

5. NEW HAMPSHIRE

It was that classic New England trait of frugality that accidentally caused New Hampshire to have the first presidential primary. The New Hampshire state legislature created a presidential primary in 1913 and scheduled the election in the month of May. Only two years later, in 1915, a penny-pinching public official noticed that money could be saved by holding the presidential primary on Town Meeting Day. That was the day when town clerks and other local officials were chosen by the voters.

Every spring in New Hampshire, when the snow begins to melt and the ground begins to thaw, the back roads become muddy and impassable. To make it easy for New Hampshirites to get to the polls on Town Meeting Day, that day was scheduled in early March, when the ground and the back roads are still frozen and thus passable. So, when the presidential primary was combined with Town Meeting Day, the New Hampshire presidential primary moved to early March and accidentally became the first presidential primary in the nation.¹

But the New Hampshire presidential primary was a pretty dull affair from 1916 to 1948. That was because New Hampshirites voted for their specific delegates to the Democratic and Republican national conventions rather than voting directly for the presidential candidates by name. But that system ended in 1952. Sherman Adams, the GOP governor of the Granite State, began hatching a plot to steal the 1952 Republican nomination for General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the victorious commander of U.S. military forces in Europe during World War II.

Sherman Adams decided that New Hampshire should have a "beauty contest," a presidential primary in which the voters cast their ballots directly for their favorite candidate. Adams was certain that General "Ike" Eisenhower would win such an election in New Hampshire and thus get an early boost in his campaign for the 1952 GOP nomination. And things worked out just the way Governor Adams planned them. "Ike" won a big victory in New Hampshire and went on from there to win the Republican nomination and eventually get elected to the White House.²

But if New Hampshire was going to have a Republican presidential primary in 1952, there also had to be a similar primary in the Democratic Party. The incumbent Democratic president, Harry S. Truman, labeled this new version of the New Hampshire primary "eyewash" and refused to even visit the Granite State. That was a big mistake. A U.S. senator from Tennessee, Estes Kefauver, filed to run in New Hampshire and campaigned actively for votes. In a stunning upset, Kefauver defeated Truman, a sitting U.S. president. Shortly thereafter, President Truman announced he would not be seeking re-election to the White House.³

It was Senator Kefauver who first established a New Hampshire primary tradition of bypassing better-known national candidates by doing one-on-one, door-to-door, town-to-town campaigning at the grass roots. Kefauver also did the first "photo stunt" in the New Hampshire presidential primary, dressing in a heavy fur coat and getting his picture taken while riding in a dog sled across the snowy landscape of New Hampshire in the winter time.

Alas for Kefauver, all was for nought. The Tennessee senator won the New Hampshire primary. But the Democratic Party in 1952 gave its presidential nomination to Adlai Stevenson, the governor of Illinois. Stevenson was defeated by General Eisenhower in the general election in November.

But the early presidential primary created to benefit Dwight Eisenhower in 1952 has remained in its first place position ever since. With each passing quadrennial presidential election, the New Hampshire primary progressively gained fame as the crucial "first step" in the nomination process. The Iowa caucuses have given the New Hampshire primary a bit of competition where going first is concerned, but the New Hampshire festivities remain by far the more important and decisive of the two events.

The significance of the New Hampshire primary stemmed mainly from its powerful influence over voters in other states, particularly voters casting their ballots in presidential primaries held shortly after the New Hampshire voting. Political scientists began using the word

exaggeration to describe the way votes in the New Hampshire primary were reflected in the vote in subsequent primaries in other states. One scholar did a statistical study of the process and found New Hampshire's vote exaggeration to be "startling."⁴

Television news played a major role in building the national significance of the New Hampshire presidential primary. The Granite State is one of the most picturesque places one can imagine, particularly in winter. New Hampshire's many small towns, with their white clapboard churches and wooden frame houses, made sensational television backdrops for campaign events. And then there were the mountains, covered with pine trees and buried in snow. Shots of campaign buses and press vans ploughing through snow-packed roads in the New Hampshire hills provided enchanting television "set-up" pieces for formal campaign events such as speeches and town-hall meetings.

Many a newspaper and television reporter fell in love with getting to travel around New Hampshire every fourth winter. Longtime political reporters became very familiar with the state. The real veterans, those newsmen and newswomen who had spent decades covering national politics, gloried in the fact that they were covering their fourth or fifth New Hampshire primary. Many members of the press thus came to have a personal interest in building the mystique and the importance of the New Hampshire primary. Doing so guaranteed that they would be coming back four years later for more beautiful scenery and press camaraderie in a classic New England setting.

Another process was taking place as well. As the New Hampshire primary gained importance and influence, more presidential candidates campaigned there and more news reporters came to cover the proceedings. The result was a once-every-four-years economic boom for New Hampshire businesses. Restaurants, coffee shops, motels, hotels, car rental agencies, and bus companies all benefitted financially from the hordes of candidates, political managers, and news reporters that descended on the Granite State. Best of all, many of these visitors were on expense accounts and sought to sleep in the best hotel rooms and eat at the better-known restaurants. The

money flowed in as the political news about the presidential candidates flowed out.

And there was a double-payoff for New Hampshire from its early primary. Visually exciting scenes of the state played on television, and reporters wrote warmly descriptive stories of life in the Granite State. Viewers and readers could not help but notice that New Hampshire was a beautiful place to go on vacation - and coincidentally spend some money while there.

There are other charms to the New Hampshire presidential primary. The state is relatively small in size, with most of the population concentrated in an urbanized strip running east-to-west across southern New Hampshire. Thus it is a relatively short drive from one campaign event to another. Neither the candidates nor the news media have to spend long hours in a bus or automobile getting around the state. For the candidates, that makes New Hampshire a very manageable state where more time can be spent campaigning and less time wasted traveling from one event to another.

By the 1970s, it had only been 20 years since Sherman Adams and Dwight Eisenhower created the direct-vote New Hampshire primary. But by that time the state's political leaders were completely committed to maintaining New Hampshire's first place position in the presidential primary process. Thus, in 1975, when Massachusetts and Vermont sought to create a New England primary by voting on the same day as New Hampshire, Granite State political leaders became apoplectic. It was then that they passed that famous law requiring that the New Hampshire primary be at least one week before any other state's primary. Since that time, any effort by another state to vote the same day as New Hampshire, or hold a primary ahead of New Hampshire, has been sternly - one almost might say viciously - resisted by Granite State political leaders.

To enhance and protect New Hampshire's exalted position as the state with the first presidential primary, the state government has created a special section of the New Hampshire State Library devoted to the historical lore and economic importance of the New Hampshire primary. Called the Library and Archives of New Hampshire's Political Tradition, this state-supported

information center estimated the year 2000 presidential primary produced a total \$306 million economic impact in New Hampshire.⁵

There have been some stirring moments in the New Hampshire primary over the years. In 1972, U.S. senator Edmund Muskie was campaigning hard for the Democratic nomination when a conservative New Hampshire newspaper, the *Union Leader*, criticized his wife. Muskie appeared to be crying when he defended Mrs. Muskie at a political rally in front of the newspaper building. Muskie's tears were interpreted as a sign of personal weakness, the Muskie campaign sagged, and George McGovern, a U.S. senator from South Dakota, became the 1972 Democratic Party standard bearer. McGovern was soundly defeated in the general election by incumbent Republican President Richard M. Nixon.

Another stirring New Hampshire primary moment occurred in 1996, when arch-conservative newspaper columnist Patrick Buchanan planned a quiet "walk-around" at a lumber mill in Center Barnstead. Imported lumber from Canada was creating economic hard times in lumber towns such as Center Barnstead, and Pat Buchanan wanted to highlight to New Hampshire voters that he was strongly in support of protecting U.S. industries from cheap foreign competition.

But candidate Buchanan's plans for a peaceful look at the lumber mill with just a few newspaper reporters in attendance were completely shattered. Literally hundreds of reporters and photographers showed up at the lumber mill wanting to interview and photograph Buchanan. The news media mob crowded so aggressively around the lumber mill office door that the the one TV cameraman invited to be there, the "pool camera," could not get in. Suddenly it was the giant pack of news personnel, and not candidate Buchanan, that was in charge of this particular campaign event.

Giving in to the news media pressure, Patrick Buchanan returned to his campaign minivan, stepped up on the running board, and gave the news hounds what they wanted. For the next hour, Buchanan answered all questions asked by the press. He posed for photographs. As Buchanan

talked, the more intrepid TV camera operators and news photographers climbed up on lumber trucks and saw mill sheds to get better camera angles and a wider view. One agile TV cameraman jumped into the scoop of a front-end loader and prevailed on the driver to lift him high in the air for a downward-looking shot.

The near news media riot at Center Barnstead was an early look at what was happening in the 1996 Republican presidential primary in New Hampshire. When the votes were counted, conservative Patrick Buchanan won the Granite State over Robert Dole, a U.S. senator from Kansas and the early favorite to win. Dole finally secured the GOP nomination that year, but he was defeated in the general election by incumbent Democratic president Bill Clinton.

Every once in a while, the New Hampshire presidential primary gives a significant boost to a candidate from a nearby New England state who decides to run for president. In 1960 it was John F. Kennedy, at that time a U.S. senator from neighboring Massachusetts. John Kennedy launched his successful campaign for the White House by first winning the Democratic presidential primary in New Hampshire.

Four years later in 1964, in the Republican contest, a former U.S. senator from Massachusetts, Henry Cabot Lodge, won the Granite State. Lodge's victory was quite sensational because he filed to run for president too late to have his name printed on the official ballot. Lodge's supporters launched a "write-in" campaign, and enough New Hampshirites penciled in Lodge's name to eke out a victory. But Henry Cabot Lodge subsequently lost the 1964 Republican nomination to Barry Goldwater of Arizona, who in turn was defeated in the general election by incumbent Democratic President Lyndon Johnson of Texas.

Another New Englander who turned proximity to New Hampshire into a presidential primary victory was Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis. In 1988 Dukakis won the New Hampshire Democratic primary and went on to win the Democratic nomination for president. But Dukakis was defeated in the general election by the elder George Bush, a native of the New England

state of Connecticut, who also triumphed in the New Hampshire primary that year.

Perhaps the best example of a New Englander winning in New Hampshire was former U.S. senator Paul Tsongas in 1992. Tsongas lived in Lowell, Massachusetts. His home was less than 20 miles from the New Hampshire-Massachusetts border. Paul Tsongas could get up in the morning, take a short drive north into southern New Hampshire, campaign all day, and then drive home and sleep in his own bed at night.

Thanks to this geographical advantage, Paul Tsongas was omnipresent in New Hampshire the year before the 1992 New Hampshire Democratic presidential primary. Thus Tsongas easily won the contest. But the man who finished second, Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, subsequently wrested the 1992 Democratic nomination away from Tsongas. Clinton went on to defeat the elder George Bush in the general election and become president.

Which brings up an interesting point. For almost four decades, from 1952 until 1988, *a candidate for president had to win the New Hampshire primary if he or she was going to be elected to the White House*. Now the reverse of that statement was not true. Winning the New Hampshire primary was not a guaranteed ticket to becoming the American president. A candidate could win in New Hampshire but then lose the party nomination in subsequent caucuses and primaries. Or a candidate could win in New Hampshire and a number of other states, gain the party nomination for president, and lose the general election to the other party's presidential nominee.

But there was one thing that definitely was true. In the ten presidential elections from 1952 to 1988, every person who was elected president of the United States began their drive for the nation's highest office by first winning the New Hampshire primary.

That perfect record of New Hampshire's was broken for the first time in 1992. As noted above, Paul Tsongas from nearby Lowell, Massachusetts, captured the Granite State laurels for the Democratic Party that year. But the man Tsongas defeated in New Hampshire, Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, ended up with both the Democratic nomination and the presidency.

In 1996 the normal pattern of the White House winner also capturing New Hampshire returned. Bill Clinton, the incumbent president, was unopposed for the Democratic nomination and thus won the New Hampshire primary by default. Clinton went on to win the general election against U.S. senator Bob Dole of Kansas. As previously noted, Dole lost the New Hampshire Republican presidential primary in 1996 to conservative columnist Patrick Buchanan. According to the "New Hampshire rule," that loss guaranteed that Dole would not make it to the White House.

Thus it was that aficionados of the New Hampshire primary were watching the year 2000 presidential election very carefully. Would the eventual winner of the presidency also have won New Hampshire, thus keeping the New Hampshire rule in effect? Or would there be a repeat of 1992, when a New Hampshire victory was not required to get to the Oval Office in the White House? As the 2000 New Hampshire primary got underway, no one could answer that question for certain.

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If ever a state looked like a sure bet for a candidate such as Bill Bradley, it was New Hampshire. The state's citizens are generally well-off, New Hampshire coming in 13th of the 50 states in median income. New Hampshirites are also well-educated, which gives them a tendency to listen to high-minded campaign appeals and respond favorably to visionary reformers. Bill Bradley's repeated urgings to build a better America and gain something more than economic prosperity should have had widespread appeal in the Granite State for sure.

And on the other hand, New Hampshire did not look like strong Al Gore country. Gore had relied on labor union members and farmers to gain his victory in the Iowa caucuses. But only 11 percent of New Hampshirites belonged to labor unions, compared to 14 percent nationwide. And most New Hampshire voters were suburbanites rather than farmers. A disproportionate number of Granite Staters live in southern New Hampshire and drive into the nearby Boston metropolitan area to go to work.

Worst of all for Gore, in racial terms New Hampshire is 97 percent white. Polls consistently showed that Gore's strongest support group was African-Americans, but black voters were few and far between in New Hampshire.

Coming down the homestretch on the day before the primary election, Bill Bradley held a "town meeting" in Derry, the fourth largest town in New Hampshire. Bradley had staged more than 50 of these meetings with the Granite State electorate in the months before primary day.

The location of the meeting was pure New Hampshire. The venue was the Derry Opera House, an ageing structure that obviously dated back to a time when Derry was a small New England town rather than a rapidly-growing distant suburb of Boston. Cream-colored walls and green-painted woodwork gave the interior a decided look of Puritan frugality. The lighting was bare light bulbs. Plastic sheeting had been nailed up over the clear glass windows to save on utility bills during the cold and snowy New Hampshire winter.

But the dour look of the building did not extend to the audience gathered and waiting for Bradley to arrive. The Derry Opera House was packed, with every seat taken and an overflow crowd standing in the side aisles and at the back of the small auditorium. Everyone, man and woman alike, was dressed in snow boots, long pants, and a down ski jacket. The more enthusiastic denizens of the crowd were waving signs emblazoned with slogans that tended to walk down the left side of the political street.

"Derry - Anti-Special Interest and Pro-Bradley," read one sign. "Pro-Derry, Pro-Choice, and Pro-Bradley," read another.

This particular audience numbered about 200 persons and did not seem to mind that Bradley was running about 45-minutes behind schedule. The Derry Opera House suddenly seemed to be the locale of a lively cocktail party, with the various members of the audience talking excitedly to each other. Up on the stage of the Opera House, a bevy of junior high school girls were seated, placed there by Bradley's managers to provide a *human background* for Bradley once he began his talk.

Candidate speeches look better on television when the background behind the *talking head* of the candidate is a group of living human beings - preferably *young* living human beings.

The first sign that Bradley was nearing Derry occurred when the traveling press - reporters, photographers, and television camera operators - filed into the Opera House. Presidential candidates often take the long, slow route when traveling from one campaign stop to another. This intentional tardiness allows the news media to get to the next event ahead of the candidate and provide news media coverage of the audience's enthusiastic response at the moment the candidate enters the hall.

There was no disappointment with this crowd's reaction. As Bill Bradley strolled into the Derry Opera House, he was greeted with claps, cheers, and hundreds of outstretched hands to shake. Flash bulbs on cameras popped. Television camera motors whirred. Print reporters took out their pencils and pens and began feverishly writing notes about what they were seeing. All of this took place under the glaring brilliance of a bank of television spotlights set up in the rear balcony of the Derry Opera House.

When the crowd finally quieted down, the TV lights were turned off and Bill Bradley began his talk. The former U.S. senator from New Jersey functioned more like a professor teaching a class than a politician giving a speech on the day before election day. Bradley moved up and down the center aisle of the Opera House, doing a good job of moving his arms and pounding his fists to drive home the political points he wanted to make.

Much of Bradley's presentation was in the form of questions rather than statements or slogans. "What are your dreams? Can we in America still dream big dreams? Does America have a new story for this new 21st Century? What do you dream for your country now in this age of unparalleled prosperity?"

Bradley was intentionally presenting a contrast with Al Gore, whose campaign statements dealt mainly with small, specific programs rather than grandiose reforms such as Bradley was proposing. Bradley said the times called for another President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who put in

Social Security, and another President Lyndon B. Johnson, who established the Medicare health program for the elderly. Bradley was implying that Al Gore was too ready to compromise and end up with half-baked programs rather than really progressive reforms.

"I'm not ready to settle," Bill Bradley told his audience in his usual quiet, thoughtful manner.

"Al Gore is ready to settle."

"If I get in the White House," Bradley said, "the special interests will be out."

Bradley concluded his talk with one last high-minded statement. "America can build a world of new possibilities - guided by goodness - that will create a new politics. It is possible!"

When the town meeting ended, the crowd cheered Bill Bradley as wildly and enthusiastically as they had when he walked into the Derry Opera House. But there was something missing. The talk had not really reached the audience the way a campaign speech is supposed to do. There were no lines in Bradley's talk that had roused his audience to standing shouts and cheers. His ideas sounded great intellectually, but there was very little there to get an audience's blood boiling and a crowd raised to political frenzy.

Worst of all for Bradley, the newspaper reporters and television commentators were picking up on this lack of excitement and vitality in the Bradley campaign and putting it into their stories and TV reports. As Bill Bradley's campaign caravan rolled away from the Derry Opera House, election eve polls showed Al Gore comfortably ahead of Bradley in New Hampshire, a state that Bradley should have been winning.⁶

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The Derry Opera House, where Bill Bradley staged one of his final political rallies in New Hampshire in 2002, badly needed a good paint job and some routine maintenance. Such was not the case with the Town Hall in Peterborough, New Hampshire, a cultural and art center nestled in the beautiful Monadnock Mountains. The Peterborough Town Hall sported newly-painted white woodwork, clear glass windows that were arched at the top, and a spindled wooden balustrade on its

upstairs rear balcony. The stage looked positively luxurious with its red velvet-like curtain. A wooden antique wall clock with a brass pendulum ticked off the final seconds, minutes, and hours of the year 2000 New Hampshire presidential primary.

On that stage on January 30, 2000, were seven American flags. With primary election day only two days away, John McCain, a U.S. senator from Arizona, was holding his final "town hall meeting" with the voters of the Granite State. It was John McCain's 114th town hall on the New Hampshire campaign trail.

John McCain had picked Peterborough for a reason. Months earlier, McCain had held the first of those 114 town halls in Peterborough. He wanted his campaign to wind up in the same place where it had all begun.

Only 40 persons attended that first McCain question-and-answer session in the Peterborough Town Hall. John McCain was almost completely unknown in New Hampshire and was barely registering in national public opinion polls. Such was not the case on January 30, 2000, when McCain returned. The Peterborough Town Hall was packed to the rafters, with every seat taken and standees lining every foot of the back and side walls.

More than ten television cameras were present, with at least 100 reporters and photographers jammed into a standing-room-only area to the right of the stage. Before John McCain arrived, his political managers enthusiastically announced to the crowd that Peter Jennings, the national anchor person for ABC News, was in the hall.

How had John McCain gone from almost complete obscurity in New Hampshire to being George W. Bush's major competitor for winning the state's Republican presidential primary? The answer lay in two things: the unique character of John McCain himself, and the totally innovative campaign he organized to try to win the Granite State.

If ever a man symbolized military heroism, it was John McCain. He was the son and grandson of two U.S. Navy admirals. He attended the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland,

graduating fifth from the bottom of his class. He trained to fly Navy jet planes in Pensacola, Florida. By the late fall of 1967, he was flying his A-4 Skyhawk in combat in the Vietnam War.

The rest of the story became nationally-known legend. John McCain's jet was shot down over North Vietnam. He ejected and was subsequently captured by the North Vietnamese. Although badly wounded, McCain refused to be freed by his captors just because he was the son of a top Navy admiral. Tortured, often in solitary confinement, McCain somehow endured until he, along with other captured U.S. airmen, was released by North Vietnam.

John McCain completed his military career as Navy liaison to the U.S. Senate. He then moved to his wife's home state of Arizona and ran successfully for the U.S. House of Representatives. Four years later, in 1986, he was elected to the U.S. Senate.

Although very definitely a Republican and a conservative, McCain quickly established a reputation in the Senate for being a maverick reformer. In direct opposition to the wishes of Republican party leaders, Senator McCain joined with Senator Russ Feingold, a Democrat from Wisconsin, in sponsoring a major campaign finance reform bill. Although opposed to abortion, McCain made it clear he would not, if elected President, require opposition to abortion of his judicial appointees.⁷

But there was more to the McCain for President campaign than his heroic, almost mythic, biography. Early on, John McCain invited newspaper and television reporters to ride with him in his minivan from one New Hampshire campaign event to another. During these one-on-one sessions with the news media, McCain dutifully answered every question that was asked, no matter how politically damaging to him the answer might be. He allowed reporters to talk to him for hours on end. And he answered their questions with palpable honesty, never bothering to check with campaign advisers or stick to a limited number of talking points.

The press was charmed by this lack of stage management on the part of a presidential candidate. McCain was granting unlimited access to the news media. It was a far cry from the

carefully prepared statements, often backed up with public opinion polls to guarantee popularity, that most candidates for the White House were putting out. In addition, it was fun for the reporters to bump down the backroads of New Hampshire in McCain's minivan and talk personally, and always quite frankly, with a bona fide war hero and presidential candidate.

The result was that John McCain got a tremendous run of free stories in the newspapers and on television. As the campaign exploded in press popularity, the minivan had to be replaced with a giant highway bus, aptly named "The Straight Talk Express." The coach was equipped with leather arm chairs and a couch so that McCain could carry on rolling bull-sessions with several newsmen at once. Eventually, a second highway bus had to be added to the McCain caravan to hold all the reporters who wanted to cover the campaign and "take their turn" riding with and talking to the candidate.

Thus it was that, when the Straight Talk Express pulled up to the Peterborough Town Hall just two days before New Hampshire primary day, the McCain campaign had lost much of its maverick character. McCain had befriended the "press beast," but now that beast was demanding that the McCain campaign operate in a big-time manner. One writer noted that, now dwarfed by the demands and hurly-burly of a successful campaign, John McCain was looking back at his early, less-popular, minivan days "with great nostalgia."⁸

John McCain and his wife, Cindy, marched into the Peterborough Town Hall to a standing ovation. John McCain briefly reviewed his military exploits, then said pointedly: "I am fully prepared to lead. I do not need on-the-job training to lead the military."

McCain then took the military issue one step further. "Right now," he said, "twelve thousand American military personnel and their families are on food stamps. There will be no 'Food Stamp Military' when I'm President."

The audience, similar to so many New Hampshire audiences before, was obviously pleased just to sit and listen to McCain talk. This candidate was doing more of a stand-up comedy routine

than giving a political speech. McCain reminded the audience that the incumbent President, Bill Clinton, had allowed major campaign contributors to sleep overnight at the White House. "Clinton turned the White House into a motel," McCain said derisively, "with the President of the United States as the bellhop."

Soon it was time for questions from the audience. Youthful McCain campaign aides carried portable microphones into the crowd so that everyone in the Peterborough Town Hall could hear the questions clearly. One person asked McCain if he favored legalizing the sale of the drug marijuana in the United States.

"I will not support marijuana," McCain answered back, displaying the same direct honesty he used with the news media. Then McCain winked at both the questioner and the audience. "Good luck with your crop," McCain said with a smile.

Candidate McCain saved his strongest words for the campaign finance reform issue. He noted that Vice President Al Gore, when questioned about making illegal fund raising calls from the White House, had said his actions were legal because there was "no controlling legal authority." McCain took that line and shaped it to his own purpose. "Once I'm in the White House," McCain said, "I'm going to give you a 'controlling legal authority' on campaign finance reform."

At the end of McCain's talk, a portable confetti machine filled the entire Peterborough Town Hall with red-white-and-blue confetti. Ordinarily a confetti shower lasts a few seconds, but McCain's went a full three minutes. During that time, the audience went wild with sustained cheering and the newspaper photographers clicked away. There were photos of John and Cindy McCain in their red-white-and-blue confetti shower all over the newspapers the following day.⁹

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It only takes about an hour or so to drive from Peterborough, New Hampshire, to Portsmouth, New Hampshire. A number of members of the news media and other political observers made that trip following McCain's final town hall meeting in Peterborough. Late that

Sunday evening, George W. Bush invited his New Hampshire supporters to join him for a Texas-style barbecue in a giant aircraft hangar near Portsmouth.

It was Super Bowl Sunday. Gigantic television screens had been rigged up so that Bush supporters could watch the football game between the St. Louis Rams and the Tennessee Titans. Tables filled with food sat in the open spaces between the many large aircraft being repaired in the hangar. There were hot dogs, barbecued ribs, petit pecan pies, and cups of lemonade to drink. And it was all for free! That was a sure sign the Bush campaign was very well financed.

The excitement began when one of the immense doors of the aircraft hangar began to slide open. As soon as the opening was large enough, the Bush campaign bus pulled completely into the hangar and right up to the milling crowd of more than 400 dedicated Bush supporters. The words "New Hampshire Is Bush Country" were emblazoned in big blue letters on the side of the bus.

George W. Bush appeared at the bus door and was immediately surrounded by a mob of cheering supporters wanting to shake his hand. An equally large mob of news media types were hard at work recording the event. One middle-aged woman who had shaken Bush's hand suddenly found herself being interviewed by a newspaper reporter from Helsinki, Finland.

Bush spent most of the first half of the Super Bowl working his way through the crowd doing that famous New Hampshire one-on-one campaigning. It was soon clear that these people had not come to see the football game. They had come to see and hear George W. Bush. As far as this group of committed Republicans was concerned, the real Super Bowl was going to be the voting in the Republican presidential primary in New Hampshire the following Tuesday.

But, beneath all the outward gayety, there was gloom in the air. "The latest polls show McCain three to four points ahead of Bush," grumbled a man who clearly was watching the campaign closely.

During halftime at the Super Bowl, George W. Bush gave a short speech that was less than five minutes long. He stuck to core Republican issues such as cutting taxes and strengthening the

military. Then, as the second half of the Super Bowl got underway, Bush started back to his bus. He signed a few T-shirts for some of his teen-age supporters. Then, to a roaring cheer from the assembled multitudes, Bush got on board the bus. It backed out of the hangar and drove away.

The crowd quickly dispersed. Those who cared about such things were going to watch the end of the Super Bowl at home. (The St. Louis Rams won in the final moments of play). The giant television screens were suddenly playing to a near-empty hangar.

George Bush was campaigning hard in New Hampshire. He was struggling to make up for the fact that John McCain had painstakingly done 114 town hall meetings in the state. Bush took a ride on a snowmobile, kicked a soccer ball around with school children, flipped pancakes, visited bowlers in a bowling alley, and even did a rally with his father, former-President George Bush.

The Bush campaign seemed to be striving to present Bush as a people-person, minimizing prepared speeches and trying to get as much news coverage as possible of Bush meeting and talking with actual New Hampshire voters. It appeared that the informal, off-the-cuff George W. Bush was deemed a better vote-getter than the formal Bush giving a speech.

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A surprisingly large crowd had filled the main ballroom at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Nashua, New Hampshire. It was Monday, the eve of the New Hampshire primary. A double feature was scheduled for 7 P.M. that night. Following a talk by Republican presidential candidate Alan Keyes, music and dancing were going to be provided by the Drifters, a well-known rock-and-roll musical group from the 1960s.

Using a popular entertainer, or entertainment group, to draw a crowd to a campaign rally is one of the legendary techniques of American politics. Movie stars and vocal recording artists are often part of the scene at the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary. That is because newspaper reporters and analysts frequently use "crowd support" to gauge whether a campaign is succeeding or not.

It was a pretty safe assumption that most of the crowd had turned out to hear the Drifters. Although Alan Keyes had finished third behind Bush and Steve Forbes in the Iowa caucuses, he was not considered a major factor in New Hampshire. The Granite State race clearly was between Bush and McCain.

But something was going on at the Crown Plaza that evening. The crowd quickly filled the chairs set-up in the ballroom and began sitting on the dance floor set aside for the Drifters. Soon people were lining the walls and crowding at the doors. The security guards were apologetic. "We were only expecting a small group," one of them said. "Many fewer people than this."

Apparently the Drifters still had maximal drawing power.

Alan Keyes, an African-American who previously worked as a U.S. diplomat, gave a speech that was a brilliant mix of religion and politics, morality and patriotism. "Greatness comes from God, not from human beings," Keyes said. "That's why God in the form of 'the Creator' is found in the Declaration of Independence."

Keyes urged his audience not to follow the polls and vote for one of the two front-runners, Bush or McCain. "Vote your decent principles," Keyes cried out. "Show the world that the American heart is back."

To Alan Keyes, the "American Heart" consisted of all-out opposition to abortion and a return to the moral life symbolized by the Christian religion. The crowd was surprisingly supportive of his speech, clapping enthusiastically whenever Keyes made a point. But, here and there, people who were probably left-wing Drifters fans sat on their hands instead of clapping.

And then a big surprise. When Keyes finished speaking, almost two-thirds of the audience left. It was not the Drifters who had drawn the large crowd. It was Alan Keyes and his doctrinaire conservative viewpoint. But, with a little thought and analysis, it suddenly all made sense. John McCain was being characterized as the liberal in the Republican race for President. George Bush, with all his talk of "compassionate conservatism," was being styled as a moderate. Right-wing

Republicans really had no one in the race they could enthusiastically support other than Alan Keyes.

The one-third of the audience that had come to hear the Drifters was not disappointed. Classic hits such as "Under The Boardwalk," "Up On The Roof," "On Broadway," and "Shout" rang throughout the first floor of the Crown Plaza in Nashua. The Drifters even picked up on Alan Keyes's religious themes, singing the "Battle Hymn Of The Republic" and reciting the 23rd Psalm to a slow rock-and-roll accompaniment.

There were enough middle-aged types present that, when the Drifters played the 1960s dance craze "The Twist," the dance floor was crowded with twisting and shaking bodies.

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As the Drifters were wrapping up their show at the Crown Plaza in Nashua, it was time for the entire citizenry of Dixville Notch to gather at a local hotel in that northern New Hampshire community. The entire citizenry of Dixville Notch constitutes approximately 25 persons of voting age. As the clock strikes midnight, it is officially primary election day. Every four years, the good people of Dixville Notch endeavors to cast what is promoted as "the first official votes" of the presidential election.

Each voter enters his or her own private voting booth. By having each citizen vote separately as the clock hands both point to the number 12, Dixville Notch seeks to guarantee that it is, indeed, the first New Hampshire town to report election results. Valuable time is not lost as one voter stands in line waiting for another voter to finish. Dixville Notch sends out its final tally within the first five minutes after the midnight hour.

Dixville Notch symbolizes the "exaggeration" effect of the New Hampshire primary. Under ordinary conditions, the votes of 25 or so persons in an obscure rural village more than 100 miles from a major metropolitan area would be of no interest whatsoever. But, this is New Hampshire. And these are the first votes. So the results from Dixville Notch are faithfully reported by the major news media throughout the nation. Sometimes the midnight voting in Dixville Notch is covered live

on cable television.

* * *

Because Al Gore was Vice President of the United States, his primary election night party was broken into two parties, probably because of security concerns. As the polls closed in the year 2000 New Hampshire primary, insiders in the Gore campaign gathered at the Hilton in Manchester. Good news was quick in coming. Early returns showed Gore comfortably defeating Bill Bradley by 53 percent to 47 percent, a 6 point margin. Television and newspaper exit polls were unanimous in predicting a clear-cut Gore victory.

That good news produced a wild celebration at the overflow Gore party at Jillian's, a sports bar in a restored brick factory building in downtown Manchester. This crowd was younger. It was composed mainly of volunteers and student interns. And the merriment reached its peak when Al Gore, his image projected ten times larger than life on a wall-sized television screen typical of sports bars, gave his victory speech.

At that precise moment, the year 2000 race for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States was over. Al Gore had defeated Bill Bradley in both Iowa and New Hampshire, the two most important stops on the nomination campaign trail. There were no more Democratic primaries scheduled until the giant bi-coastal primary, with both California and New York voting, scheduled a full five weeks away in early March.

With Al Gore possessing all the Big Mo from winning Iowa and New Hampshire, there was no way anyone but Al Gore was going to win California and New York and thus garner the nomination.

Hardly any news reporters or television commentators bothered to mention the fact that, in effect, the Democratic nomination had been decided after only two states - Iowa and New Hampshire - had voted.

* * *

The George W. Bush primary election night party, similar to every other aspect of the Bush campaign, was massive. More than 1,000 persons gathered in the gymnasium of St. Anselm College. The main crowd stood should-to-shoulder on the gymnasium floor, covering more than three-fourths of a basketball court with humanity. The spectator stands on one side of the gym were packed with the news media. Across from the news hounds, the other half of the specator stands were packed with those Bush supporters who had wisely decided to get the primary election results sitting down.

There were all the customary hallmarks of a victory celebration. A high school band, with all the music makers dressed in Bush T-shirts, played brisk and lively tunes as the gym filled with people. Giant television screens, visible throughout the gymnasium, carried the latest election results along with the customary pundit analysis and candidate interviews. The crowd, as it grew, was enthusiastic. There were periodic group cheers for George W. Bush and a buzz of happy and excited conversations.

The Bush campaign that night had everything but votes. Word slowly spread that John McCain was defeating George W. Bush by 49 percent to 30 percent, a spread of 19 points.

This was unheard of. A colossal defeat. To the politically astute, a lead of five points or more is considered a landslide. What words, other than "total blowout," could describe a 19 point McCain victory margin?

Someone wisely had switched off the audio on the giant TVs. As soon as the election outcome was clear, at 8:20 P.M. Eastern Time, a humbled but not disheartened George W. Bush went to the podium and spoke frankly to his supporters. "New Hampshire is a bump in the road for front-runners," Bush said, "and this year is no exception. But my road will go through all 50 states, and it will end at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue."

As usual, Bush kept his speech short. He congratulated his "good friend" John McCain on his victory. He called for teaching children to read and write, but also for "teaching them right from

wrong." He pledged to end "an era of scandal and bitterness in Washington, D.C.," a not-so-veiled attack on the Clinton-Gore administration.

And, just in case he might need to ask for votes in New Hampshire at some time in the future, Bush talked about how much he enjoyed campaigning in the Granite State. "The chats, the parades, the picnics" were all terrific, Bush said, dutifully praising a state whose voters had just rejected him totally.

There was no such gloom over at the McCain election night party. McCain's wife, Cindy, began to cry when her husband was declared the victor. John McCain himself played up his 19 point victory margin. "You can't help but be amazed by the size of this," he said. "The people in Washington, D.C., are going to wake up."¹⁰

How had McCain done it? The answer was independent voters. New Hampshire election law allows registered independents to declare a party affiliation on primary election day and vote in that political party's presidential primary. As the Bill Bradley campaign faded and the McCain campaign gained strength, it was widely speculated that most of the independent voters were going to give-up on Bradley. These independent voters then would declare themselves Republican on primary election day and vote in the Republican primary for John McCain.

Exit polls suggested that was exactly what happened. Registered Republican voted for Bush over McCain by 42 percent to 37 percent. But independent voters in the Republican primary preferred McCain to Bush by an overwhelming 60 percent to 20 percent.¹¹

John McCain received the expected "exaggeration" from his big win in New Hampshire. The next week his face was on the cover of the three national newsweeklies - *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report*. The press was said to be "obviously in full metal swoon." As Walter Isaacson, the managing editor of *Time* pointed out, McCain got more of a "bounce" out of New Hampshire than previous candidates, partly because "the size of his victory was so amazing."¹²

* * *

The New Hampshire primary has evolved into a sort of electoral theme park - a Disneyland for politics aficionados. Where else can one experience things like a three-minute red-white-and-blue confetti shower, a presidential candidate zooming around on a snowmobile, a 1960s rock-and-roll band wailing into the wee hours on election eve, and an entire town voting simultaneously at midnight?

One man summed it up perfectly. In 1996 he went from one campaign event to another with a hand-printed sign on his chest that read: "My lifetime dream is to attend the New Hampshire primary."¹³

ENDNOTES - CHAPTER 5:

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13. Robert D. Loevy, *The Manipulated Path To The White House* (Lanham, MD, University Press of America, 1998), p. 115.