

GOALS SAME, METHODS CHANGE

By Sam Denny

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The bombardment of political campaign activities we have experienced during the past months shows no sign of setting up. The common goal of all the candidates is to establish recognition and confidence among the voters. Let's hope all this activity doesn't burn out the voters to the point they fail to vote.

All the speeches, handshaking, billboards and media coverage are insignificant if the most important part of the process, the act of voting is omitted.

Before the time of instant, nationwide communication and rapid transportation, the candidates had the problem of getting their message to the people. They had to rely heavily on key people in each community to represent them. These people known as electioneers or campaign workers talked with their neighbors expounding the virtues of the candidates and asking for their vote. The following account of a 1935 election reveals some of the antics of a campaign worker.

Edgar Evins was running for a seat on the State General Assembly. He, and other candidates of this time had to rely on community campaign workers. Tom McClellan was "his man" in the Long Branch area. Mr. McClellan had a keen interest in politics and was well versed on current events and could debate the issues with the best.

In other words, he was a good man to have on your team.

Mr. Evins told his campaign workers, "if we win you are invited to come to Smithville the day after the election for a victory celebration." Refreshments, food and for those who wished to spend the night, lodging would be furnished.

Apparently the workers did a good job, Mr. Evins won and many of the workers including Mr. McClellan converged on Smithville for the celebration.

Mr. McClellan was one of those that elected to spend the night. He was housed in an establishment that provided meals as well as room. (This may have been the Evins Hotel. I am not sure on this.) Next morning a large breakfast was served.

Some of the workers stayed on for the noon meal which was a generous affair but by night fall all had departed, all that is, except Mr. McClellan. He knew a good thing when he saw it.

The room was nice, the food was good, it wasn't costing him anything and he liked being around town talking politics.

After a couple of days of this, the lady who ran the establishment approached Mr. McClellan about when he planned to leave. Mr. McClellan replied, "des' (his favorite by word) I didn't know there was any hurry but if that's the way you feel about it I'll be going 'des' don't seem right for a man to go off on an empty stomach. Could I at least stay for dinner?" "Yes", she said, "I am planning on a big meal today and you can eat with us before you leave."

After Mr. McClellan consumed generous portions of a big home style meal, he left the dining room.

The lady went about clearing the table and such when she finished and went to the front porch, there sat Mr. McClellan in a lounge chair.

"Mr. McClellan", she said, "I thought you were going to leave."

"Des, I am woman, but can't a man rest?" Rest! What have you done during the past three days that would cause you to need rest?

“Des, one thing I need to rest from is swirling my coffee around in the cup trying to get the grounds to settle.”

That was the last straw. She ran him off the porch with a broom.

*Read more stories by Sam Denny at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>