

CHAPTER 14

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS: JOHNSON AGAINST GOLDWATER

Clark Schooler was genuinely surprised that the world did not stop spinning at the moment Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law. Clark had been only a bit player in that great legislative drama. But Clark had so pointed his every effort and every ability at getting the new law enacted that, it seemed to Clark, all human history should have ended when the long struggle for the civil rights bill at last was over.

But life did go on. On July 31, 1964, Clark's sojourn as a Capitol Fellow was over. To celebrate the end of their time in Washington together, the Capitol Fellows and their spouses and friends boarded a "party boat" on the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. Operated by the National Park Service, the boat was a former canal barge that had been converted from hauling freight to hosting a stand-up social gathering and a buffet dinner. A real live mule hauled the old tow boat through the C. and O. Canal Park on a lovely summer's night.

The old Chesapeake and Ohio Canal was one of the things Clark liked best about life in Washington, D.C. The actual canal, which stretched from Georgetown to Cumberland, Maryland, had been abandoned as a working canal in the 1930s. The old canal bed paralleled the Potomac River, so walking the old canal included beautiful river scenery along with canal scenery.

The tow path on the canal, along which mules had walked pulling canal boats up and down, had been converted by the National Park Service into one of America's best and most scenic biker-hiker trails. Clark loved to be out walking or bicycling on the old canal. He particularly enjoyed inspecting the ruins of old stone locks, the gated portions of the canal that were used to lift the canal boats from one water level of the canal to another.

So Clark was delighted that a dinner party on a barge ride on the old Chesapeake and Ohio Canal was going to be the final social event of his year as a Capitol Fellow. Clark took Bonnie and Carl brought Vonda Belle to this final event of the Capitol Fellows program. Clark experienced both joy and melancholy that evening. He was joyous because his year as a Capitol Fellow had been unusually challenging and exciting. But he also felt melancholy, because he was going to greatly miss working on Capitol Hill with Senator Kuchel.

Upon returning to his job in the Washington bureau of the Patriot Press newspaper chain, Clark was immediately assigned to a Patriot Press News Squadron covering the 1964 Democratic National Convention. The party confab was to be held in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in late August of 1964.

The convention delegates would be able to enjoy the famous beach and more than six miles of boardwalk in Atlantic City. In between lavish parties at the city's famous row of ocean front hotels, the delegates would formally vote Lyndon Johnson as the 1964 Democratic nominee for president.

Clark dutifully pointed out to his superiors at the Patriot Press newspapers that he was a Republican and perhaps could not be trusted to cover the Democratic Convention. His journalistic bosses would have none of it. "This is your chance to test your objectivity as a newsman," said Jim Senitall, the Patriot Press organization's top Washington correspondent. "You can work on training yourself to keep your partisan biases out of your reporting."

By 1964, the national conventions were no longer true nominating conventions. Budding political analysts such as Clark Schooler referred to them as ratifying conventions. One of the major candidates for the party nomination for president always had enough delegate votes to win the nomination even before the national convention began. Careful spade work at state conventions and winning most of the presidential primaries usually enabled one candidate to quickly wrap up a majority of the convention delegates.

"It's not like the good old days," Jim Senitall told Clark wistfully. "As recently as 1952, just twelve years ago, national conventions often began with no one candidate having a majority of the delegates lined up. During convention week, the various candidates would promise things like Cabinet posts and seats on the Supreme Court in order to get key delegates to give them their votes. Or sometimes the candidates would promise big U.S. Government projects for a delegate's home state. It was really exciting. You often didn't know until the last day who was going to actually win the nomination."

"But that seems to be all over now," Jim Senitall continued. "John F.

Kennedy really furthered the trend in 1960. He lined up lots of delegates at the state conventions and then won six presidential primaries. Kennedy already had five votes more than he needed when the convention chairperson banged down the gavel and called the 1960 Democratic National Convention to order.”

Clark listened dutifully to Jim’s little lecture. “It sounds to me,” Clark commented, “as if I’m on my way to a coronation rather than a convention.”

Clark Schooler drove up to Atlantic City in his 1951 Ford Victoria hardtop convertible. He took one of the nation’s oldest highways, U.S. 40, which also was known as the National Road. U.S. 40 stretched all the way from Atlantic City to San Francisco, California, and passed through Baltimore on its way west. With every window in his automobile open, Clark drove through the incredible heat and humidity of a hot and sunny East Coast August day.

With Lyndon Johnson already having the nomination safely in hand, Clark thought, this would probably be one of the dullest week’s of his life. Clark was genuinely fearful that there would be virtually no news for him to report and write up for the millions of readers of Patriot Press newspapers.

Clark was saved from that fate by a civil rights struggle. The white politicians who were firmly in control of the Mississippi Democratic Party had sent a state delegation to the Democratic National Convention that was composed of white persons only. Despite the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in early July, Mississippi’s white Democrats had refused to put even one or two token blacks in the Mississippi delegation.

Inspired by the recent gains of the civil rights movement, a group of black Mississippians formed the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. The key word in that name was “Freedom.” This group elected an all-black delegation to the Democratic National Convention and raised the money to send those delegates to Atlantic City for convention week. This rival organization demanded that the national Democratic Party, in the spirit of racial equality, seat the black delegation from Mississippi, rather than the white delegation, on the convention floor.

Suddenly Clark found himself at the epicenter of a major national news story. With the presidential nomination already decided, the national press corps was gleeful to have something really exciting to cover. Suddenly the members of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party were all over the newspapers and network television news. The boardwalk and the grand hotels in Atlantic City suddenly turned into a stage on which Mississippi blacks cried out for justice and highlighted the inequities of living in one of the nation’s most segregated states.

Out on the boardwalk in front of the Atlantic City convention center, a group of black and white demonstrators marched in silent protest against racial segregation in the all-white Mississippi Democratic Party. These protesters were visible to all the delegates as they entered and left the convention hall. The demonstrators also were photographed for the nation's newspapers and televised for the evening network news.

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party presented a very difficult problem to President Johnson. The white delegation from Mississippi had, after all, been elected according to Mississippi state law. The blacks in the Freedom Democratic Party delegation had moral credentials but no legal credentials. And, as long lines of delegates marched past the boardwalk demonstrators on their way into the convention hall, there was a growing sentiment among Northern and Western delegates to recognize the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in some highly visible and rewarding way.

To Lyndon Johnson, the obvious solution to the problem was compromise. The president sent two of his most trusted allies, Hubert Humphrey and Joseph Rauh, Jr., to try to broker a deal between the white and black Mississippians. Humphrey was to try to appease the white Southerners. Rauh was to work with the black Mississippians. It was a sensational break for Clark Schooler. Because the two men knew him from the civil rights bill struggle, Humphrey and Rauh both gave Clark personal interviews as they struggled to find a solution to the "Mississippi problem."

National conventions are organized under a committee system, exactly as Congress is. Major committees hold hearings and make policy recommendations to be adopted by the full membership of the convention on the convention floor. An example of a national convention committee is the Resolutions Committee, which debates the Party Platform and then recommends specific language to be voted upon by the entire convention.

The Credentials Committee's task was to listen to the pleas of those persons who contended they should be seated as bona fide delegates to the convention with the privilege to vote. It was not unusual for contested delegations to appear at national conventions in the early 20th Century. Often, in a heated race between two strong candidates, one delegation from a particular state would appear supporting Candidate A. Then another delegation would arrive from the same state committed to Candidate B. The job of the Credentials Committee was to recommend to the entire convention which delegation should be seated.

Thus the Credentials Committee at the 1964 Democratic National Convention became the arena in which the battle between the white Mississippians and the black Mississippians was fought out. Joseph Rauh negotiated strongly on behalf of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, but

eventually he was forced to acknowledge that the current laws of Mississippi had to be followed and all of the white delegates recommended for seating on the convention floor. The best deal that Rauh could get for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party was that two black Mississippians would be admitted to the national convention as at-large delegates with one vote each.

That deal, when it was announced, came nowhere near satisfying the demands of the black Mississippians. In an open act of defiance against President Lyndon Johnson and the Democratic Party, many of the Freedom Democrats stealthily made their way on to the convention floor. Most of them simply got entrance tickets from sympathetic white delegates from the North and the West. Once on the floor, the black Mississippians took the seats reserved for the white delegates from Mississippi. They sat with their arms locked together and stubbornly resisted all efforts by the sergeant at arms at the convention to get them to leave.

At ratifying conventions, where the nominee for president has been determined long before the national convention begins, the name of the game is stage management. Properly controlled and orchestrated, a national convention can be a week of free advertising for the presidential nominee and the political party. There are speeches by leading members of the party, supportive demonstrations on behalf of the party presidential candidate, and tons of exposure for the candidate and the candidate's spouse and children. All of this, with Hollywood style production values, can be presented via the mass media to the American people.

But, by the same token, unruly protests on the convention floor, or in the streets outside the convention hall, can turn a national convention into a public relations disaster for a political party. And, with the invasion of the convention floor by the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and their illegal occupation of the white Mississippians' seats, the 1964 Democratic National Convention was well on its way to being bad advertising, not good advertising.

Clearly the national convention, by 1964, had metamorphosed from a political event into a media event. In fact, the more than 5,500 news reporters and television and radio technicians present outnumbered the convention delegates.

Clark Schooler had a bird's eye view of the proceedings from the Patriot Press desk in the press section of the convention hall. Bernard Martin, the black reporter who had covered the riot at Ol' Miss with Clark, had risen steadily in the Patriot Press organization during the year that Clark was working as a Capitol Fellow in Washington, D.C. As a result, Bernard Martin was in charge of the Patriot Press News Squadron covering the 1964

Democratic National Convention.

Clark had been the first Patriot Press reporter to spot the black Mississippians coming into the convention hall and heading for the seats of the all-white Mississippi delegation. "Hey, Bernard," Clark said. "It looks like some blacks are trying to take over the Mississippi section of the convention floor. What do you want to do about it?"

Bernard Martin did exactly what Clark thought he would do. He hurried down on to the convention floor to try to interview the invading black Mississippians personally. As he hurried away, however, Bernard Martin yelled an order back to Clark: "Go outside and see if things have also gone berserk in the streets or down on the boardwalk."

The time of day was early evening, just before the eight o'clock hour when the convention was scheduled to begin. Back when national conventions were true nominating conventions, the conventions met during the daytime. And sometimes, when there was a real fight over who would win the presidential nomination, a convention might last well into the night. But by 1964, in the age of television, the most important sessions of national conventions were scheduled in the evening. That way, the convention proceedings would be covered on prime time television when the largest TV audiences were watching.

It was twilight when Clark walked out of the convention hall, which was located right on the boardwalk in Atlantic City. The first thing Clark did was check the streets immediately surrounding the convention center. Traffic was moving normally, and the sidewalks were filled with tourists and vacationers. There was not a protester or a demonstrator to be seen. Clark then checked the boardwalk where, for more than three days, the silent vigil had been going on to support the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

The protesters had situated themselves on a portion of the boardwalk close to the beach in Atlantic City. Behind them, across a broad stretch of some of the best beach sand in the United States, the waves of the Atlantic Ocean pounded upon the New Jersey shore. The breakers looked good, Clark noticed as he hurried to the site of the ongoing demonstration. His mind slipped into the vernacular. Surf's up, he thought. Because it was summertime, the entire scene was bathed in the warm pinkish and orangish glow of a setting summer sun.

The demonstrators were mainly black males. They were dressed in white cotton shirts and dark blue overalls. They looked exactly like Mississippi tenant farmers who had come to Atlantic City to fight for their right to be represented equally at the convention.

At the moment Clark walked up, the protesters were standing listening

to a speech. One of the protesters was James Farmer, a black man who was the national leader of CORE, the Congress of Racial Equality. Farmer had an injured eye and wore an eye patch over it. He made an inspiring sight, standing with the ocean to his back and with his eye patch catching the fading light of the setting sun.

“The Freedom delegation is on the convention floor,” Clark heard a demonstration leader say. “Our delegates are sitting in their deserved seats as black representatives of the state of Mississippi. We shall support them out here with our silence and our commitment.”

In front of the protesters, some 50 feet away, delegates were lined up to enter the convention hall. They could clearly see the demonstration. Some of the delegates occasionally yelled words of encouragement.

When the demonstration leader had finished his pep talk, the protesters began slowly walking in a circle on the boardwalk. Some of them carried small lighted candles which they carefully shielded from the light breeze blowing in off the ocean. As the demonstrators came by him along their circular path, Clark noticed for the first time that there were two women participating in the protest, one black and one white. Unlike the men in their overalls, the two women were dressed in blouses and wraparound skirts.

Clark did a double take when he recognized who the women were. The black woman was Vonda Belle Carter. The white woman was Bonnie Kanecton.

“You two are certainly full of surprises,” Clark said as Vonda Belle and Bonnie walked past him.

Clark then began walking along with the two of them so he could talk to them. In all sincerity, Clark asked:

“Are your fellow demonstrators really Mississippi tenant farmers?”

Bonnie Kanecton smiled. “If you’ll look closely,” she said, “those white shirts and blue overalls are all brand new. We’ve talked with these particular demonstrators. Many of them are black lawyers and businessmen from New York and New Jersey pretending to be Mississippi tenant farmers.”

“It didn’t take us long to figure that out,” Vonda Belle said, also smiling. “Hardly a one of them has a Southern accent.”

Before Clark could ask anything more, one of the black men in overalls said to him: “It certainly is nice to have a white man in a suit coat and necktie join our demonstration.”

The man’s comment seemed to be sincere, and that sincerity embarrassed Clark. “I’m actually a newspaper reporter,” Clark stammered back. “I’m just interviewing these demonstrators for the Patriot Press newspapers.”

Clark took out his pencil and his reporter's tablet to make it look like he really was interviewing Bonnie and Vonda Belle as he walked along beside them. Clark asked a question that emphasized his amazement at finding his two friends in Atlantic City.

"How did you get here?"

"We drove up together from Washington," Vonda Belle said matter-of-factly. "According to the newspapers, this obviously is the place for anyone who truly believes in civil rights." She said the word "truly" in such a way that Clark felt like a rabid segregationist for not grabbing a candle and marching all night long.

"But you're actually hurting the cause," Clark said, sounding a great deal like Lyndon Johnson. "Holding protest demonstrations right after we passed the greatest civil rights bill in American history is folly. All it's doing is driving white voters into the arms of Barry Goldwater, the Republican nominee for president. The voters all know that, as a states' rights conservative, Senator Goldwater voted against the civil rights bill."

"We black people always get nervous when white people start saying stop, or wait, or slow down," Vonda Belle replied. "The civil rights bill did not end all forms of racial discrimination in the United States. The situation with the Mississippi freedom delegation clearly illustrates that point."

Clark continued to argue. "But why not wait until after the November election? Then, after President Johnson's won and Barry Goldwater and his states' rights ideology have been repudiated by the voters, the civil rights movement can get underway again."

At this moment, Bonnie Kanecton decided to get into the conversation.

"Be realistic, Clark," she said with an earnestness that revealed concern for both the civil rights cause and Clark Schooler. "The quest for liberty and freedom for minority Americans is going to be a continuous and ongoing task. Our beloved Civil Rights Act was a beginning, not an ending. It's been a mighty battle, and great gains have been made. But many more battles lie ahead, and much remains to be done."

The conversation ended abruptly when the protesters began to sing a few verses of "We Shall Overcome," the unofficial anthem of the civil rights movement. It was just as well, Clark thought. Clark was in Atlantic City to work for the Patriot Press organization, not conduct theoretical discussions on minority rights with Vonda Belle and Bonnie.

Clark quickly bade the two young women goodbye and hurried back into the convention hall. As he left the boardwalk, he cast one last glance back at Bonnie. She waved and smiled at him, as if to say that it was all right for the two of them to see this situation somewhat differently.

When Clark returned to the Patriot Press desk in the press section, he

found the situation on the convention floor still out of control. The Mississippi freedom delegates refused to voluntarily leave their seats. By the same token, the Lyndon Johnson forces controlling the convention were reticent to use force to eject the freedom delegates from the convention hall. Finally, on the direct orders of President Johnson himself, the black Mississippians were pulled out of their chairs by security personnel and dragged or carried away.

In the end, the black Mississippians left Atlantic City, blaming their failure to get seated at the convention on Lyndon Johnson. But others left as well. The Mississippi and Alabama delegations, both of them all-white, marched indignantly and conspicuously out of the convention hall. They claimed that offering even two at-large delegates to the black Democrats of Mississippi was an unacceptable recognition of “illegal” delegates.

Once that disruptive scene was completed, however, the convention began to run as planned by Democratic Party leaders. The delegates played their assigned role of providing a background of enthusiastically cheering individuals in front of which Lyndon Johnson could accept the party nomination for president. The delegates had become so unimportant by 1964 that Clark Schooler mockingly referred to them as “movie extras” and nothing more.

There was the requisite ballot for president, but the roll call of the states was merely a formality since everyone knew that Lyndon Johnson was going to win. And, the night after the balloting made it official, Lyndon Johnson concluded the convention by giving his acceptance speech during prime time on national television.

Clark Schooler returned to Washington, D.C. He was immediately assigned to a Patriot Press News Squadron covering the 1964 presidential election campaign. The race was expected to be an interesting one. The Republican presidential nominee challenging incumbent Democratic President Lyndon Johnson was U.S. Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona. Goldwater was an outspoken conservative Republican who took strong right wing stands on a variety of domestic and foreign issues.

When he first heard he would be covering the 1964 presidential election, Clark visualized himself traveling with Lyndon Johnson or Barry Goldwater, flying around the nation on the press plane that accompanied each candidate from state to state. Clark also saw himself riding on the press bus that took the reporters from campaign event to campaign event within a particular state. In this particular daydream, Clark spent much of his time chatting and socializing with David Broder of the *Washington Post*, James Reston of the *New York Times*, and other leading political reporters and commentators of the time.

But that was not the case. Clark was assigned to remain in the nation's capital and cover the more intellectual aspects of the presidential election, such as the influence of the Electoral College and the television spot ads that Johnson and Goldwater were running against one another.

"The Electoral College is found in the United States Constitution," Clark pointed out to Carl Brimmer one day when the two young men were discussing the campaign. "The Founders did not trust the people to elect the president directly. They provided for each state to select electors who would do the actual voting for president. Each state was assigned one elector for each seat it had in the U.S. House of Representatives. In addition, each state received two more electors for its two seats in the U.S. Senate."

Carl Brimmer listened politely to Clark and then said lightheartedly: "Somehow, Clark, you turn any subject we discuss into a lecture."

"I can't help it," Clark replied. "I think that, similar to most Americans, you don't really understand how the Electoral College works."

"Sure, I do," Carl answered back. "Because the Electoral College is based mainly on the House of Representatives, the states with the largest populations have the largest number of electoral votes. In almost all states, when a state votes for a particular candidate, that candidate wins all of that state's electoral votes. The way to win a presidential election is to just win the big states with the largest numbers of electoral votes."

Now it was Carl who was lecturing. "Presidential candidates concentrate their efforts in states such as New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois," Carl said with an air of great authority. "Most of these states are located in the Northeast quadrant of the United States bounded by St. Louis, Milwaukee, Boston, and Washington. The only other place that's big and important is California."

Carl was on a roll. "The result is a theory called the Quad-Cali Theory," Carl explained. "To win the Electoral College, presidential candidates concentrate on the Quad, the Northeast quadrant of the United States, and on Cali, the state of California."

Clark Schooler smiled the smile of one who possessed superior knowledge. "Close, but no cigar," Clark said. "It's more subtle than that. When public opinion polls show New York or California to be voting strongly for one candidate or the other, neither candidate will bother to campaign in that state, even though it has a giant pot of electoral votes. Furthermore, a presidential candidate often will campaign in a middle-sized state, a state with a middle-sized population, when polls show that the race is close and either candidate might win that state and all of its electoral votes."

"So the general rule," Clark said with a tone of triumph, "is that presidential candidates campaign in the largest states, population wise, where

polls show the race to be close.”

Carl Brimmer absorbed all this weighty information and then said: “All right! Your analysis is more subtle than mine. So tell me, Mr. Republican know-it-all, is that how Barry Goldwater is going to win this race for the White House. Is he just running in states where the polls show the contest to be close?”

“No,” Clark responded. “He’s pursuing a completely different strategy. He calls it a Southern strategy. Goldwater seems to be giving the Northeast quadrangle of New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, etc., to Lyndon Johnson without a fight. Goldwater proposes, with his conservative ideology, to steal the entire South from the Democratic Party and get it to vote Republican. He plans to add in the more conservative states in the Rocky Mountain West plus California. He thinks he can carry California because of all the conservative Republican voters in Orange County in the Los Angeles suburbs.”

“As a U.S. senator, Barry Goldwater voted against the 1964 civil rights bill,” Clark continued. “It was part of his Electoral College strategy to win the South. He plans to pry the South away from its normally Democratic leanings with his opposition to civil rights.”

“Sometimes,” Clark rambled on, “you hear Goldwater’s Southern strategy referred to as the Sunbelt strategy. The Sunbelt is the strip of states across the southern United States which have experienced rapid population growth since the end of World War II. Three of those states are California, Texas, and Florida. Those states are already populated enough for each to have a large number of electoral votes. And those three states are attracting more people and growing larger all the time.”

“Sunbelt theorists,” Clark concluded, “look with disdain on the Rustbelt, the old industrial states of the Northeast and Midwest that are filled with worn-out and rusted-out old factory buildings. They argue electoral power in the United States is shifting from the Rustbelt to the Sunbelt, and that will help elect Goldwater to the presidency.”

Carl Brimmer listened to all this high-powered Electoral College logic and then shook his head in wonderment. “OK,” he said. “You’re a veritable political Sherlock. But what’s Lyndon Johnson doing to head Barry Goldwater off?”

Clark was more than happy to strategize for the Democrats as well as the Republicans. “As far as I can tell,” Clark said, “Lyndon Johnson and the Democrats are playing it straight Quad-Cali. President Johnson is willing to let Goldwater have the South, but that’s all right if Johnson can hold the Quad and California together. It’s now clear the state each of them has to win to make his Electoral College theory work is California.”

In addition to writing articles for the Patriot Press newspapers on the

Electoral College, Clark Schooler covered the political strategy of the Johnson and Goldwater campaigns for president.

Lyndon Johnson, Clark told his readers, was running a standard liberal Democratic campaign. Johnson was emphasizing the “deal me in” strategy, the idea developed during President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal that the U.S. Government should share the great wealth of the United States with less fortunate groups in the society. Thus New Deal programs such as Social Security and unemployment compensation and public welfare collected taxes from the middle class and well-to-do and shared this money with the elderly, the out-of-work, and the economically destitute.

Among intellectuals, it was fashionable to refer to this particular method of winning votes as “redistribution politics.” Money was redistributed from the wealthy to the poor in return for votes.

Lyndon Johnson called for a U.S. Government program to provide health care for the elderly. In addition, Johnson promised to undertake a series of U.S. Government poverty programs to reduce economic hardship throughout the nation. Johnson referred to his package of proposed government subsidies as the Great Society.

The political strategy of President Johnson’s opponent, Republican nominee Barry Goldwater, was considerably different. Goldwater pledged to cut U.S. Government welfare programs rather than expand them. Goldwater called for more individual responsibility in the United States and for less dependence on the government.

And, with great fervor, Goldwater called for freeing the state governments from rules and regulations forced upon them by the U.S. Government in Washington, D.C. That position was a thinly-veiled attack on all the rules and regulations imposed on the states by the recently enacted Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Clark reminded his readers over and over again that these were the traditional ideologies of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. Ever since Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal, Clark emphasized, the Democrats had been strongly pro-government and the Republicans had called for less government. The Democratic Party had been for collective responsibility, Clark wrote, while the Republicans had hammered away in favor of individual initiative.

The most interesting thing about the 1964 presidential election, Clark emphasized in his writing, was that the ideologies of the two political parties were so frankly and clearly stated. The choice between the Democratic candidate and the Republican candidate in 1964 was an unusually clear one.

In the post-World War II years, the political weapon of choice in the United States was the 30-second television spot ad. The Johnson forces were

aided in their advertisement writing by Barry Goldwater's tendency to take strong stands on controversial political issues.

For instance, although U.S. troops were serving in South Vietnam only as military advisers in 1964, there was considerable debate as to whether United States troops should be serving in Vietnam at all. Barry Goldwater stepped into the middle of this controversy by stating that, if elected president, he would give the authority to use tactical nuclear weapons to U.S. military commanders in Vietnam. Up to this time, it had been assumed that nuclear weapons would never be used by the United States except upon the direct orders of the U.S. president.

That statement by Goldwater was all that the Johnson forces needed. A TV spot ad came out picturing a little girl, about five years old, playing in a field and picking the petals off a daisy. The camera focus was intentionally fuzzy, giving the impression that the little girl was having an enjoyable, almost dream-like experience.

Suddenly, the peace and happiness of the scene was shattered by a male voice giving the backward countdown of a missile launching. "Three. Two. One. Zero," the voice said sharply, and suddenly the screen erupted into the rising mushroom cloud of a nuclear explosion. Then another voice spoke softly and convincingly, articulating the main message of the ad:

"There is a man running for president who supports the free and easy use of nuclear weapons in Vietnam. Peace loving Americans cannot let that happen. Be certain to vote in this presidential election. The stakes are too high not to."

The ad concluded visually with the words: "Lyndon Johnson for President."

That one television spot ad set off a storm of controversy in the print press. Was it fair to imply that Goldwater wanted to start a nuclear war that would kill little American girls? Was picturing an actual nuclear explosion going too far in criticizing Goldwater's position?

All at once Clark Schooler found that his assignment to cover campaign advertising was a juicy one. Clark's stories were the one's getting on page one of the Patriot Press newspapers. The reporters actually covering the candidates were having their stories demoted to page two or page three inside the newspaper. The situation inspired Clark to come up with Schooler's First Law of Presidential Campaigns. To wit: What the ads are saying is more important than what the candidates are saying.

The anti-Goldwater ad with the nuclear explosion in it was eventually pulled off the air by the "Johnson For President" campaign. But by that time, Clark carefully pointed out to his readers, that 30-second spot had been played over and over again on news programs reporting the controversy over

the ad. That resulted in millions of dollars of free advertising for Lyndon Johnson. And the entire incident firmly established in millions of voters' minds that Barry Goldwater was the war candidate and Lyndon Johnson was the peace candidate.

In his effort to emphasize individualism and personal responsibility in his campaign for president, Barry Goldwater proposed that the Social Security retirement system be made voluntary rather than compulsory. Goldwater wanted to let people invest their Social Security money in the stock market, if they wanted to, rather than be forced to give it to a government-managed program.

Here was another opportunity for a Lyndon Johnson 30-second television spot ad. The ad writers took a very simple approach. The ad opened with a picture of a Social Security membership card. The announcer's voice accused Goldwater of trying to sabotage the Social Security system by letting wealthy people invest their Social Security funds in the stock market. That would leave no money for poor and middle-class persons, the announcer said, who only had Social Security to support them in their old age.

Just before the end of the ad, two human hands appeared and tore the Social Security card in half. The hands proceeded to tear the Social Security card into little bits. The announcer's voice concluded: "There is a man running for president who wants to take away our Social Security retirement plan. Average Americans cannot let that happen. Be certain to vote in this presidential election. The stakes are too high not to."

And, on the screen, the final words: "Lyndon Johnson for President."

Although he was a Republican, Clark thought the Social Security ad was stunning. "Every working American has a Social Security card in his or her wallet," Clark wrote. "Virtually all citizens of the United States are depending on that card to provide for them financially in their later years of life. Having two human hands, ostensibly Barry Goldwater's hands, tear up the Social Security card brought the gravity of this issue home to the average voter in a highly visual and compelling way."

The 1964 presidential campaign ended up being a very rich one for innovative television spot ads. In the end, Clark's favorite turned out to be a Lyndon Johnson ad based on an offhand comment by Barry Goldwater. The Republican nominee had stated for the record that, in his opinion, the United States would be a better country if someone "sawed off" the East Coast and let it "float out to sea." That simple act, Goldwater implied, would eliminate large numbers of liberal Democratic voters from the national electorate.

Lyndon Johnson's ad writers saw another chance to further mine the electorate for votes. A 30-second spot ad opened with a map of the entire

eastern half of the United States, starting at about the Mississippi River and going eastward to the East Coast and the Atlantic Ocean.

As the announcer's voice began reading the Barry Goldwater quote, a handsaw began sawing off the East Coast states. The saw worked its way down the western borders of New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia. Eventually, when the saw had finished its work, the East Coast states began moving as if they were floating free of the rest of the nation. Then, as the ad concluded, the entire East Coast floated off into the Atlantic Ocean and, eventually, out of the television picture.

All that remained of the United States in the ad was a truncated nation that started with Ohio and Kentucky and Tennessee and went westward.

Once again Clark Schooler was impressed by the visual impact of the ad. "Residents of the East Coast immediately fixed their eyes on their home state," Clark wrote. "Or, more finitely than that, on the spot in which they lived in their home state. East Coast viewers were completely aware of when the saw went by their home state. And the viewers could feel the wave action when the East Coast was sawed free of the U.S. mainland."

The Johnson campaign saturated the East Coast with that particular 30-second television spot ad. And most of the states where the ad played, such as New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, were heavily populated states with large numbers of electoral votes.

Suddenly it was presidential election day 1964. The public opinion polls were all predicting a Lyndon Johnson landslide, and the polls turned out to be more than correct. The electoral slaughter of Barry Goldwater and the Republicans began in New England, where swing states such as Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine went thunderingly for President Johnson.

The Democratic tidal wave surged across the American Midwest, that traditional breadbasket of the Republican Party. Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Missouri all voted for Johnson. Even Senator Everett Dirksen's home state of Illinois went heavily for the president. And the rising Democratic waters engulfed even the High Plains and Rocky Mountain states, where such Republican diehard strongholds as Kansas and Nebraska and Wyoming and Idaho repudiated Goldwater-style conservatism and voted instead for Lyndon Johnson's brand of liberalism.

When it was all over, the 1964 presidential election had redrawn the map of American politics. Barry Goldwater carried only six states. One was his own home state of Arizona. The others were the five Deep South states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. All the rest of America, 44 states in all, had voted for Lyndon Johnson.

"It's incredible," Clark Schooler grumbled, as much to the television

set as to anyone else in the room. “The Republicans have always dreamed of stealing away the Solid South from the Democratic Party. Tonight, with Barry Goldwater as their presidential candidate, the Republicans succeeded in winning the five states of deepest Dixie. But it cost them almost all the rest of the United States to do it. That’s no way to restructure and rebuild a political party.”

Clark was watching the election returns with the three people who had become his closest friends in Washington. They were Bonnie Kanecton, Carl Brimmer, and Vonda Belle Carter. The four young people were on the election night equivalent of a double date. They had gathered together at an election night party in Georgetown to, as Clark put it, “watch the voters of America paint an electoral picture of the nation.”

The electoral picture that soon emerged was one of Lyndon Johnson having unusually long presidential coattails. Large numbers of Democrats were being elected to the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, some of them from states and districts that were considered heavily Republican.

Carl Brimmer, an ever loyal member of the Democratic Party, was particularly delighted by the large numbers of Democrats who were winning Senate and House seats from the Republicans. “With each new report,” Carl gloated to Clark, “we seem to mine another nugget of electoral gold for the Democratic Party.”

Carl’s enthusiasm was shared by Vonda Belle Carter. “My parents,” Vonda Belle said at one point in the evening, “are like many older blacks. My parents were born and raised Republicans. After all, the Republican Party is the party of Abraham Lincoln and the emancipation of the slaves. And I always kind of thought of myself as a Republican. But this election tonight has won me over to the Democratic Party. Totally!”

The results of the 1964 presidential election were hardest of all on Bonnie Kanecton. A lifelong Republican from the Chicago suburbs, she was watching her chosen political party suffer one of the worst defeats in its history.

“It’s all so unfair,” Bonnie said, sounding as if she might burst into tears at any moment. “Senator Dirksen worked so hard on the civil rights bill. He really thought his efforts to get his fellow Republican senators to vote for cloture would win support for the Republican Party among black voters. But then Barry Goldwater came along and nullified Dirksen’s efforts by voting against the civil rights bill and winning the Republican nomination for president.”

“Dirksen did such a good, good thing for American blacks,” Bonnie concluded sorrowfully. “But now Dirksen’s been completely overshadowed

by Goldwater. Dirksen's good deeds for American blacks are being totally ignored."

Vonda Belle Carter replied to Bonnie's sad lament with some measure of sympathy. "Sorry," Vonda Belle said, "but I'm one of those American blacks you just referred to. For me, stopping Barry Goldwater and his conservative ideology was a ten-times higher priority than rewarding Senator Dirksen for his laudable efforts on the civil rights bill."

Clark Schooler was amazed that so many Republican candidates for Congress had gone down with Goldwater's ship. Lyndon Johnson was not just going to remain the American president. Johnson was going to be a Democratic president with some of the largest majorities the Democratic Party had ever enjoyed in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives.

In The Interim

National conventions are as stage managed in the 2000s as they were in the 1960s, only more so. In 1992 the Democratic Party called upon two Hollywood television producers, Harry Thomason and his wife, Linda Bloodworth Thomason, to script virtually every detail of the Democratic National Convention. The Thomasons played down political speeches and strongly played up warm and fuzzy TV scenes of William Jefferson Clinton, the Democratic Party nominee-designate, dancing with his wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton, and talking with his teenage daughter, Chelsea Clinton. The result was the kind of warm and fuzzy television that draws and enchants audiences but has very little to do with the more practical realities of American politics.

Hollywood style at national conventions also means tightly controlling the convention so that there are no negative images such as those presented by the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at the 1964 Democratic Convention. The only people who are allowed to appear on the official television coverage of the national convention are supporters of the designated party presidential nominee.

And, whenever possible, glitzy well-known Hollywood celebrities who support the political party are put on television. These nonpolitical headlines take the place of important elected party politicians, such as U.S. senators and members of the U.S. House of Representatives, whose political speeches and complex political proposals tend to bore audiences.

The high spot of the year 2000 national conventions came when Albert Gore, Jr., the Democratic Party nominee-designate, gave a warm and meaningful kiss to his wife, Tipper Gore. Although Gore narrowly lost the

2000 presidential election to Republican candidate George W. Bush, Gore's emotional kiss for his spouse, before a sizeable national television audience, was said to have energized his presidential campaign more than any other event at the national convention.

Presidential election campaigns remain much the same in the 2000s as in the 1960s. The Electoral College is still in effect. Therefore Republican and Democratic presidential nominees continue to concentrate their efforts in states where the public opinion polls show the race to be close. Even a populous state with a large number of electoral votes, such as California or New York, will receive minimal attention from presidential candidates if polls show the state going solidly for one candidate or the other.

And television advertising, particularly 30-second spot ads, continues a big part of campaigning for president of the United States. In fact, it is the high cost of television ads that causes both political parties in the 2000s to put a heavy emphasis on raising large sums of money to pay for those television ads.

A major change has been the rise in importance of presidential television debates. Ever since 1976, the Democratic and Republican presidential nominees have met in a series of two or three face-to-face television debates in the October before the November presidential election. These debates are conducted in an even-handed style with officially nonpartisan journalists serving as moderators and question askers.

These formal television debates can have an effect on a presidential campaign, particularly when one candidate makes a particularly pointed and memorable statement. More importantly, presidential candidates need to avoid a major gaffe when debating. Incumbent Republican President Gerald Ford greatly weakened his 1976 campaign for reelection to the White House when he erroneously stated that Poland was no longer a Communist country under the control of the Soviet Union. That statement would not become true until 13 years later, in 1989, when the Berlin Wall was torn down and the Soviet Union lost control of its Eastern European satellite nations.

The most important change in presidential elections since the 1960s has been the shift of the South from the Democratic to the Republican Party. This quantum change in United States voting behavior took place slowly and steadily throughout the 1970s and the 1980s. As the Southern states, and their large pot of electoral votes, slipped away from the Democratic Party, the Democrats were forced to rely more heavily on the votes of racial minorities, particularly African-American voters in East Coast, Midwest, and West Coast cities. The new Democratic base became the populous states in the Northeast and the Midwest, with occasional help from the most

populous state of all, California.

But the shift of the old South to the Republican Party continued relentlessly in the 1990s. In the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections, Republican candidate George W. Bush carried every one of the states that seceded from the Union during the Civil War. The old Solid South of the Democratic Party appeared to be gone forever.

By the early 2000s, there was a new Republican base consisting of the entire South plus the heavily Republican High Plains and Rocky Mountain states. It closely resembled the electoral coalition that Barry Goldwater had attempted to assemble in 1964, but which Goldwater only carried in part. The Southern strategy, a losing strategy in 1964, had become a winning strategy by the time of the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections.

