

POINTS OF VIEW

Party fissure: Engler has just been managing it

The only person I know who expected Sen. John McCain's big win in last Tuesday's Michigan Republican primary election was State Sen. John J. (Joe) Schwarz, McCain's Michigan campaign chairman.

"I really didn't know what would happen until we got to Traverse City on Monday," Schwarz told me. "But when I saw the way McCain was connecting big-time with all those people, somehow I knew what was going to happen."

McCain took on Texas Gov. George W. Bush and virtually the entire Michigan Republican hierarchy, headed by Gov. John Engler, and beat them badly. Bush won only six of 58 Michigan delegates to the GOP national convention, despite early loose talk by Engler that Michigan was a "firewall" against further Bush slippage after losing the New Hampshire primary.

Most subsequent media coverage focused on the obvious — and obviously wrong — story: Whether the election showed John Engler was suddenly a political has-been. The Detroit News, for example, headlined: "Party splintering, Engler's lame-duck status may hurt in fall."

The only people I know who think that are a few reporters and headline writers for the big-city newspapers. John Engler remains the most politically skilled governor in recent Michigan history. With three more years to go in his last term, anybody who thinks Engler has lost it had better think again.

Where Engler & Co. bungled, however, was last year when they figured the threat to Bush would come from Steve Forbes and the right wing of the Republican Party. Carefully managing Bush's image as a "compassionate conservative" who could appeal to the political middle, they set the rules so as to open the Michigan Republican primary election to moderate Democrats and Independents. Back then, nobody imagined the real challenge to Bush would come from McCain and would involve countless thousands of energized Independents and conservative Democrats.

That miscalculation raises the main issue: How willing are Engler and the Michigan Republican Party to court defeat in November in pursuit of party orthodoxy and a pre-announced presidential candidate?

On the one hand, you have Sen. McCain who has demonstrated extraordinary appeal to Independents and Democrats. On the other hand, you have Gov. Bush who has moved to the right to capture the Republican base, but at the risk of terminally alienating voters in the center. And you have the entire GOP hierarchy swearing up and down that Bush is their guy and that he'll do fine in November.

I don't understand it. Sen. Schwarz agrees. "A majority of the voters do not feel represented by either tradi-



PHILIP POWER

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tional party, Republicans or Democrats. Last Tuesday, you had a record number of first-time voters, of young people 18-25 years old, and around 85 percent of Independents announcing they'll stick with McCain in the fall.

"But you have Bush moving to the right, bringing out all those virulently aggressive spokespeople and isolating himself from the mainstream of American politics. And the Republican Party hierarchy continues to support Bush, cutting him and the party off from a majority of the electorate."

"They just don't get it," Schwarz concludes. I think he's right. The threat to the Michigan Republican Party has always been the ideological split between hard-right social conservatives and much more moderate and pragmatic main-street Republicans. It has been only John Engler's extraordinary political skills and toughness — coupled with general and persistent incompetence by the Democrats — that have held the GOP together over the years.

It took the unexpected emergence of McCain as a wildly attractive personality with a compelling reformist message to expose to full public view the fissure that has lain quiescent at the core of the Republican Party.

John Engler did not cause the fissure. He succeeded in managing it for years. The question now is can he control it?

Phil Power is chairman of HomeTown Communications Network Inc., the company that owns this newspaper. He welcomes your comments, either by voice mail at (734) 953-2047, ext. 1880, or by e-mail at ppower@homecomm.net

After a lot of changes, he is still keeping plenty busy

Ever since I retired as mayor of Farmington Hills and the death of my wife, many people have asked me how I am staying active and living without my spouse of more than 50 years.

Thank you very much for your concerns. I am getting along due to the loving support of the Farmington community, my many friends at the senior center and the parishioners at St. Alexander's.

First of all, I have been busy representing our city as a member of the tribunal to oversee the renewal of the contract between Time Warner and Southwest Oakland County Cable Commission. Farmington Hills Mayor Nancy Bates appointed me to this tribunal because of my previous experience as a member of the cable commission.

I have also started a new series of television programs on Channel 8 titled "Unsung Heroes, Unsung Institutions." The guests will be residents of our community who quietly and without fanfare perform deeds that benefit all of us. We will also include those institutions that have been providing vital services to our community, again without fanfare and public acclaim.

I produced the first two programs last week. They will be shown in March on Channel 8. The first program involved Judy Eisner, executive director of Detroit Baptist Manor, and two of the residents, Joyce Baker and Marcella Greene. The second program had barber Abe Aon as the guest. Abe is active on the Beautifi-

GUEST COLUMN



ALDO VAGNOZZI

cation Commission and the Optimists Club. Born in Jerusalem, Abe has a rich history as the barber to whom politicians and elected officials go for a good haircut and good conversation.

And finally, I have found a mother lode of things to do at the Farmington Hills Senior Center. To start with, I have been going to a daily water exercise class. Due to recent eye surgery I have had to suspend that activity for the present, but I will start up again soon.

Once a week I attend the Current Events meeting where the previous week's news is discussed and digested. Once a month I attend the meeting of the local chapter of the American Association of Retired Persons. In between, there are trips and special holiday luncheons and the Victorian Luncheon where the clothes women wore in the late 1800's were featured.

Several weeks ago I began substituting as a deliverer of Meals on Wheels to frail residents. I now have my own route on Fridays and deliver meals to those who are bedridden or are unable to cook.

Not only do these activities keep me busy but keep me in close contact with the many friendly and supportive people who are involved with the senior programs. Their warmth and thoughtfulness are a comfort to me.

I am also continuing to stay active in city affairs, attending many functions including the Jaycees tribute to Jody Soranen, the chamber of commerce mixer, the VFW annual tribute to police and fire officers, the Piomontese Social Club installation of officers and others.

I appreciate your concern about my post-mayoral, life but I have been quite occupied. Aldo Vagnozzi is a former mayor and councilman in Farmington Hills.

1st Annual 5k Walk for Wishes

MAKE-A-WISH

Walk for Wishes!

Saturday, March 25, 2000

Nankin Mills Pavilion in Hines Park

Hines Drive between Farmington and Merriman Roads

The Make-A-Wish Foundation® of Michigan invites you to lace up your walking shoes and join us for our first annual Walk for Wishes.

While there is no cost to participate in our 5k fun walk, walkers are encouraged to obtain pledges that will benefit the Make-A-Wish Foundation®

Please join the Make-A-Wish Foundation®, Meijer, Inc., WDRQ-FM and all our generous sponsors!

Registration begins at 8:00 a.m.

Walk begins at 9:00 a.m.

For more information, call 1-800-622-WISH

Pledge Support Prizes - You must be present to win

30-149 Walk Sign, 100-149 Sign, 200-149 Sign, 300-149 Sign, 400-149 Sign, 500-149 Sign, 600-149 Sign, 700-149 Sign, 800-149 Sign, 900-149 Sign, 1000-149 Sign

150-249 Walk Tee • Make-A-Wish Tote Bag • 300-499 Tee • 500-499 Tee • 700-499 Tee • 900-499 Tee • 1000-499 Tee

Registration Form

Fax your registration today: 517-347-2720

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Home Address _____ Apt. # _____

City/Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____ Ext. _____

E-Mail Address _____

Male Female Age _____ Individual Walker Team Walker Team Name _____

I am unable to participate in Walk for Wishes, but please accept my donation.

Liability and Public Release: I have accepted my registration for the Walk for Wishes. I hereby state that my physical condition is sufficient to safely complete the walk. I, for myself, my executors, administrators and assignees, do hereby release and discharge the Make-A-Wish Foundation® of Michigan, its officers, sponsors and volunteers, from damages or injuries occasioned by my participation in this event. I also authorize the use of any photographs or videotape of me taken during the event for any and all purposes. By signing below, I certify that I have read all the terms and conditions of the release and do intend to be legally bound thereby.

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William Tyndale College is currently enrolling students for our next session. Classes are scheduled to begin April 1st in Dearborn Heights, and April 4th in Troy. For more information, attend our Information Session on Thursday, March 9th at 8 p.m. or on Saturday, March 11th at 10 a.m. at our Farmington Hills Campus. Call Jan Crain at 1-800-483-0707 to reserve your seat for this information session now!

1-800-483-0707

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