

# Specter goes West for votes, respect

By Steve Goldstein  
INQUIRER WASHINGTON BUREAU

LOS ANGELES — "How are ya, Arlie Darlie?" burbles Tom Snyder as the talk-show host saunters into the greenroom to greet his next guest.

Sen. Arlen Specter smiles wearily. He doesn't mind the informality — Specter was a new district attorney and Snyder a brash broadcaster in Philadelphia 30 years ago — but it has been a long day.

Now it is nearly 9:30 p.m. Pacific time, about 18 hours since he left Washington after a weekend trip to Guatemala, and Specter is facing a live interview on *The Late Late Show* with Snyder.

**It's a  
wearying  
journey. He  
endures petty  
indignities,  
bad coffee  
and critics.**

Moments earlier, the Republican presidential candidate from Pennsylvania discovers that he isn't the sole guest on the show, which airs at 12:30 a.m. on the East Coast.

Specter will follow rape victim Kim Caldwell, a San Diego woman who helped capture her attacker.

"I knew him as a young D.A. He was an honest man at the time," Snyder says as the show begins, promoting Specter. Watching in the greenroom, Specter nearly gags on his coffee.

Arlen Specter's nascent presidential campaign swung up the Left Coast this month, a three-day odyssey to California, Oregon and Washington state in search of money, recognition, votes and respect.

The rigors of campaigning are amply demonstrated in marathon days of radio and television talk shows, media

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availabilities, sessions with newspaper editorial boards, Republican activist meet-and-greets and fund-raising events.

For a long-shot candidate in unfamiliar territory, petty indignities are as much a part of the ordeal as hurried cups of bad coffee. Or, in Specter's case, regular infusions of sugar-rich ice cream.

Whether it was a scheduled half-hour session with a local TV news anchor in L.A. that was distilled into a 15-second sound bite, or two reporters showing up for a well-publicized media availability at the Portland airport, or a news photographer in Seattle mistaking a journalist for Specter, small sparks of humiliation can quickly make a bonfire of political vanity.

How tough is it to constantly race to identify yourself before someone fails to recognize you?

Yet Specter sees the payoff. In money, contacts and goodwill.

California is high-profile, lots of media. Oregon and Washington are states that do not have early primaries, but Specter is banking on making friends by being the first to go courting in the Pacific Northwest.

And folks said they were impressed. "We're furthest away from everything," said technology consultant Glenn Anderson as he sipped a beer during a Seattle reception hosted by the Mainstream Republicans of Washington.

"If someone is willing to come up here and invest time, people respond to that," said Anderson. "They are willing to do things they might not otherwise do."

Such as volunteer to help the campaign, host a fund-raising cocktail party, or help spread the word that Specter — yeah, the guy who trashed Anita Hill — is moderate, supports abortion rights, knows where Bosnia

is, and has a flat-tax proposal that makes a lot of sense.

Karen Dangremond, a jewelry designer in Portland, said she was a Democrat who once voted for Richard Nixon.

"Specter is the kind of guy, if there were more of him, I'd join the Republican Party," Dangremond said after hearing the Pennsylvanian speak. "They need people who have muscle."

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The television industry permeates L.A. like cocoa butter on Malibu's beach billionaires. Mindful of that, the Specter campaign scheduled six events, four of them TV interviews.

After a one-on-one with a Fox news anchor and an interview with Jewish TV, a cable venture, Specter taped a show for Channel One, the school television network that now appears in 12,000 middle schools and high schools, reaching more than eight million students.

Specter was the first presidential candidate to appear on the Channel One show. He sat with anchor Rawley Valverde, who came off as more MTV than CNN, in front of bleachers filled with high schoolers from Village Christian and St. Bernard.

No one at Channel One seemed to know why two parochial schools were picked to question Specter. His opposition to school prayer and to a voucher system — "It will hurt public education" — appeared unpopular with the studio audience.

"I think his views are too moderate," said Katie Earl, a junior at Village Christian, and her classmates nodded.

Specter had higher hopes for Sny-

der's *Late Late Show*. Apart from their old friendship, Snyder is attracted to long shots.

With his gleaming gray hair and manic smile, Snyder segued neatly from pleasantries to the 1991 Hill-Clarence Thomas hearings.

"I have sustained some political damage," Specter said in what has become his stock answer to *The Question*. "That whole matter was a learning experience for me, and fundamentally for the whole country. I knew about sexual harassment, but I had no idea how much there was."

Snyder tried to get Specter to reveal whether he believed Hill and Thomas had had a sexual relationship. Specter said he didn't know.

The senator's staff, worried about a 65-year-old man doing live TV at the end of a 20-hour jet-lagged day, was visibly relieved.

Other pitfalls were in store. After Specter explained his flat-tax proposal and methods to thwart domestic terrorism, Snyder opened the phones.

Charlie from New York City asked the candidate about the John F. Kennedy assassination and Specter's controversial single-bullet theory, which was lampooned by filmmaker Oliver Stone.

"My views haven't changed," said Specter. "Truth is sometimes stranger than fiction."

Snyder stared at his guest. "This almost brings me to tears. You've stuck to the same story."

Later, headed into the night and a soothing Beefeater martini, Specter recalled the movie *JFK*, which hurt



**Sen. Arlen Specter** pushes his message.

his 1992 reelection campaign.

"I could have owned Oliver Stone productions," he smirked.

A.M. "Bubby" Cronin 3d, president of Electrical Distributing Inc., lives in the well-manicured Forest Heights section of Portland. He invited 75 friends, mostly Republicans, to a late-afternoon reception.

Cronin and Scott Ehlen, a Portland businessman, met Specter two years ago while playing golf in Sun Valley, Idaho. The senator impressed them, and they offered to help should he ever seek national office.

Since morning, Cronin and his chauffeur had driven Specter around in a white 1966 Lincoln limousine, from an airport media availability to a meeting at the Oregonian newspaper, which Cronin once owned.

But the tall timber here in Portland was now at poolside under a rare cerulean sky. Tan in a seersucker suit, Cronin called for attention, then handed Specter a check in a white envelope embossed with "Arlen Specter '96."

"Bubby and Scott have first dibs on the Lincoln Bedroom," Specter said of the famous White House quarters. "Sign the register on the way out to indicate what night you'd like to sleep there. ... I only have about 100,000 of these envelopes left."

There were appreciative chuckles from the guests, who sipped Chardonnay and munched endive filled with Dungeness crab. Specter provided the main course: a synopsis of his stump speech and a humorous Q-and-A.

"I've found people interested in reclaiming the party," said Specter. "I need your financial support. I can't talk to everyone, so this is like dropping a pebble into a pool and creating ripples."

Circulating in the crowd bearing white envelopes was Carey Tatum, Specter's finance director. Some

folks handed her checks, others requested envelopes to take home for friends. She left a stack of envelopes with Cronin, and took a list of the names and addresses of the guests.

"For the first time in an area, this was very good," said Tatum, a tall, methodical woman. "People seem generally enthusiastic about what they've heard. There's lots of potential for follow-up."

In the next weeks and months, Cronin's guests will receive calls and letters inquiring if they'd like to contribute to the campaign. Donations up to \$250 are matched by federal funds — "give more if you wish."

Tatum said the fund-raising goal for the three-state swing was \$30,000 to \$50,000, including the follow-up. She looked confident.

Hilary Gripekoven, a historian who came "to be informed," said she was sure Specter had benefited more than financially.

"I think this is going to have a big impact in Portland," she said. "These people think — and they talk."

Early for a media availability at Seattle-Tacoma Airport, Specter pored over faxes on the Bosnia situation and decided to announce that he would oppose the use of U.S. forces there without congressional approval.

Here was an attempt to make news, but Specter was also aware that he did not want to step on his message, which is that "there is a constituency in Washington [state] for a pro-choice candidate who's taking on the fringe."

Mantra-like, the message was recited through two editorial board meetings, a luncheon speech, and a fund-raising reception with Team Washington business executives atop the Columbia Seafirst skyscraper.

The "fringe," led by Christian Coalition leaders Ralph Reed and Pat Robertson and commentator-candidate Pat Buchanan, "is a 5 percent

factor," said Specter. "The tip of the tail wagging the dog."

Specter argued that Republican moderates have been too timid in trying to capture the party. "I don't think anyone has put up a fight."

After a drive-by scooping at Baskin-Robbins, a rejuvenated Specter was ready to take on the listeners of conservative host John Carlson's top-rated talk show on radio station KVI.

In the next 30 minutes, Specter defended his positions against school prayer, against school vouchers, and for providing access to abortions for the poor people.

"I'm the candidate with ideas," Specter said when Carlson gave him the last word. His voice grew huskier.

Later, at the Mainstream Republican reception in an art studio, some of the 40 activists said Specter has a chance because the other pro-abortion-rights Republican is California Gov. Pete Wilson "and Washington people don't like Californians."

Last week, Wilson stepped off the abortion-rights wagon, saying he wouldn't try to change the party's antiabortion platform. Specter attacked immediately.

The Western swing was looking like an even better gambit.

Secretary of State Ralph Munro, a moderate who is Washington's biggest GOP vote-getter, said more than 800,000 voters had registered since the "motor voter" bill was enacted.

"Our state is up for grabs," said Munro. "This state could flop back and forth faster than a yo-yo in a frying pan."

Specter had one more stop to make before heading east, a fund-raising party arranged by his son Shanin's in-laws. But he was having fun, the coach rallying the underdogs.

"Tell them you saw Arlen Specter and this is what he wants to do," he cajoled. "I'm encouraged. Let's raise some money. Let's beat 'em."