

Jack Anderson

Inside the McGovern Campaign

The two correspondents who doubled as Nixon spies provided the White House last year with a fascinating, running account of Sen. George McGovern's presidential campaign. Their confidential reports would make a book, which might be called "The Making of a Fiasco."

Under the code name "Chapman's Friend," Seymour Freidin and Lucianne Goldberg dictated reports sometimes twice a day to Nixon aide Murray Chotiner. He distributed copies to White House chief of staff H.R. Haldeman and campaign director Clark MacGregor.

Freidin followed the McGovern campaign until Sept. 5, 1972, when Goldberg took over as the new Chap-

man's Friend. We have obtained their reports and checked them with sources close to the campaign. Some say the spy reports are accurate; others claim they are distorted.

But the secret pair gave the White House an account of a harum-scarum campaign, which Freidin called "McGovern's flying circus" and Goldberg described as a "disorganized disaster." Here are typical excerpts:

Aug. 23—"By the end of the Midwest tour, McGovern was saying privately that the operation must be tightened up... Some of the strategy sessions were almost comic—in a knot of twos and threes in the fairgrounds at Springfield was an example. Spot decisions were being made on walk-tours... It was something of a reminder of the 1968 early swings of (Hubert) Humphrey—bad scheduling, poor crowds and disorganization... The liaison between (running mate Sargent) Shriver and McGovern was gossamer at best; non-existent at worst... The entourage is too busy with its own delicious thoughts and wisecracks. It should be carefully noted that jealousies keep growing and some intramural upheavals should not be excluded."

Aug. 29—"The McGovern for President headquarters (in Washington) is a worse firetrap than when it was a citadel for (Sen. Ed) Muskie. It's eight floors of a ramshackle building fit to be condemned; has two wheezy elevators—signs urging people to walk down if descending—and floors that are carved into dozens of tiny cubicles."

Aug. 30—"When the media shows—as it does increasingly—that it does not take McGovern too seriously, his top people get furious. Thus it would seem that scoffing at McGovern's suggestions rather than treating them, point by point, with gravity is a useful tactic."

Sept. 1—"The operations may be summed up in the observations of Dr. Henry Meyers, a scientist who has been asked to prepare national security papers, ideas—from the top foreign affairs-disarmament brain trust of McGovern. Meyers told me that he received a paper yesterday—'the collective brainpower of this operation,' as Meyers put it. 'It was 30 pages, single-spaced. It was impossible. Everybody and his brother put his ideas into it, and this was given to me to whip into shape. Then, some of the guys who appealed to me to get involved went home at 4 p.m.—to go swimming.'"

Sept. 6—"After the speech (in Dallas), Chapman's Friend asked some businessmen why there weren't any big Democrats present. One answered: 'Not even a dog catcher would be out there, because he would not be a dog catcher after the next election.'"

Sept. 8, 12:15 a.m.—"The newspapers tell about McGovern's visit to NASA in Houston. It should be noted that astronauts always say 'sir' every other sentence, but they didn't say 'sir' to McGovern... Shriver got hell from McGovern for missing a dinner with the Ohio labor leader. It seems he was

taking a shower when he was supposed to be eating with the labor leader."

Sept. 8, 5:30 p.m. — "Chapman's Friend was standing in the hall when someone said that Gordon Weil had resigned... (Press aide Richard) Dougherty forgot himself momentarily and replied: 'You know what the senator said this morning? Every time he hears of another resignation, he feels like he's an astronaut up in a spacecraft and the guy below in charge of oxygen keeps pulling the plug.' Someone said: 'Is this going to keep up?' Dougherty: 'Oh hell, if this keeps up, the next one to resign will be George McGovern'... In direct contrast to the press plane where a good time is had on trips, McGovern's plane is reported to be like a flying coffin. Occasionally he gets up and walks about halfway back to talk to the press but loses his nerve and goes back and sits down."

Sept. 14—"Chapman's Friend reports that there is hard-core disenchantment with McGovern among the press traveling with him because it is such a lack-luster campaign. The pool reports have started to refer to him as McGoon."

Sept. 15—"Chapman's Friend had a conversation on the plane with John Gage, a long-time McGovern supporter, who... is typical of the extremely well educated, articulate young people around McGovern. His attitude was that of disillusionment—not so much because of vacillation but because the man had no personal charisma; that he said things that read well in print but when he said them it put you to sleep."

Sept. 26, 12:30 a.m.—"With the hectic pace of the campaign trail, little sleep, changes in weather, etc., many of the traveling group have been plagued with colds and illnesses for the past week. It has now reached the top. The senator like everybody else has a cold."

Sept. 26, 6:45 p.m.—"During the delivery of his usual speech, McGovern commented on the Nixon pickets that have been turning up. 'Let them send them around,' he said, 'We are happy to have them. We would rather have Nixon paying pickets than to have Nixon pay people to spy on us.'"

Oct. 12 — "While in Boston, McGovern did the Jerry Williams Show. As he was leaving, Williams handed him a tape of a Vietnam veteran... On the airplane between Boston and Minneapolis, McGovern put the tape on the loudspeaker and played the voice of this young man. It was a very emotional tape. He talked about going into villages where the napalm burned bodies so badly that they could not be distinguished from animals... McGovern had tears in his eyes when the tape was over. He simply turned around and went into his cabin and laid down."

Nov. 7—"The atmosphere is that of good-humored resignation on the part of McGovern's staff. He has had his whole family and a dog named Upset with him. A newsman from the New York Daily News posted a page from the Harvard Lampoon on the plane... which simply says: 'Defeat.'"

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