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A person who does not stand out in a crowd

(Mr. VanderVeen with his wife, Marion, after his victory Monday night in Grand Rapids, Mich.)

A Democrat in Ford's Old Seat

Richard Franklin VanderVeen

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GRAND RAPIDS Mich., Feb. 19—The last time Dick VanderVeen felt a similar combination of elated disbelief and unreality was in 1948, when he was a second-year law student at Harvard. He had headed the Harvard Young Democratic Club that

year, when President Truman confounded the country by upsetting Thomas E. Dewey.

But this time it was even better. Richard Franklin VanderVeen — a three-time loser in electoral politics—exploded last night what is so far the political bombshell of the year. He becomes the first Democrat since 1910 to be elected to Congress from Michigan's rock-ribbed Republican Fifth District, one of the most orthodox Republican bastions in the country. It is the district that for 25 years gave Gerald R. Ford 60 per cent or more of the vote until he vacated the district's House seat last year to become Vice President.

Mr. VanderVeen, a Democrat, was the first Congressional candidate of 1974 to resignation and to make that the major issue of his campaign. And in an astonishing reversal of form, the Fifth District responded: 53,008 votes for Mr. VanderVeen and 46,159 for his Republican opponent, State Senator Robert VanderLaan, who was regarded as one of Michigan's political heavyweights.

"It's kind of mind-blowing," Mr. VanderVeen said today as he savored his victory. And then, more seriously, the 51-year-old lawyer talked of what he viewed as his next task—attempting to persuade other members of Congress, particularly Republicans, that it is in their best interest and the nation's for Mr. Nixon to resign. "If

now his wife, the former Marion Coward. They were married in 1946, just after Mr. VanderVeen graduated from the University of South Carolina, where he was supported by a Navy scholarship and where he was elected president of the student body and just before he went to Harvard. He spent two years as an officer on an attack transport in the Mediterranean during the Korean war, then returned to Grand Rapids to practice law.

Mr. VanderVeen describes himself as a "business law-

yer," one of whose specialties is helping prospective businessmen set up their enterprises and he has been quite successful at it: During the campaign, his net worth was put at \$250,000.

The VanderVeens have three sons, all of whom were active in the campaign—Richard, 22, a graduate of Michigan State University; Larry, 20, a Michigan State student; and Paul, 18, a high school senior. The family lives on a small lake in East Grand Rapids, where the VanderVeens like to sail.

that can done," he said, "it would be a great service to the country."

Mr. VanderVeen says he has long regarded politics as an honorable pursuit and, like many of the Calvinistic Dutch who set the moral tone of this part of Michigan, he says he puts a high premium on honesty, dependability and straight-forwardness.

In that sense, Mr. VanderVeen is a true representative of the Fifth District, inasmuch as he, like Vice President Ford, is widely perceived here as honest and straight. "Being 'sharp' isn't that important around here," Mr. VanderVeen says.

Button-Down Candidate

Some political analysts saw Mr. VanderVeen as too colorless to have much of a chance in the election. Indeed, he is an unprepossessing person who does not stand out in a crowd — somewhat sharp-faced, with receding black hair, and a man who prefers gray or blue suits and button-down collars.

But other political analysts, like those in the political consulting firm of Marttila, Payne, Kiley & Thorne of Boston, saw in Mr. VanderVeen an honest openness, which, coupled with an outright Nixon-should-resign appeal, could make a difference.

"What appealed to us was that Dick was such a decent guy, a straight-shooter," said Douglas Frost, an associate of the Marttila firm, said today.

Mr. VanderVeen chose the campaign's Nixon-resignation theme, but he credits the Marttila firm with winning the election.

The firm managed the campaign from top to bottom, raising funds, solidifying Mr. VanderVeen's natural Democratic constituency with an intensive direct-mail effort, and attempting to reach disgruntled Republican through carefully worded radio and newspaper advertisements.

Mr. VanderVeen was born in Grand Rapids on Nov. 26, 1922, the son of a factory worker. His great-grandfather was a minister in the Central Reformed Church (although Mr. VanderVeen is now an active Presbyterian), one of the Dutch Reformed churches that have a great influence in this region.

He went to public schools here and in Muskegon, where he met the woman who is