rights and anti-poverty movements. Nonetheless, I wanted to help achieve something, make some progress. Joe Howard's campaign was the nearest and best thing at hand.

I was not alone. Howard became the rallying point, the "in" thing, for many young professionals and college graduates that summer.

The campaign attracted people who had not previously been involved in politics. That fact alone made the Howard organization revolutionary.



The African American community in Baltimore had three organizational bases which traditionally had been the source of volunteers, political or otherwise. We were about to be the fourth.

Black churches in Baltimore had always been a bedrock in the community, but their impact on politics was mixed. Too many pastors sent out a message which, perhaps unintentionally, depressed political involvement. They preached that all white politicians were "tweedledum" and "tweedledee," and that black politicians could not make a real difference. It was hard for us to go recruit in that atmosphere, where parishioners were regularly being fed a diet of defeatism.

The civil rights movement had preached activism, but activism from outside government. It was also hierarchical. When we "young Turks" returned to Baltimore from college or law school, we wanted to do our own thing. The civil rights organizations already had their leaders. There was no place for us at the table.

Norris Ramsey, who has since gone on to a distinguished career as a civil rights lawyer, summarized what was wrong with civil rights organizations for us Young Crusaders:

I did not really know much about Joe Howard, but he was the only thing in town. There was nothing else to join. CORE (the Congress on Racial Equality) and SNCC (the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee) were not active enough, and I was not going to join the Panthers.

The third traditional source of political energy in the black community were the black Democratic political organizations around the City, usually headed by an elected City Councilperson or state legislator. However, the closer one looked at those clubs, the more one realized their approach to specific elections was as likely to disenfranchise blacks as empower them.

The key to old style machine politics was to win. You did not need thousands of votes, just enough to beat the opponent. You did that most easily by focusing attention on the regular, consistent voters rather than on trying to get new or infrequent voters to the polls.

In some ways, these three traditional bases had a perverse synergism. The politicians were not interested in increasing the vote; some preachers were confirming that participation made little difference; and civil rights leaders looked at the lack of progress and were convinced that the system was corrupt.

Parren Mitchell, who had been the Director of Baltimore's Community Action Agency, an anti-poverty group, was running for Congress in 1968 in the Seventh Congressional District, which covered the

western part of the City (and some of Baltimore County as well). He was part of a ticket with Howard and Archie Williams, who was running for the Baltimore City People's Court.<sup>4</sup>

Mitchell and his campaign manager, Clarence Blount, were older. They drew far more heavily on the civil rights groups, churches and politicians. His core group of about nine ministers and civil rights leaders referred to themselves unapologetically as the "goon squad." His campaign looked and felt more traditional. Fewer of the type of young graduates and professionals we were drawing to our eastside campaign office wound up working for him over on the westside of town.

Three characteristics united our group.

First, the volunteers were optimists who thought they could do something. Joyce Ann White, a young woman who was interviewed by the *Afro-American*, told the paper:

'I'd just like to see one of us in the chair' ... .

'I've never met Howard or Williams, though I've heard of them - and Parren Mitchell of course. But when the girls asked me to help, I guess I just saw it as an opportunity to do something.'

'An opportunity to do something' is what hundreds of people like the young mother of three have been discovering over the past several weeks.

Roberta Gill, now a well-known Baltimore lawyer, caught the activist spirit: "We wanted to do something to change things. We wanted a doable goal.... It was visible [if we could] get an even break in the courts. It was time restricted. Between April and November we knew that was when we would do it."

The second draw was that it was something new, something at the cutting edge. A "together brother" was running City-wide and doing so on his own terms. It was the first time many of the Young Crusaders were on their own and able to do something.

The final draw was that we went out of our way to make the campaign a social thing. We had parties almost every week between July and the September primary. Although fun, the parties were not frivolous. The presence of good looking guys and pretty women at social events centered around the campaign attracted other people to it.

Roberta Gill remembers the parties with real enthusiasm:

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<sup>4</sup> A civil court of limited jurisdiction, which handled landlord and tenant disputes and small claims.

The best part was the parties at Frank Hunt's. They were the best. That was incentive enough. It would boost your morale. After dealing with rude people or being out in hot sun, it was good to seriously party. It gave you incentive to go out and continue.

The word on the street was that the campaign was both useful and fun. We appealed to people both as a cause and as a social opportunity.

Did those people stick with the Young Crusaders? Not all, but take the case of James Cranston. By consensus of those of us who have gathered to put together this book, Cranston was the least likely person we ever recruited to the campaign. He was the most cynical person we had. Everything we were doing was going to fail, according to James. He often provoked me to say, "Cranston, just leave us alone."

But he was there through the 1968 race and for several campaigns in later years. He showed up for the parties, but we could always squeeze some work from him. He kept coming back - presumably for the social scene. In fact, he met his wife during the campaign..

We put out a newsletter for our volunteers and supporters called "News from the Happy Farm." I do not remember how we came up with the name, and with the perspective of years, I think I am probably better off having amnesia about the origin of that title. I am probably also better off not sharing with you some of the exhortations to the women volunteers to cook for the events or look nice.

Even if the language would not pass muster today, we did in fact have a new and different attitude about women's roles. It was the egalitarian '60s. People wound up doing what they wanted to do and what they believed they were capable of doing. Although virtually none of the women who became heavily involved in the campaign other than Roberta Gill<sup>5</sup> had any prior political experience, many of them became precinct captains and ran events. They were treated with respect; they responded with enthusiasm.

Irving Phillips, who worked with us as a volunteer in 1968, recently said I would never let anyone sit in the office. People were always being told to go out and do some more.

That style worked because everyone got a task or tasks that included clear instructions. We were big on writing out instructions. For door-to-door canvassers, there was a script to be followed. It answered not only the big questions about message, but also the small ones about what to call people:

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<sup>5</sup> Roberta Gill is an interesting case study of political action in Baltimore prior to 1968. Her father had followed the tradition of many African Americans following the Civil War: he had joined the party of Abraham Lincoln and become a Republican. When Baltimore elected a Republican Theodore McKeldin, in the 1950s, Roberta's father was appointed to various boards and her mother became part of a state constitutional convention. Ultimately, her father ran unsuccessfully for City Council from the Fourth District, and Roberta helped him, going door to door through the neighborhood. Her experience was a valuable addition during the 1968 campaign.

Good Afternoon, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. I'm working to election Joe Howard and Archie Williams as judges of the Baltimore City Court. These are our own folk (*or - soul brothers, Negroes, colored people or black people*). As you know, the judges in Baltimore city courts are mostly white and they don't treat us fairly. In the election on September 10th, we have an opportunity to elect our own judges. Please vote for Joe Howard and Archie Williams and save this card for election day to take with you inside the voting booth.

(Emphasis supplied.)

Roberta Gill recalled:

"The campaign was different from before because it was better organized. It was run like a military campaign. There was a goal and an objective. We had a strategy. Every week we had certain blocks to do door to door. We would always finish up with a parade in the area which had just been canvassed. It was real visible. We never felt like wasting time."

There was not much of a hierarchy. There was no commander who stayed above the fray. At the time, we did it that way because we did not have much choice, but it taught us something that is now a cardinal rule. If campaign managers are going to use volunteers, they are going to have to think like lieutenants leading troops than generals issuing orders to be followed. Out in front is the only place to be. No volunteer puts on more bumper stickers, places more lawn signs or hands out more literature than I do. You can get far more from a volunteer when he or she sees you doing the same work. It is far less inspirational to be behind closed doors back in the office while someone else is dodging a barking dog in the rain.

Maria Broom, who was then an 18 year old Morgan State student majoring in dance, remembered what we did this way:

There was never women's work. We were all there and the bottom line was to get Joe elected. There was so much fun and talk of the arts it never felt like a chore or a task. I never felt out of my element. I never remember it being awkward or being degraded as a female. I do not remember being talked down to or belittled. It was comfortable fun, and whatever we had to do, everybody was doing it.

There were always meetings at apartments. The work was done while we were socializing. It felt very organic. No hierarchy. We were never treated as less intelligent even though we were not political.

Our approach to volunteers worked. Our volunteers list ultimately included 271 names, of whom 60 to 70 people worked regularly. That number is even more impressive when you think that we had only nine weeks between Joe Howard's formal announcement of his campaign and the September primary election to pull in all those people and put them to work.

On top of quantity, the list had quality. Between the issues, the candidate and the socializing, we attracted some of the best young people in Baltimore. Yvonne Lansey is now president of a bank. Bob Moore is the President of the Baltimore Hospital Workers Union. Paul Smith is a judge of the state Circuit Court. John Bethea became President of the Baltimore Teachers Union. Sharon May is Deputy State's Attorney.

A few people, like Randy Carroll, David Allen and the current Baltimore City Commissioner of Housing and Community Development, Dan Henson, became as regular as I was in campaigning year after year. Many of the volunteers drifted off to do other things and never were seriously involved in a campaign again.

### *Lessons from College*

While the Young Crusaders were in fact young, we were not without experience. I had been campaigning ever since City College days, and my four years at Howard University taught me more about campaigns, organizing and coalition building than anything I've done since then.

The ultimate objective of an undergraduate education is to prepare a student for the adult life. If one was a student at Howard in the 1960s, that goal meant more than book learning. It was about creating black leadership. It meant learning how to organize and how to get things done.

The school was blessed with the best teachers of leadership and organizing I have ever met. Carl Anderson, the Director of Student Affairs, presided over all student activities including the student government. He used Homecoming activities, concerts, speakers series, leadership conferences and campus elections and other events to teach a generation of organizers. He taught us how to recognize the common interests that would be the basis for successful coalitions, and he focused us on how to build teams to be effective. He emphasized attention to the details. He taught us to anticipate what could go wrong. We learned to think of Murphy as an optimist.

I learned everything I could. I was both the Joint Forces Commander of our Army-Air Force ROTC unit and President of the Student Council. It was the only time that the same person had held both jobs. My roommate, Frank Satterwhite, was the President of the Inter-fraternity Council and Chairman of Homecoming, which at Howard was a massive multi-event undertaking.

Those activities, however, were not the crowning point of my organizing career at Howard. The biggest election on campus in those days was for Homecoming Queen (remember it was the *early* 1960s). I ran two of those campaigns, which put my skills to the test far more than did ROTC or student government.

I still take special pride in the election of Wilma Montieth as Homecoming Queen in 1961. Wilma was the first non-sorority woman in many years to be elected Queen. There were always more non-fraternity students than fraternity students at Howard, but they had never organized. To get Wilma elected, we were going to have to get our message out to these students, many of whom lived off campus or just did not care.

Our campaign team learned its lessons well. In addition to Randy Carroll and David Allen, there was H. Patrick Swygert, who is today the fifteenth President of Howard University.

The professionalization of campaigns in America these days has tended to underestimate the value of such seemingly frivolous experience. Any operative or consultant who sends me a resume today will put his or her time at some professional campaign school well ahead of running a homecoming election. I respect the vocational training, but I also do not dismiss the value of having to build coalitions and persuade people even in the context of an overblown beauty pageant.

In the June 2, 1996 edition of *The New York Times* there was a long story about how both Mississippi Senators, Trent Lott and Thad Cochran, who were at the time running against each other to replace Sen. Bob Dole as the Majority Leader of the United States, had honed their politicking skills running to be the head cheerleader at the University of Mississippi. My point exactly.

### *Moving Ahead One Step at a Time*

Like Randy Carroll's letter to Coca-Cola, none of our strategy in the 1968 Howard campaign had a great deal of flash. All we did was to move forward one step at a time. A saying we learned at college guided us: "By the yard it's hard; by the inch it's a cinch."

The Young Crusaders had a good writer, David Allen. Campaigns need at least one. In the Joe Howard campaign, we had to put together written dialogue for our door-to-door campaigners, a newsletter, leaflets and scripts for the small amount of radio advertising we were able to afford. People did not read everything that we wrote, but they read enough of it.

We had to convey several messages about the race. We had to explain to people why a seat on the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City was important to them. We had to convince them that Joe Howard was qualified to fill that seat. We had to educate them about the complicated balloting rules we wanted them to follow. Bad writing could have sunk us at any point.

We needed one other thing if we were going to marshal all these volunteers into a coherent group: organization. Every targeted precinct in the City was organized with a captain and block workers. There were address lists taken from the voting rolls for every block in each of those precincts. There was an early-decided strategy to visit all the people in those neighborhoods twice before the primary and then again on election day.

We faced real challenges in this campaign. Joe Howard had never run for any office before. And now he had to run City-wide for his position. However, there were only 145,503 black voters out of a total of 413,290 people registered in the City, or 35%. In a head-to-head vote, divided strictly on the basis of race, Howard could not win.

Then there was the "Sitting Judges" principle. Although the Bar Association and the Bench described the principle in glowing and lengthy terms, it boiled down to a simple proposition: So long as an appointed sitting judge has not done anything that deserves kicking him off,<sup>6</sup> he should be supported when he stands for election to a full fifteen year term. Otherwise, the proponents argued, good people would not be willing to give up prominent legal careers to serve.

The idea, they said, was to take politics out of the judiciary. At one level, it sounded laudable. However, with an establishment Bar uninterested in promoting African Americans and a Governor who was at best indifferent to increasing minority representation on the bench, the principle was really just a fancy way to institutionalize discrimination.

At least that was the perspective that we, young black professionals in Baltimore, had. It was not a widely shared view, even among white liberals.

The most disturbing hurdle had to do with "qualifications." It had been drummed into African Americans that black people had to be better than white people to get the same job. A saying of the time was: "White ice is colder than black ice."

The African American community was always concerned about whether a candidate would embarrass them in front of a white community that seemed poised to jump on any mistake or failure as proof of black inferiority.

We were fortunate that Joe Howard was a candidate with truly superior qualifications. All we had to do was get the word out. Of course, "getting the word out" in a city with almost 400,000 African Americans is not as simple as it sounds.

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<sup>6</sup>In 1968, there was no reason for being gender-neutral; there were only two women on the trial bench and none on the appellate benches in Maryland at the time.

So there was the game plan: Disabuse people of the "Sitting Judges" principle; convince them Joe Howard was well qualified; and get out to the polls most of the 35 % of the electorate that was African American. And do it all in nine weeks.

There were three sitting judges running for election to the three available positions: Robert Hammerman, Thomas Kenney and Edwin Wolf. If the "Sitting Judges" principle worked, they would all be re-elected.

However, in addition to Howard, there was a fifth candidate whose presence was critical if Joe was going to win in a racially divided city. Paul Dorf, a state senator, was the son-in-law of Jack Pollack, the powerful Democratic leader in northwest Baltimore. Although some people were not impressed by Dorf's legal qualifications, his political ties made him a real force in the election.

More importantly, his presence would split the white vote. If every white voter voted for the same three people, there was virtually no way the African American minority could elect Joe Howard. With four white candidates to divide the total, however, Joe had a chance.

The chance required a further complication for our voter education program. Not only did the voters have to vote for Joe Howard, they had to refrain from using either of their two other possible votes to vote for anyone else.

At the time, all the judges could cross-file in both the Republican and Democratic primaries. Finishing in the top three in either the Democratic or Republican primary got a candidate into the General Election. The effect was to give each candidate two chances to be nominated.

To explain why he was running, Joe Howard wrote a piece for the *Afro-American*, which willingly reprinted it. His prose was that of an orator, and, even though it may have seemed turgid when read in a daily newspaper, people were impressed because it was from the candidate's heart:

[M]y purpose is to challenge a system and a way of life and a mode of thinking which acting in concert are responsible for a continuous complaint of black people and contributes immeasurably to the combustible condition that exists within our community.

A system that provides for justice and equality on paper and denies it in practice...  
that offers opportunity with one hand and withdraws it with the other....

...

For the Young Crusaders, the challenge was to take the high rhetoric and make it understandable and immediate to the people who could vote.



During the primary, when Mitchell was running for Congress, the Howard campaign in the westside Seventh Congressional District was really part of the Mitchell ticket, and Clarence Blount, Mitchell's campaign manger, ran the show.

On the eastside, where there was also a substantial black community, the campaign was all ours. We found space in an empty store-front at 835 N. Gay St., on the near eastside, and got to work.

This campaign did not have money. It is hard today to imagine educating almost 400,000 people about all the issues in the Howard campaign without resort to slick - and expensive - advertising.

We had to imagine it. We had no choice. Our campaign slogan may have sounded as if it had come from a more radical place, but it perfectly fit our predicament: "Do what you gotta do."

We had to build excitement about Joe Howard for two reasons: enthusiastic volunteers and educated, motivated voters.

We started by urging the initial, small core of supporters to go out and recruit others. "Bring two people to our next meeting."

Maria Broom, who turned out to be one of the campaign's most valuable people because she could operate a new-fangled thing called a photocopy machine, came to her first meeting as much for social as political reasons. When she was practicing her dancing in the building where Parren Mitchell had his campaign, a good-looking guy named Dan Henson, who was on his way to see Mitchell, asked her to come. And when she came, she brought another dancer, Marcia Contee.

Those volunteers were there to get out the message. David Allen and Randy Carroll put it together. It worked because it was straightforward, factual and meaningful, especially to the black voters to whom it was targeted. One piece read:

Number of Negroes (black people; brothers, etc.) serving as judges:

Municipal Court (police station; traffic court) - 2 black judges out of 15.

Supreme Bench (Criminal Court; accident courts; divorce courts) - 1 black judge out of 17

People's Court - (rent court; installment account collections court) -  
Archie Williams' candidacy - No black judges out of 5

...

## Courthouse evils

1. A Negro who commits a crime against another Negro will receive a lighter sentence than if he had committed the same crime against a white person; therefore, the Negro victim of crime receives less consideration than the white victim.

2. Accident cases -

If a Negro and a white person tell opposite stories (she had the green light), the jury will usually decide for the white person.

A jury will award less money to a Negro than to a white person who has identical injuries.

This is because 47% or almost half, of the people on the jury list, are from far Northeast Baltimore, a community which supported Wallace in '64, and which is a stronghold of Baltimore racist groups.

We received help from a then-new community resource, the East Baltimore Citizens' Center. It created a leaflet explaining what the court did. In addition to our own material, we carried it around with us. Later, the Center helped again by setting up a voting machine so that people could practice how to vote.

Every one of the eastside black precincts in Baltimore got Joe Howard's message. Each precinct had a captain and anywhere from three to eight workers. There were detailed instructions about what they had to do - and they were told to do it twice by primary day.

We tried to avoid wasting people's time. Things happened *on time*. One of our newsletters urged people to be on time and noted: "Some of our soul brothers were late Tuesday and to our regret, they were left."

We never forgot that people could always do something other than volunteer for campaigns. They were teachers, secretaries, parents. If their time at the campaign was not meaningful, they were going to find something better to do.

We were amazed at how well our volunteer recruiting was going. In early August, we sponsored a Saturday drive to register voters. We expected 100 people, but 150 turned out.

The door-to-door campaigning was important, but campaigns need more excitement if they are going to take off. We did parades.

In the summer of 1968, with its hard-edged cynicism and ideological edge, political parades probably seemed like an anachronism to political sophisticates.

Campaigns are not run for them. Campaigns are run for voters, and voters in Baltimore were used to parades - and they liked parades. So they got parades.

The parades were as social and as educational as anything else we did. We made sure that the only black marching band in Baltimore, which had limited opportunities to strut their stuff, played. We wanted the parades to look good as well. One of our newsletters was blunt about that:

Attention all women!! Billy Murphy, Randy Carroll and Larry Gibson need some pretty faces and shapely legs for the parade this Sunday. If you meet these qualifications, meet at Madison Square at 1:30 pm.

In that Madison Square parade we had a little fun with our message. We hired a hearse for \$10 and hung on it a sign: "The Sitting Judge Myth - R.I.P." In any case anybody missed the point, we had young teenagers going up and down the crowd explaining what the Sitting Judge Myth was.

We did so well with that parade that we did another one a couple of weeks later on the westside.

### *Keeping the Substantive Message Front and Center*

Meanwhile, Joe Howard kept up his constant message that the courts were biased against blacks. In mid-August, he released a study of how poorly blacks fared in civil cases in Baltimore City Courts. Just as he had documented the charges of bias in rape cases, he now turned to automobile crashes and jury awards. He noted that few blacks or Jews, who tended to give higher verdicts, made it to juries. According to his study, 47% of the jurors seated came from the white northeast, notoriously hostile to African Americans.

While we were doing our thing, Spiro Agnew was doing his. Just as Dorf's candidacy gave us an opening that we could not have expected, Agnew's hell-bent handling of judicial appointments in Baltimore City during the summer kept reminding people that the only way an African American was going to get to the bench was through an election.

Between late July and late August, Agnew named three new judges to the Baltimore City bench. All were white males. He could have nominated one of the replacements to an interim appointment, permitting the position to be filled permanently by election. He did not.

We responded with a handout that headlined: "Agnew Determined to Keep Balto. Courts 99% White." We reminded people that even though the City was half black, only three of the 44 sitting judges were.

The leaflet was a perfect vehicle for going back into the community to reinforce the initial message about Joe Howard. If people were not going to elect him or other African Americans to the bench, it was not going to happen.

Joe Howard's role in the campaign was limited: keep the message of bias in the courts in front of voters and raise whatever money he could. What Joe Howard did not personally do was a great deal of the door-to-door campaigning.

The volunteers whom we had recruited gave that campaign a real grassroots feel even though the candidate himself was not around much. Such are the powers of a strong message and direct voter contact by people who are perceived to be neighbors or peers of the voters.

Howard fulfilled his role brilliantly. In August, with about a month to go before the primary, he issued a statement detailing discrimination in civil cases in the City. He then confronted two of the sitting judges, Hammerman and Wolf, at a meeting of the East Side Democratic Organization, and the drama brought him new headlines in *The Afro*.

As primary day approached, our job boiled down to raising money, getting endorsements and getting out the vote.

Our fundraising operation was, well, limited. One true sign of the coming of age of African Americans in recent years, is that they have begun to have access to enough money to run sophisticated campaigns. We did not. But we tried.

In the end, we raised and spent just over \$5,000 for the entire campaign, through the general election. We made do. Our records show that we spent \$35 on the mid-August parade around Madison Square, including \$10 for renting the hearse. We were so strapped for cash that we wrote the Mitchell campaign a long letter itemizing costs and asking them for reimbursement of \$11.71, their one-third share.

We did not know much about fundraising, so we tried anything and everything. Randy Carroll recalls that the letter to Coca-Cola, which is quoted at the beginning of the chapter, was just one of those things we decided to try: "There was nothing to lose. I did not have any sophistication [about these things]. I just decided to do it."

We held several raffles and a couple of small \$15-a-plate dinners. We also relied on in-kind contributions, a refrigerator (for the office) here, a bread truck (for sound equipment and posters) there.

In the primary, we benefited some from running with Parren Mitchell. His candidacy attracted nationwide attention. One week before the election, Mayors Carl Stokes of Cleveland and Richard Hatcher of Gary, Indiana, the country's first two black mayors of major cities, attended a fundraiser at the Lord

Baltimore Hotel which drew 900 people. Although that money was principally intended for the Mitchell campaign, we were part of the Mitchell slate. More importantly, it motivated our volunteers because it showed us that we were not the only ones who thought that what was happening in Baltimore had national implications.

In the general election, we did not have Parren Mitchell, who narrowly lost the primary. We were forced back on our own resources. We did, however, have help. Ron Shapiro, who had clerked with me for Judge Kaufman, and his brother-in-law, Richard Manekin, son of a prominent Baltimore developer, sent out a fundraising letter for us to their friends in the business community.

Getting voters to cast their ballots for Howard - and only for Howard - was the toughest task. Here, we put a few hundred of our precious dollars into advertising on the City's black radio stations. Joe Howard pleaded not only that people vote, but also that they vote only for him: "Don't vote for three, just vote for me." That is the kind of message for which radio is perfectly suited.

We also designed a bumper sticker and a postcard-sized sticker with a bull's eye to remind people to "single shoot." The smaller stickers were plastered wherever we could find space.

When election day came we thought we were ready. We had lots of volunteers. The newsletter for weeks had been urging people: "Take sick, slick, death or any other type of leave in order to be present all day Election Day." Every poll watcher had detailed instructions about what to do if the machines jammed or there were other problems. We had busses and cars to take people to the polls. We did not think we had left anything to chance.

There was only one thing we did not count on. It rained. And rained. For eight torrential hours. In spite of our best efforts, turnout throughout the City was minimal.

### *Saved by the Party of Lincoln - The General Election*

We were saved - by the Republican Party. In the Democratic primary, Paul Dorf defeated Judge Wolf and the two other incumbents, Hammerman and Kenney, won. However, in the Republican primary, where they had all cross-filed, there was a different result. Enough older black voters were still Republicans that they carried primary day for Joe Howard.

The general election campaign marked our coming of age. Parren Mitchell's defeat meant that we would not have him on the ticket with us. However, his westside organization could now lead the Howard campaign.

Joe Howard had to make a pivotal decision. Did he go with their politics or did he place his fate in the hands of us youngsters. He chose us, and Baltimore's politics have never been the same since.

The difference between our approaches could not have been clearer. Shortly after the primary, I met with some of the westside leaders at Sess,' a soul-food joint that was a gathering place for black notables. They cross-examined me about whether I had met with "X" or "Y." When I said, "no," they flat out told me I was not really going to do well in this area or that unless I did.

I did not buy; I had no intention of working through those "leaders," most of whom really could not produce anyone. The primary campaign had been their test, and most of them had flunked. Although they gave lip service to Joe Howard's candidacy, they had not generated workers or much else. Our corps of volunteers were coming to the campaign on their own or through peers and neighbors, without any direction from the "key people."

That failure to produce people is not really a bad reflection on the "key people." It is just a realistic acknowledgment that it is relatively rare that one can translate one kind of connection, say a church affiliation, into another, in this case a volunteer effort for a political candidate. For example, people go to churches to pray and find God. Unless that minister is highly political (and most of those in Baltimore at the time were not), and the attraction of his church political, there was no particular reason to think that members of his congregation would be drawn into a political campaign, an entirely different kind of organization, with different objectives and goals. The same is true for service or fraternal organizations - or even some civil rights organizations.

It is important to distinguish producing volunteers from attempting to persuade voters to vote for someone on election day. Endorsements from "key people" can be helpful to give credibility and visibility to candidates.

We moved our headquarters to the old offices of the Baltimore Teachers' Union on the westside of the City and pushed forward with more message and direct voter contact.

Although current media critics of the 1990s criticize the press for being too focused on the politics of an election, as distinguished from the underlying policy issues, the so-called "horserace" factor, the distinction is not always clear. On the contrary, sometimes the best way to make "policy" points during a campaign is to find them in the dynamics of the horserace.

Joe Howard figured out the connection brilliantly. Since there were now only two "sitting judges" left for the three positions available, the "sitting judges' principle" could not guide voters' choice for the last position. It also left the Bar Association exposed with nowhere to hide.

We circulated a petition among members of the Bar calling for a referendum to decide who the Association would endorse. The Bar's President, William Somerville, declined, claiming that the petition was invalid because six of the signatures were not of Bar Association members. He also asserted that there was a "time limitation" which made such a vote impossible.

Howard would not let the matter rest. He asked Somerville to have the Bar Association publish the candidates' qualifications. Once again, the Association declined.

The spectacle led a local columnist, Bradford Jacobs, to write a column entitled "The Bar at Bay." He noted that the Bar had lost its "Sitting Judge" principle, but now had no response to it.

At the same time, in October, one of the incumbents, Judge Kenney, was reported to have endorsed Dorf. Kenney's response simply made the story last longer. He denied the endorsement, but then said that Joe Howard "did not have the temperament" to be a judge.

The door-to-door campaign used all of these battles to reinforce a key message: the white establishment was not going to treat Joe Howard fairly. Just as Agnew's summer judicial appointments had been a dramatic case-in-point, so was all the fall's jockeying for position.

Our direct voter contact program expanded some after the primary. None of the white politicians from that era with whom I have recently spoken remember the event, but it was a big deal for us. *We handed out leaflets at a Colts football game.*

You must remember that this was the year that the Colts were going to win the Super Bowl (which they lost in fact in one of the greatest surprises in sports history to the New York Jets and Joe Namath). Memorial Stadium was hallowed ground for Baltimore, at least for the white part of the City that attended the games.

It may now seem trivial, but it was a big step for young blacks to stand in the parking lots surrounding Memorial Stadium handing out leaflets. We were harassed by the police, who let up only when we got to Maryland Attorney General Francis Burch, who told them we had a right to distribute our literature.

Of course, we all doubted that anyone would read about Joe Howard's qualifications. It was, after all, a football game. And even though Joe's picture did not appear on the leaflet, most of us handing out the literature were African Americans.

There is a difference, however, between being read and being remembered. I had the leaflets printed in the brightest yellow we could find. After the game, we knew we had made an impression: the ground was blanketed with thousands of yellow leaflets that you could not miss from a mile away. There was no doubt that lots of white folks had at least heard for the first time that a man named Howard was running for the Supreme Bench.

In the meanwhile, all of this battling among the white candidates and the Bar Association also gave us something which we had not had before - attention from the City's white newspapers. When it came

to the Bar Association controversy, *The Sun* gave Joe the opportunity to respond. He hit the perfect note, stressing simple fairness and ignoring race:

This [Judicial Selection] committee has fallen short in both areas. It is simply dishonest to suggest that sitting judges are the only ones qualified or even the most qualified candidates in the race.

I challenge the committee to prove this to the public. Likewise, it is grossly unfair to mislead the public on the one hand and withhold information from it on the other.

In the general election, *The Sun* endorsed Joe Howard:

We are aware that Mr. Howard, who is a Negro, has been accused of racial "militancy," a term the definitions of which are widely various. In any extreme sense we believe this charge to be unjustified. We are aware also that Mr. Howard has at times been sharply critical of the Supreme Bench - and this could make for tensions with his associates on the court if he were elected. However, in our considered opinion, Mr. Howard is qualified by his record, by his experience and by his views of the functions and responsibilities of a court of law, to deserve election to the Supreme Bench.

Then-Mayor Tommy D'Alesandro, III recently said that he saw that endorsement as the white community's first acknowledgment that there were African American candidates who deserved election City-wide. While that may be true, the endorsement was not pivotal in the election.

What was true in 1968 is still true today: Our core vote in Baltimore does not pay attention to *The Sun*.

What worked in the primary, worked even better for the general election. *The Afro* once against came through with both strong editorial endorsements and good coverage. We did not do radio, but we put together a short film on Joe Howard and ran it at the only black-owned movie theater in the City.

On election day, we had 2500 volunteers, of whom about 300 were white. We equipped people with bullhorns and sent them into the communities urging people to vote. All of the contacts we had made walking door-to-door paid off. We knew our voters and they knew us. We kept checking polling stations to see who had voted, and we went and found those of our supporters who had not yet come in.

All of the work paid off. On Election Day, Joe Howard received over 114,000 votes, more than any other judge. More, in fact, than Tommy D'Alesandro, III had received when he won the Mayoralty the previous year.



Election night was a party. Over 2000 people crowded into the City's venerable Fifth Regiment Armory. Like all campaign events, it was festive, with lots of food for hard-working volunteers. The *Afro* reported that our supporters prepared over 500 chicken dinners and 1500 sandwiches. Jim Parker, a famous Colts player of the day, who owned a liquor store across from campaign headquarters, threw in the pink champagne.

Joe Howard told the crowd what already felt: "Black people will no longer be the silent ones now that they know this city is theirs and the Court House is theirs."

That victory party was a stark counterpoint to an event which had happened just the weekend before the election. Stokely Carmichael had been in town, speaking at the Mt. Zion AME Church. He had called for change in the only way that black nationalists of 1968 thought was possible. He urged people to "engage in revolutionary activity" to "tear down and destroy" what he called a "racist system in America."

Stokely's objective was right, but he was wrong about the means. Although it was not what he had in mind, Joe Howard's victory did more to end that racist system than Stokely could have imagined.

## Summary of Chapters

### **Ch. 2. Really Getting in Gear - The Allen-Murphy-Chester Campaign**

In 1970, we ran a city-wide campaign for a slate of three black candidates for courthouse positions (the State's Attorney, a court clerk and another judge) - and all three won. So did Parren Mitchell, who defeated incumbent Sam Friedel for the Seventh Congressional District seat. The campaign marked the real coming of age of African American politics in Baltimore: Milton Allen's election as State's Attorney was the first time an African American had won the chief prosecutor's position in any major city in the nation.

The campaign used many of the same techniques as 1968. There were large numbers of volunteers and an emphasis on direct voter contact and an educational message. We did everything better. We learned new ways of reaching large numbers of voters. We discovered new ways to put up posters and hang up signs. A special group of students, a "strike force," spent days and nights plastering the City in ways that Baltimore had never seen.

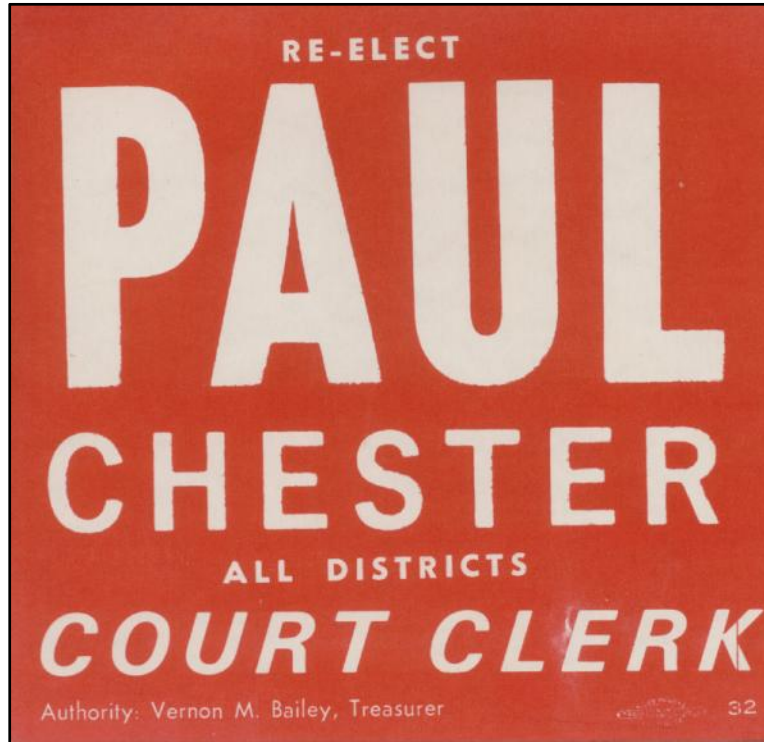
We had more money this time. Many of Milton Allen's old clients, some from his criminal law practice, came through. Amazingly, despite the office Allen won, none of them seem to have sought, let alone received, any favoritism once he was in office.

The campaign was still an effort that centered around young people, which was remarkable in light of the suspicion in the African American community in the late 60s and early 70s (which was ultimately validated in the late 1970s) that heavy political participation attracted undue police interest and pressure. Moreover, the campaign marked the full mobilization of the black professional class around a ticket.

We succeeded in this campaign by mastering the details. The primary election for State's Attorney and the Seventh Congressional District seat were so close that the recount took weeks. Milton Allen won by 448 votes after multiple recounts, and Parren Mitchell won ultimately by only 38 votes. We had to be as tough and as sharp as the old Democratic politicians who were arrayed against us in order to assure that the elections were not stolen when the votes were counted.

It was also a campaign marked by the kinds of controversies we did not have two years before. The three candidates' families produced special pressures and tensions within the campaign. The infighting occasionally threatened to destroy the "ticket," and it took energy and tact to keep the peace and the troops united.

It was also a distinctive State's Attorney's campaign for Baltimore. We had to take the general election seriously. Normally, it is difficult for a Republican to mount much of a challenge, but in 1970, the mere fact that Sheldon Braiterman, the Republican, was white, was enough to make the November election a real fight.



Paul Chester for Court Clerk, 1970

The end result was a dramatic assertion of black political power in the City at a scale never seen before.

At the same time, I had been appointed to the School Board and begun to fight issues of curriculum reform, integration and school funding. In 1971, Baltimore hired its first African American Superintendent, Roland Patterson, who immediately became a controversial figure who aroused great hostility in some quarters of the white community.

### **Ch. 3. Moving Too Fast - Schaefer Wins, Chester Loses in 1971**

The 1971 campaign is an object lesson about "being divided and getting conquered." It is also my first real lesson about the limits of media campaigning.

William Donald Schaefer, then the President of the City Council, ran for Mayor against two African Americans, George Russell, the City Solicitor, and State Senator Clarence Mitchell, III, a nephew of Parren Mitchell's. Russell had been regarded as the odds on favorite to be Baltimore's first black mayor. At the same time, Paul Chester, who had just been elected Clerk of Court in 1970, tried to move up to City Council President.

The election was a disaster. The mayoral race divided the volunteers. Some were for Russell; others were for Mitchell. The African American community paid little attention to Chester's candidacy, many voters realizing that we had told them just the year before that the Clerk's office was fundamentally important. If that was so, then, they reasoned, perhaps he should not abandon it so quickly. The *Afro-American* endorsed Russell, but it also endorsed his white running mate for City Council President.

The start of the election reflected a major shift in Baltimore. George Russell was taken as a serious candidate, in fact the initial favorite to win the Mayoralty. The perception was a dramatic "flip:" it was only three years since Joe Howard had been the first African American to win any City-wide race.

However, the fundamentals honed in the earlier elections were lost. Neither Russell nor Mitchell were viewed universally within the black community as "our candidate." On top of that, it was not possible to campaign the way we had campaigned in prior years. There were not hundreds of volunteers available to do the kind of direct voter contact that persuaded people to vote. There was not so much a decline in overall participation, as there was a decline in a focused participation.

Russell had lots of money. People - including the white establishment - thought he would win. He had the choice to go on television or do a grass roots campaign. He chose to "broadcast" his message rather than "narrowcast" it.

a

# FIFTH DISTRICT FIVE-IN-FIVE DEMOCRATIC CLUB Official Primary Election BALLOT

VOTE — TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1971 — VOTE



**MAYOR**  
VOTE FOR  
GEORGE E.  
**RUSSELL** LEVER  
**2A**



**COUNCIL PRESIDENT**  
VOTE FOR  
JAMES  
**LACY** LEVER  
**4A**



**CITY COUNCIL**  
VOTE FOR  
PINKNEY A.  
**HOWELL** LEVER  
**8B**

**KINDLY TAKE THIS BALLOT AND---VOTE IT,  
YOU'LL BE GLAD YOU DID.**



Authority: ERNEST W. LEE, Treasurer

George Russell for Mayor, 1971

He used one of the best television ad men of the day, Joe Napolitan, to create his spots. He did not do much grassroots organizing, and I do not recall a single Russell volunteer going door-to-door. In the end, he did not connect with much of the black community.

There was some grassroots campaigning going on. Clarence Mitchell focused all his energies on grassroots campaigning, but he was disorganized and lacked follow through. His volunteers were wasted. He did not understand how to use them well and get them to come back.

It was the white community which was mobilized and better organized in 1971. After years of school and highway-building controversies had energized neighborhood groups, they were actively involved in the election. There was also a national "white backlash" which none of us recognized at the beginning of the year. By election day, Mayor Schaefer's supporters utilized some of our techniques as well or better than we did.

Schaefer's organizing prevailed over Russell's heavy media campaign.

The losses were in fact proof that others can use the same techniques, focused on other communities, and win when they do it better than you do.

#### **Ch. 4. Successful Busing: George McGovern's Win in Baltimore.**

George McGovern did not win many big cities in 1972. He did win in Baltimore.

We were not heavily involved in the campaign until close to the end, when the young McGovern staffers who were brought in to run Maryland needed help to prepare for election day.

At Parren Mitchell's request we got involved. It immediately became clear that we could not do our typical door-to-door campaign with heavy use of message because there was not time.

All we could do was concentrate on getting out the vote. The question was: how could we do that without all the preparation we had used in past elections. The answer: 40 buses - that's right, 40 big yellow school buses - which we covered with posters and topped with loudspeakers and flashing emergency lights for moving around Baltimore throughout Election Day.

Those buses were moving advertisements, but they were also mobile command posts. Each bus had a captain and workers assigned to it. Each bus was assigned to a sector of the City. They fed the poll workers and organized the get out the vote operation. It pulled out voters in both white and black neighborhoods, and McGovern carried Baltimore.

Also in 1972, Parren Mitchell had faced a primary challenge from defeated Mayoral candidate George Russell. Parren utilized many of the now well-understood door-to-door and direct message

techniques to defeat the primary challenge.

## **Ch. 5. The Worst Year - Allen Loses; Patterson Sacked; Chester Indicted.**

The largest mistake we made in 1974 was not paying attention. We thought that Milton Allen's re-election would be easy. He had done a good job as State's Attorney, and he was seemingly endorsed by the Democratic power structure.

We completely missed the undercurrent of racial backlash that was brewing. Bill Swisher, an east side Baltimore attorney, caught us by surprise.

Part of the problem was that people were distracted in 1974. School Superintendent Roland Patterson was being thrown out of office. I had left the School Board and represented him in his legal action to try to hold on to his job. That case took most of my time and attracted the attention of most of the young black professionals who might otherwise have been working hard for Allen. His primary election campaign wound up relying on old-line political organizations and endorsements which ultimately did not turn out the vote. In fact, we were double-crossed: many of the white clubs endorsed Allen but worked for Swisher on election day.

The community was also demoralized by the indictment of Paul Chester, who was running for re-election as Clerk. He had complained to his staff one day in the office that none of them had come to a fundraiser that had been held a day or two before. For that, he was indicted on political corruption charges.

Milton Allen, his old running mate, had to recuse himself from the action and appointed a special prosecutor. Even though Chester won re-election, the pendency of his case added further gloom in the community. (He was convicted in 1975 and resigned.)

Swisher's campaign used television ads which had a subtle racial appeal. They warned people about the dangers of the "jungle" in the City. The Allen campaign let those charges go unanswered, on television or otherwise, and paid the price.

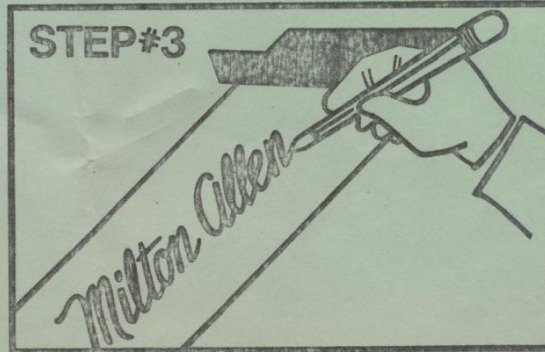
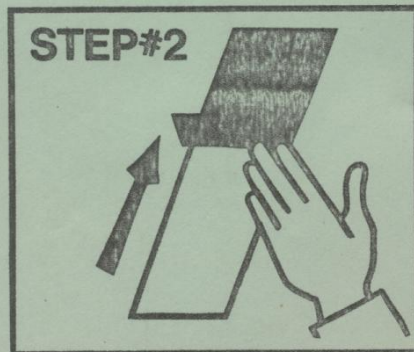
However, Allen's primary defeat was not the end of the fight. In the general election, I organized a write-in campaign, which was unheard of on a City-wide basis. Once again, we were doing something new, and the newness generated interest and activity. We had a complicated task to teach people how to write in a name in the City's old ballot machines. The sting of the primary loss and the challenge of the write-in effort drew back the volunteers.

We went out and campaigned as we had before and got more write-in votes than ever before in any election in the state. But there was massive voting machine failure. The apparatus and paper rolls for write-ins had not been used much in years - if ever. The machines jammed and jammed. Nevertheless, more

# HOW TO WRITE IN MILTON ALLEN

STATE'S ATTORNEY

GENERAL  
ELECTION  
NOV. 5



ADPT: DANIEL P. HENSON, TREASURER

"How to Write in Milton Allen," 1974



than 50,000 write-in votes were recorded. Had the machines not been overwhelmed, or had we demanded the use of paper ballots, we might well have won the election.

## **Ch. 6. Back Into the Game: Jimmy Carter in 1976.**

Dwight Pettit, another active African American lawyer in Baltimore, introduced us to Jimmy Carter in the spring of 1976. This southern governor had little support in the state; in fact when Carter spoke at his first rally in Baltimore I was asked to introduce him because no incumbent elected official had endorsed him.

Gov. Marvin Mandel made a deal with Gov. Jerry Brown of California, a late entrant into that year's presidential primaries, and most of the organization and elected officials gave Brown his first major East Coast victory. Although a few of us by then had met Carter and liked him, we did not mount much of an effort in the primary in the face of the overwhelming support for Brown.

Once Carter received the nomination, things changed. We were impressed by the large numbers of black political leaders in Georgia who strongly supported Carter. The African American community in Baltimore and around the nation coalesced strongly around Governor Carter.

Paul Vance, who is now the Superintendent of Schools in Montgomery County, Maryland, chaired the campaign in Baltimore City. I was teaching at the University of Virginia but was in town at least three days a week.

The key was going to be voter registration and then turnout. The campaign mounted a large registration effort, using a "bounty" system that paid workers for the number of people they registered. Dan Henson handled the funds. The Carter campaign's state director, Arnie Miller, who later became Director of Presidential Personnel, was so impressed by the careful documentation of payments Dan made during registration and for Election Day operations that Dan was appointed regional SBA Director to clean up a problem office in Philadelphia.

The national campaign appeared to place much emphasis on a strong field operation. They wanted to put most of the effort into media. After I badgered Arnie Miller, we received funds for lawn signs and went to work doing our thing. We put them up everywhere we could.

To stimulate turnout, we held a large, dramatic rally at Mondawmin Mall. We literally treated the rally as if it were the election, with posters and fliers spread throughout the City to get people to come. The *Afro* reported that 15,000 people crowded inside the mall. Even if that number was inflated, the turnout was immense.

For the Get Out The Vote Operation, we relied on volunteers. We had so many that we filled the entire auditorium at Greenspring Junior High when we held a campaign briefing meeting. As we done



The Carter Campaign, 1976

before, we divided the troops into teams, with leaders and clear instructions.

The turnout in the City was high. Carter carried Maryland on the strength of the strong showing in the City. I became Depute Associate Attorney General in the Carter Administration.

### **Ch. 7. The Bandwagon. The Schmoke Election of 1982.**

I returned to electoral politics in 1982, when a young attorney, Rhodes Scholar and Harvard Law graduate, Kurt Schmoke, asked me to run his campaign for State's Attorney. This campaign was the first time I really had the chance to "do it my way" entirely. Perhaps it was that for the first time I was older than the candidate for whom I was working.

Although I certainly wanted to see Swisher defeated, if for no other reason than his defeat of Milton Allen eight years before, his media image was that he was a tough, hard-on-crime prosecutor. My initial reaction, in fact, was that the unknown Kurt Schmoke could not win.

A closer examination showed that Swisher was almost all talk and little real action. Perhaps to cover his real record, Swisher started to complain that the Speedy Trial Act, which required criminal cases to go to trial within 180 days of arrest, was leading to the release of dangerous felons.

I personally reviewed all the cases that Swisher used to make his claim and proved that none of them in fact had resulted in a release based on the Speedy Trial Act. The case study started a series of analyses of Swisher's record which proved that he was all talk and no action. Instead of trying cases, he was plea bargaining most of them away.

Our first hurdle was to communicate that information to voters. We did it, even though it again was heavily substantive.

Our second burden was to make people familiar with Kurt Schmoke, who had never held public office. For this purpose, simple name recognition, radio was perfect. We wrote ads which made fun of Kurt's name. For example, we talked about "coming out Schmoking," and "Schmoke is schmart."

Our third challenge was to communicate to people a program that would make them want to vote for Kurt. We put together a platform proposing a victim assistance program, more attention to crimes against the elderly, a new focus on domestic violence and a narcotics strike force.

Our final, and most difficult burden, was to assure that people would remember to vote for State's Attorney, which is an office far down on the ballot. A statistical analysis which we had done showed that the vote for the office in the prior election had fallen off substantially.

We focused on making the State's Attorney's race the most important election in Baltimore that

★ Official **DEMOCRATIC** Ballot ★  
44th District

STATES ATTORNEY

Pull Lever

Kurt



**SCHMOKE**

**15A**

STATE SENATE

Kenneth C.



**MONTAGUE**

**7B**

HOUSE OF DELEGATES (Vote for all 3)

Torrey C.



**BROWN**

**8C**

Dennis C.



**McCOY**

**9C**

Anne Scarlet



**PERKINS**

**10A**

STATE CENTRAL COMMITTEE (Vote for all 3)

Pam



**KELLY**

**26D**

Andrew J.



**O'BRIEN**

**27C**

John



**RICHARDSON**

**29B**

GOVERNOR / LT. GOVERNOR



Harry **HUGHES**

**1A**

J. Joseph **CURRAN** Jr.

US SENATOR



Paul S. **SARBANES**

**5A**

CONGRESS / 7th DISTRICT



Parren J. **MITCHELL**

**6C**

JUDGES OF THE CIRCUIT COURT



John Carroll **BYRNES**

**12A**

James A. **PERROTT**

**13B**

Peter D. **WARD**

**13C**

Kurt Schmoke for States Attorney, 1982

year. We wrote songs and sung them on the radio directing people to the race and encouraging them to vote for State's Attorney first.

I was urged to use television, and we could have afforded to do so - at least in limited quantities. We did not. We used bumper stickers and lots of posters. We had a large number of volunteers, although more were older than the young professionals I worked with a decade before. They were just as enthusiastic. One prominent story in *The Sun* reported on our "sign-tists," young black and white volunteers who were placing lawn signs all over the City.

Just as Milton Allen's campaign had not seen Swisher coming eight years earlier, Swisher did not see Kurt Schmoke coming in 1982. He spent part of the summer in Ocean City at the beach, and when he returned in August, he was confronted with a better organized opponent than he had anticipated.

It was an overwhelming victory. Kurt Schmoke received over 110,000 votes, the most ever for a State's Attorney, and more than many winning mayors. Swisher later told the press that he had projected the need to get 60,000 votes to win, and that he had done it. He was just overwhelmed by a "rising tide."

Black turnout in Baltimore for the first time exceeded white turnout - and there was no TV.

## **Ch. 8. Show of Force - The Mid-Term Celebration of 1985**

Kurt Schmoke was re-elected to a second term as State's Attorney in 1985 - even though the election was not held until 1986.

The reason: a *great party* in 1985. We held a "Mid-term Celebration" in 1985 to commemorate the first two years of Kurt Schmoke's tenure as State's Attorney. The point about the party was not to raise money. It was to demonstrate to anyone who might be thinking of running against Kurt that he had an enormous, devoted following in the City.

To do that, we threw a party that drew some 6,800 people to the Fifth Regiment Armory. We told them over and over again that it was going to be a great party.

And that it was. To this day, it remains the most dramatic political party that anyone around this state can remember.


The sales effort was the equivalent of a full-blown campaign. We literally spent tens of thousands of dollars on posters, lawn signs, bumper stickers and hats asking people to pay \$25/head to join us. We put out t-shirts with the slogan: "Keep on Schmoking." Even one of the more popular Baltimore Orioles of the day, Eddie Murray, cut a radio commercial for us with Baseball Hall of Famer Brooks Robinson.

## **SOUTH CLIFTON PARK DEMOCRATS**

GOVERNOR/LT. GOVERNOR

**SCHAEFER/STEINBERG**  **1B**

CONGRESS

**KWEISI MFUME**  **3B**

SENATE

**NELSON R. STEWART**  **4C**

HOUSE OF DELEGATES (VOTE FOR ALL THREE)

**EUGENE MURPHY**  **7A**


**HATTIE N. HARRISON**  **6D**

**ROBERT STOKES**  **7C**

CIRCUIT COURT JUDGES (VOTE FOR ALL THREE)

**ELLEN L. HOLLANDER**  **9B**

**RICHARD T. ROMBRO**  **9C**

**JOHN C. THEMELIS**  **10B**


SHERIFF


**JOHN W. ANDERSON**  **16A**

STATE CENTRAL COMMITTEE (VOTE FOR ALL FIVE)


**ROBERT L. DOUGLASS**  **20D**

**EDWARD G. HAIRSTON**  **21C**

**PAULA D. JOHNSON**  **21D**

**NATHANIEL J. McFADDEN**  **22A**

**RONALD WATSON, SR.**  **23B**

AUTHORITY: DANNETTA HUDSON, TREASURER 

William Donald Schaefer for Governor, 1986

We had a new army of volunteers. They helped with the signs and bumper stickers and at the party itself.

The City Council was so troubled that all this activity was the first step in a Schmoke Mayoral bid that after the celebration it passed an ordinance, which is clearly unconstitutional, banning lawn signs prior to a few weeks before an election.

As part of the "celebration," we published a lengthy "Mid-term Report," which we paid for with advertising revenue. It looked like a professionally published magazine. The Report went over the operations of the State's Attorney's Office in detail and unquestionably demonstrated that Kurt Schmoke had done a great job there in his first two years.

We convinced people. Lots of them. And then Schmoke delivered. We hired buses to bring people to the cavernous Fifth Regiment Armory. There was food, great heaping piles of food, ice cream and beverages. There were bands, playing simultaneously throughout the building. There were events and festivities. It was an afternoon to remember.

And, if anyone had been thinking about running against Kurt, it was an event that gave them pause...and pause some more. Kurt had no opposition when the election actually rolled around in 1986. We had run and won a re-election campaign a year in advance of Election Day.

## **Ch. 9 One Poorly Run Campaign - Sachs v. Schaefer, 1986**

Steve Sachs was a popular Attorney General in Maryland. Yet he lost resoundingly to Mayor Schaefer in the Democratic Primary for Governor.

I was nominally Co-Chairman of the campaign, but all campaign strategy and decisions were the province of the candidate and the campaign manager, Blair Lee, III from Montgomery County. The campaign was one of the most flawed campaigns I had ever seen. All of the operating premises were wrong, and a candidate who could have won lost badly. From its earliest days, I argued with them both in meetings and in memos (which I still have) against two things: (1) heavy use of television; and (2) an overwhelmingly negative approach to the campaign. Sachs and Lee chose to ignore my suggestions.

The campaign focused much of its energies and resources on television. Sachs and Lee hired W.B. Doner Advertising, a major advertising firm in Baltimore, to create a series of ads attacking Sachs rival, Mayor Schaefer, as petulant and vindictive and not fit to be Governor. On top of that, it never made a positive case why Steve Sachs should be elected Governor.

At the same time, the campaign ignored volunteers. There was no real field organization except the one we put together in the Seventh Congressional District of Parren Mitchell, who ultimately ran for Lieutenant Governor. It was the only district which Sachs carried.

**MITCHELL, MITCHELL & MITCHELL, P.A.**

LAW OFFICES  
1239 DRUID HILL AVENUE  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21217

AREA CODE 301  
523-6275

September 12, 1986

CLARENCE M. MITCHELL, JR. (1911-1984)  
JUANITA JACKSON MITCHELL  
MICHAEL BOWEN MITCHELL

BLAINE A'MMON WHITE\*  
SYLVESTER B. COX, JR.  
TERRANCE WILLIAM TANKARD  
\*ADMITTED IN PA AND D.C.

Professor Larry S. Gibson  
1910 Eutaw Place  
Baltimore, Maryland 21217

Dear Larry,

This comes with the love and appreciation of all of the Mitchells for your superb management of a very difficult campaign.

Your judgments, faith and your steady drive towards the mutually agreed upon goals, inspired me.

I am a longtime veteran of these campaigns. You were tops.

We win some and we lose some. That's politics. But my husband, Clarence, Jr., always believed that the efforts in political action were always important and contributed to our ultimate objective of political freedom.

Give my love and appreciation also to your family, Diane and your son. They endured your absences and the sacrifice of your time and energies with commendable understanding.

The Sachs-Mitchell campaign was brilliant in conception and had magnificent results against the formidable bankrolling by the Schaefer-Steinberg forces. The dream "One Maryland" will become a reality and there are third generation Mitchells preparing to be a part of the continuing struggle.

May God bless you and keep you strong.

Yours in the fellowship of service,

*Juanita Jackson Mitchell*  
JUANITA JACKSON MITCHELL

JJM:cg

**Letter – Juanita Jackson Mitchell to Gibson, outcome of the 1986 election**



Schaefer, on the other hand, had help from field organizations which others had built. For example, in East Baltimore, Clarence "Du" Burns, the African American who was City Council President, threw his support behind Schaefer since he, Burns, would become Mayor in the event of a Schaefer victory.

When Sachs lost, I resolved never again to become involved in a campaign I was not running that was using a basic approach with which I disagreed.

## **Ch. 10 - Doing It My Way - Schmoke Wins Mayor in 1987**

The Schmoke Mayoral election of 1987 pitted Kurt Schmoke against Clarence "Du" Burns, who had become Mayor when William Donald Schaefer was elected Governor the prior year. Du was an African American, but he was an old "pol" closely tied to Schaefer.

Kurt represented the new Baltimore. The objectives were to avoid alienating parts of the African American community and to bring into a coalition the more progressive, younger elements of the white community who could identify with Kurt.

The message aspect of the campaign was a particular challenge since almost half the black voters in Baltimore were older than Schmoke and more clearly identified with the older Burns. There was some sentiment to let Burns have a term as a sign of respect and appreciation (and force the much younger Kurt to wait four years).

We could not attack Burns. We simply had to be positive. We had to educate older voters that Kurt Schmoke was the kind of son you always wanted to have because he made you proud.

At the same time we could not be deferential to Burns and allow him to build prestige from his incumbency. We started campaigning as soon as he was sworn in. We had a fundraiser immediately. We constantly referred to him as the "interim Mayor."

From the start, the Schmoke campaign had some financial resources. The question was whether I would follow the typical media-oriented strategy, or whether I would stick with the type of race I now had run repeatedly, and successfully, in prior years.

We ultimately did use a fair amount of television and radio to fill out Kurt's biography. It reinforced the message that people, especially seniors, should be proud of Kurt. However, the strength of the campaign was again the volunteers.

In this election, we had to be scientific about our voter contact and get out the vote operation. Any blanket "pull" of voters in the black community was going to be counter-productive since many of them would be Burns supporters. As a result, we needed to use the most modern technology then available to record which voters were with us, and which were not.

The message was about the future, and the long-delayed responses to problems which had festered during the last years of the Schaefer Administration. Our slogan was: "Baltimore's Future Starts Now."

We continued to be able to draw volunteers. Some of them were again older, retired people, but most were young professionals and students that did not look much different from us in 1968 - except that they were more prosperous as a whole and included more whites. Where did we get them? The kind of personal contacts and recruitment on which we had always relied.

We did the same sorts of things we had always done. There was heavy use of door-to-door campaigning, with signs in the windows and on the lawns. We put together for the first time a slick newsletter using "desktop publishing" technology. There were phone banks, rallies and a strong "get out the vote" effort staffed by 4,000 volunteers. We used computers for the first time to manage all this data.

We were not the only ones with volunteers. At the end of the race, especially on Election Day, a white candidate for City Council President, a long-time State Senator named Harry McGuirk, mounted a heavy grassroots effort, even in the African American community. McGuirk was allied with Schaefer, who may well have been the source of the money, and his people clearly drew out voters for Burns.

The race showed that polls could create reality. The press had early on picked up an internal poll which we had done which we said showed we were 31 points ahead. We had done the poll and released it early on to influence potential donors and deflate the potential value of Burns' incumbency.

We never thought the voters' preferences were that lopsided, but did not discourage the media image that Kurt was an overwhelming favorite. When the race "narrowed" toward the end, we did turn more heavily to paid electronic media. By this time, we had identified our voters and were trying to convince them to stick with Kurt, and to vote for him as the first thing they did in the voting booth.

The key was to get them to the polls, which we did with a full-court press of election day activities, including a "van club" to drive people to the polls. Our success had more to do with people than television.

Kurt won by 5,000 votes.

## **Ch. 11. No TV... Schmoke Wins Second Term in 1991.**

The key in 1991 was something I did not do. We spent \$2 million, but not one cent on television.

The decision upset my pollsters and consultants. There were memos openly challenging what I was doing. How could I think of running a major campaign without TV when there was enough money for it. But I persisted. I was right, and they were wrong.



Kurt Schmoke for Mayor, 1991

They missed the focus of the election. Kurt Schmoke was an incumbent with a record. He was not a new face that needed television for name recognition. It was not going to be possible to explain that record in thirty second soundbites. It was going to be especially difficult when many of the initiatives that Kurt had started had yet to bear significant fruit.

Our heaviest investment was in a single, 84-page booklet, *The Major Accomplishments of Kurt Schmoke as Mayor of Baltimore City*. We emphasized words like "started" or "launched" to convey that the work had begun but was not yet complete. We printed 200,000 copies at \$.75 a copy and mailed over 100,000 to Democratic voters in the City.

We hand delivered the rest.

The message was that Kurt Schmoke had begun a wide variety of important initiatives which would bear fruit over time (even if they had not yet done so). The campaign slogan was "Stay on Board with Schmoke," and the campaign poster featured Kurt with a streamlined train in the background.

We also entered the new era of video technology. We compiled a twelve minute campaign video documenting the Administration's accomplishments and printed 10,000 copies, which we sent throughout the City.

It was a finesse campaign. The media accused us of being boring. There were no television ads and just this one booklet. When confronted, Kurt simply said, "I'm not Arsenio Hall, I'm Kurt Schmoke."

Our opponents were people we had previously defeated: Du Burns and William Swisher, but both had also won city-wide. Both tried to capitalize on the City's problems, of which there were many, and Du retained some support in the black community, especially among the minority contractors. However, they had no program and we had a record. Neither had a game plan, and neither could challenge the accomplishments laid out in our book.

We won comfortably.

## **Ch. 12. Leading the Nation... Clinton Wins in 1992.**

In 1992, I was the State Chair of the Clinton campaign in Maryland. Just as in 1976, I asked the national campaign for money for lawn signs and posters, and, once again, I was turned down. There was no money for these kinds of "field" items. The message would be delivered on the air.

I disagreed. It was important to me to give people the opportunity to "buy into" a campaign. When they placed a sign on their lawn or on their bumper, they were yours. And they were an advertisement to others.

Tired of trying to convince national staffers, I decided to do it on my own. I produced a range of "Maryland for Clinton/Gore" posters, buttons and stickers. Many were distributed by more volunteers and many were distributed to Democratic politicians and operatives throughout Maryland. For the first time, I had the opportunity to test my style of campaigning around the state, which meant in suburban and white areas. As I would have expected, the style of campaigning worked well. It was not meant for just urban, black Baltimore.

I insisted that the Maryland Clinton/Gore campaign have no hierarchy. People all over the state lobbied me to be appointed County chair or chief of this or that. It was not so much that they wanted to run the campaign as it was that they wanted some credit when it came time to place people into the Administration. I resisted and there were no County Chairs designated. If people wanted to do something, I simply encouraged them to go do it. And if two of them did the same thing, so much the better.

We did our normal direct voter contact and we worked hard to make the Clinton-Gore ticket visible throughout the state. In the end, it worked. We won handily in November 1992. Maryland was second only to Arkansas among the fifty states in the percentage of votes received by the Democratic ticket. Field visibility had done its job.

### **Ch. 13. Going Statewide - Curry and Glendening in 1994.**

1994 put my theories to the test again. I went outside Baltimore in a big way for the first time.

I was involved in two races. I ran one my way; I helped in another which was not. The comparison confirmed the value of direct voter contact and visibility.

The critical election for me in 1994 was Wayne Curry's race for County Executive in Prince George's County, a suburban Washington area which has a substantial African American population.

When I got to Prince George's early in 1994, Curry was unknown to most voters, placing third or fourth in the polls behind several well-known white and African American officeholders. He had volunteers but they were not organized.

We immediately started a phone bank. Even though the winter weather was so bad that we had only a couple of volunteers on some evenings, someone was always making telephone calls. Gradually, we built up the visibility and the volunteer base. To lend them a hand, I sent volunteers from Baltimore, who knew how to do visibility, to Prince George's to put up signs along with the local residents.

We followed in Prince George's the same principles we had used in urban Baltimore and it worked. We used substantive pieces particularly effectively. We created a tabloid, *The PG Pulse*, which we sent out several times during the election. The principal opponent, a conservative County Councilwoman named

Sue Mills, had a long record. We carefully researched it and put together a sixteen page tabloid documenting dozens of problem areas. There were no thirty second sound bites. There were descriptions and documentation, laid out for 200,000 County voters.

I was repeatedly urged to go on television. As the campaign drew to a close, Curry had more money than his opponents. However, television in the Washington market is expensive. It did not make sense to me. That same money could be better used in the County distributing the tabloids and identifying voters. And we won.

We also saved the Gubernatorial election for Parris Glendening by rolling up an impressive majority for him in Baltimore in both the primary and the general election. The Glendening campaign represented politics as usual. Most people in Baltimore were learning about Glendening, then the Prince George's County Executive, from television. It was a distant and antiseptic sell.

I had to demonstrate to Glendening the power of visibility. I had volunteers plaster the parking lot outside his campaign headquarters with posters, and we put them all along Route 1, which was the way he had to drive to the office every day from his home. We eventually squeezed out money for our kind of field operation.

In Baltimore, we abandoned the Glendening strategy and did it our way. We went back to direct voter contact and a hands-on get out the vote campaign. It carried him through the primary, in which he defeated the Lieutenant Governor, who was from the Baltimore area, and through the general, where the large turnout in Baltimore provided a narrow 6,000 vote margin of victory statewide.

Glendening's Republican opponent, Ellen Sauerbrey, in fact used our tactics well. She defeated a better-known, more moderate Republican, Helen D. Bentley, in their primary, and then almost beat Glendening, even though her politics were to the right of most Marylanders. She used phones, direct voter contact and substantive message to mobilize her voters and get them to the polls. It almost worked, despite her lack of appeal to moderate Maryland.

#### **Ch. 14. Taking It All in Baltimore in 1995.**

In 1995, Kurt Schmoke faced a serious electoral challenge from the popular President of the City Council, a white woman named Mary Pat Clarke.

As a two-term incumbent, Kurt had to convince people that he had delivered for them over the prior eight years. That objective was not going to be easy; *The Sun*, the City's only major newspaper had long ago decided that it wanted Kurt out and had worked hard to attack him on virtually every front since the last election.

In fact, as the campaign started in early 1995, *The Sun* ran a series of stories on a housing

OFFICIAL  
**DEMOCRATIC**  
BALLOT

General Election ★ November 7, 1995

<b>MAYOR</b> KURT <b>SCHMOKE</b> LEVER 1A	<b>PRESIDENT CITY COUNCIL</b> LAWRENCE <b>BELL</b> LEVER 2A	<b>COMPTROLLER</b> JOAN <b>PRATT</b> LEVER 3A
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**5th Councilmanic District**

**CITY COUNCIL**

HELEN L. <b>HOLTON</b> LEVER 4A	STEPHANIE C. <b>RAWLINGS</b> LEVER 5A	ROCHELLE RIKKI <b>SPECTOR</b> LEVER 6A
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**VOTE YES FOR THE  
CITY LOANS**

- A** COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
- B** RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL FINANCING
- C** ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- D** SINAI HOSPITAL
- E** ASBESTOS REMOVAL
- F** PARKS & RECREATION
- G** BALTIMORE ZOO
- H** SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

**YOUR VOTE IS IMPORTANT!**

Authority: The Kurt Schmoke Committee, Ronald M. Shapiro, Treasurer

Kurt Schmoke for Mayor, 1995

rehabilitation program which had come under attack from HUD. It repeatedly trumpeted allegations that millions had been misspent and that some of the money had gone to relatives of the Mayor and other City officials.

Although *The Sun* may have seemed like the principal opponent, Mary Pat Clarke was a formidable candidate - at first glance. She had been around for many years and had strong alliances in the African American community, as well as in the white community. Her feminist message potentially struck a further responsive chord.

The campaign had elements of the old. There were signs, larger phone banks and bumper stickers. However, the clear innovation here was the intensity of the substantive message. People had to be convinced that Kurt had in fact worked hard for eight years and deserved four more.

We put out two remarkable documents. One was a 155 page book entitled *Reasons to be Proud*, which described a wide variety of the Administration's accomplishments and cited dozens of articles from the Mayor's nemesis, *The Sun*, as proof. The other was a series of individual "neighborhood reports" which were ultimately combined into a single tabloid which documented in detail virtually everything the Mayor had done for each of the City's 50 neighborhoods. Both documents were sent to Democratic households throughout the City.

The printed word overcame *The Sun*. Later interviews demonstrated that we had convinced people that even if there were problems in Baltimore, Kurt had done a good job in difficult times.

We did do a small amount of television and radio toward the end of the campaign. There was a positive ad that reinforced the printed material, and a piece targeted toward the silliness of some of Mary Pat's previous legislative proposals.

While the media's polls said that Mary Pat had pulled within four points within three weeks of the primary election, we won by 20 points. We had built a case of substantive accomplishment in print and merely used the electronic media to compare it to how little our opponent had done.

## **Ch. 15. Epilogue... Same old Argument in 1996.**

This year, I am a member of the Democratic National Committee's Finance Board, a group whose members pledge to raise at least \$350,000 each for the upcoming election.

At a briefing of the Board early this year, we were shown proposed commercials and told that the President's campaign would spend most of its money on media and virtually none on field.

When Doug Sosnick, the White House Political Director, asked for comments on the commercials, I decided not to talk about commercials but about people. I asked how the campaign would "close the sale"



to the voter. What were they going to do to allow voters to "buy in?" I proposed spending real money on a national bumper sticker effort.

I had no more luck convincing anyone this year than I did in 1976 or 1992.

After the briefing, we went across the street to the White House for lunch with the President, where I ran into my old law school classmate, the President's Deputy Chief of Staff, Harold Ickes. I tried out my proposal again, and although he was most polite hearing me out, I knew I had not convinced him either.

I subsequently made the same pitch to the National Committee's Chairman, Don Fowler. He seemed to understand, and I have noticed that there are now "Clinton-Gore '96" bumper stickers being sent out in packets to supporters.

In any event, the campaign in Maryland will go much as it has before. I am having my own bumper stickers printed.

*(The rest of the chapter will be written over the course of the election.)*