

Ford Aids Campaign Of GOP Nixon Critic

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PALO ALTO, Calif.—Vice President Ford may have succeeded in salvaging the congressional career of one of President Nixon's fiercest Republican critics, Rep. Paul N. (Pete) McCloskey.

McCloskey, the thrice-decorated former Marine combat officer who briefly challenged Mr. Nixon for the Republican presidential nomination in 1972, seemed to be losing a primary challenge here to orthodox Republican Gordon Knapp, described by one area newspaper as a "sincere, hard-working, colorless, retired millionaire."

Polls showed McCloskey, who favors Mr. Nixon's impeachment, trailing slightly when Ford came to speak for McCloskey at a San Jose forum on April 20.

Immediately afterward McCloskey gained 12 percentage points in the polls. He has since lost some of his lead, but he is now using the Ford visit on television

commercials which quote the Vice President as saying, "Pete contributes an input that is needed."

Campaign managers for both candidates see Ford's visit as a turning point.

"It really depressed them and it gave us a needed lift," said Ron Smith, the McCloskey manager. "It turned everything around."

Harvey Hukari, campaign manager for Knapp, said the Vice President's speech was "a big plus for McCloskey because it made him seem to be a genuine Republican."

Ford's action undermined the principal theme of the Knapp campaign, which is that McCloskey is not really a Republican at all.

Knapp points out that McCloskey consistently has differed on key issues with a majority of his Republican colleagues ever since he went to the House of Representatives in 1967 in a

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special election victory over Shirley Temple Black. And Knapp makes much of McCloskey's abortive attempt to cancel his Republican registration in 1973 at a time when McCloskey was uncertain whether he wanted to seek re-election this year as a Republican or a Democrat, if at all.

Knapp, a 52-year-old mineral-water company president, ran as an independent write-in candidate in 1972 because both McCloskey and his Democratic opponent were supporting George McGovern's presidential candidacy "and I didn't feel represented by either of them." Soon afterward, Knapp launched his 1974 Republican primary campaign with strong back-

ing from traditional GOP groups.

In his present challenge to McCloskey, Knapp has knocked on 35,000 doors, concentrating on precincts where McCloskey previously ran poorly. Knapp, aided by political consultant Lyn Nofziger, also has bombarded voters in this reapportioned San Francisco Bay area district with letters assailing McCloskey's support for amnesty and liberalized abortion laws and McCloskey's opposition to the death penalty.

But the campaign, which will be decided here by GOP voters Tuesday, has been a gentlemanly one on both sides in contrast with previous efforts to unseat the 46-year-old McCloskey.

In 1972, when McCloskey's emotional opposition to the Vietnam war and his early suggestion of presidential impeachment were the issues, one of his Repub-

lican opponents accused McCloskey of actions that "border on treason" while the other said McCloskey was a sympathizer of Hanoi who advocated "socialistic" ideas.

McCloskey, responding in kind, called one opponent "the village idiot of the Republican Party" and the other "an Oklahoma zealot." He won re-nomination only because the two of them nearly split the anti-McCloskey vote.

Both McCloskey and Knapp agree that McCloskey himself is the fundamental issue of the present campaign. While politicians in many races diligently search their opponent's record for some scrap of a vaguely damaging statement, McCloskey has spoken out so freely on so many subjects that Knapp's major problem has been one of selection.

"It's a gold mine," Knapp said. "We've got so many irresponsible quotations we don't know which ones to use."

One quote that Knapp has used frequently is an abridged and somewhat altered version of a McCloskey statement cited by the Wall Street Journal in May, 1972. "I just don't have a constituency in the Republican Party any more," the Knapp ads quote McCloskey as saying. ". . . All the happy, optimistic people are Democrats. All of the grim-lipped, surly people are Republicans."

The actual quotation used the word "most" before Democrats and Republicans instead of "all." But in either version this statement now seems prophetic.

Republicans in this district, who assumed that McCloskey would be an easy mark in 1974 with only one genuine opponent (another candidate filed but has not campaigned), have truly become "grim-lipped" in the aftermath of Watergate.

The San Jose Mercury, a newspaper which has never been particularly friendly to McCloskey, believes that Watergate undermined the basis for a Knapp victory even before Ford arrived.

"Watergate rehabilitated McCloskey in his own party," the paper wrote in a recent analysis, "because the worse the President looked, the better McCloskey looked, and the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam

neutralized that issue."

Despite these handicaps, Knapp early in April stood dead-even with McCloskey in McCloskey's own poll with the majority of the undecided leaning toward Knapp.

McCloskey believed he was likely to lose, and he sought to re-establish himself as a Republican. His first move was to seek permission to introduce Ford at the state Republican convention in San Jose.

When state Republican Chairman Gordon Luce rejected his request, McCloskey set up a rival forum. Working closely with Rep.

John Rousselot of Pasadena, a right-wing Republican congressman who has been McCloskey's close friend since boyhood, and with George Milias, a Republican congressional candidate from an adjoining district, McCloskey mailed out more than 60,000 invitations to a meeting discussing the future of the Republican Party.

Ford agreed to be the featured speaker at this meeting. While he told McCloskey that he could not formally endorse him, the Vice President posed for the television commercials and he stressed the importance of retaining divergent view points in the Republican Party.

More importantly the Vice President allowed his name to be used on the return address of the post card invitation, an action that made it appear as if Ford were sponsoring the meeting.

Both the state Republican leadership, which is loyal to Gov. Ronald Reagan, and the White House were disturbed by Ford's willingness to help McCloskey.

So was Sen. James Buckley (Cons. R-N.Y.) who was the featured speaker the same day at the nearby state Republican convention.

The Washington weekly, Human Events, reported that David Keene, Buckley's top political aide, made a last-minute plea to Warren

Rustand, the Vice President's scheduler, in an attempt to head off the Ford appearance.

Had Ford cleared the appearance with the state party chairman or the state committee? Keene asked. No, said Rustand. Had he cleared with Reagan? NO, again. Did the Vice President know there was a primary? Yes, said Rustand.

"You must understand," the newspaper quoted Rustand as telling Keene, "the Vice President is a very independent person."

In his subsequent appearance Ford stopped just short of endorsing McCloskey.

"I urge you to embrace Republicans who are honest, diligent and hard-working, whether they are on your side of the political spectrum or not," Ford said. "The Republican Party needs this depth."

Republican politicians who only three months ago were cheerfully predicting a McCloskey defeat are now saying that he will survive Knapp's challenge.

He will survive, if he does, partly because McCloskey has once again inspired hundreds of volunteers to knock on doors for him, a rarity in California Republican politics. But the man who more than any other, is helping McCloskey through pull is the "very independent person" named Gerald Ford.