

Instant History

by Chuck Ross

Richard Nixon planned his bid for re-election very carefully. He was not concerned about the nomination, that was assured, but his election in 1968 had been too close, much closer than it should have been. While he might concede the deep South to George Wallace, he had the border south, the far West, and most, if not all, of the Midwest. To insure his victory in 1972, he would go after the blue collar, the ethnic, and the Catholic vote in the East. The Forty-Seventh Election (1972)

The Democrats were in disarray, still divided after their disastrous Chicago Convention and Hubert Humphrey's defeat in 1968. Still, they were the majority party, they controlled Congress, and they had the issues of an ailing economy and Vietnam (suddenly, it was "Nixon's War"). Now, if they could just find a leader....

(1) There were five frontrunners for the Democratic nomination in early 1972. However, a crying jaz in New Hampshire, a bullet in Maryland, and a beach party in Massachusetts reduced the number to two. Who were the eliminated candidates?

(2) The winning of the Democratic nomination was a masterful, albeit Machiavellian, stroke of political genius. Who won, and how?

(3) Who said, "Remember, Tom, I'm 1000% for you."?

(4) Who won the election of 1972...and why?

(5) On June 17, 1972, five months prior to the election, five bungling burglars were apprehended in an office suite of a soon-to-be-famous apartment complex in Washington. What had happened?

Answers

(1) Senator Edmund Muskie of Maine was the leader going into the New Hampshire Primary. However, angered over slanderous articles about his wife

amassed enough votes to reverse the California decision and the nomination was his.

(3) The words were George McGovern's, said to Senator Tom Eagleton of Missouri, McGovern's choice as running mate. Eagleton had not told anyone of his history of mental illness, but after his nomination, the word leaked out. At first, McGovern supported Eagleton, hence the quote, but later dumped him. McGovern's handling of the affair caused many to question his sincerity as well as his competence.

(4) It was a massacre. Nixon carried 49 states with 521 electoral votes, losing only the 17 electoral votes of Massachusetts and the District of Columbia to McGovern. The Republican received over 47 million popular

votes, 18 million more than his rival. Although Nixon conducted a very intelligent and effective campaign, zeroing in on the issues that concerned most Americans, his huge vote was as much a rejection of McGovern as it was a mandate for the President. The Democrat had alienated his party leadership and the chieftains of organized labor, but of greater concern to the American people were the causes he espoused. He was for amnesty, abortion, busing, and less harsh laws concerning marijuana. He would give \$1000 to every American, then soak middle income people as well as the rich to get it back. He would slash the defense budget below pre-Pearl Harbor figures and he would have us out of Vietnam immediately even if it meant a

surrender. The people believed that George McGovern was an incompetent dreamer, so they turned to Richard Nixon.

(5) The burglars, or "plumbers", as they came to be known, had been dispatched by the Republican Committee to Reelect the President to rifle the files and electronically "bug" the Democratic Party headquarters in the Watergate apartment building. At first, the incident was dismissed as a mere political "dirty trick" and had little affect on the election. When the President denied knowledge of the affair, most of the people believed him. However, ensuing investigations by the US Senate and the Washington Post would uncover evidence that would destroy a President, nearly destroy the Republican Party,

and shake the faith of the American people.

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