

Staffer outlines successful campaign

By LYNN BLANCO
Staff Writer

A politician without an energetic, intelligent staff has the same chance of success as a tennis player with no strings in his racket.

He may know all the rules and play the game perfectly, but he'll never win. No matter how hard he tries, he'll miss the ball and lose the match.

Political aides know a campaign is only as good as its organizers. They plot strategy step by step, from the moment the candidate decides to run.

Alan Schoenbaum, Kent Caperton's campaign manager in the 5th District senatorial race, said there are five major steps in running for a political office.

Step One: Become a candidate

Schoenbaum, who also worked as West Texas coordinator for Bob Krueger's senatorial race, described the ways people decide to run for public office.

The "self-motivated" candidate feels he really has something to offer the people and "just jumps into the race and runs. Most of the time this candidate goes on a name-

identification platform," he said.

Other candidates are usually recruited by a political party or some special interest group, Schoenbaum said.

Step Two: Secure financial support

Some politicians are able to finance a campaign themselves with "personal wealth," such as Gov. Bill Clements, Schoenbaum said. Others get financial support from close friends or people they meet while on the campaign circuit.

One way to estimate the amount of money it will take to finance a campaign is to look at returns from the preceding election year.

A candidate needs about \$1.50-\$2 per vote cast in the previous election to finance a campaign, Schoenbaum said. A minimum amount to start out with is \$90,000-\$150,000.

"A candidate gets a substantial amount of money and then raises the rest along the way. You want to have enough committed before you run," he said.

Campaign money can be raised through personal contact, Schoenbaum said. The candidate is also ex-

pected to spend a substantial amount of his own money on the campaign.

Step Three: See the right people.

Schoenbaum said candidates have to seek support from area opinion leaders — prominent businessmen, leading senior citizens and the "courthouse crowd." This includes

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people in county and municipal offices, the sheriff's office and administrative agencies.

Step Four: Hire a staff.

Caperton's staff includes a campaign manager, a travel aide, a secretary and volunteers, Schoenbaum said.

One of the most important people on a campaign staff is the campaign manager, he said.

A campaign manager, as well as most of the candidate's staff, spends as many hours on the job as the candidate himself, Schoenbaum said. Some of the duties of a campaign manager are scheduling the candidate's time, recruiting volunteers and organizations, controlling the budget, raising money and trying to present a good public image.

"A campaign manager has to be energetic, talented and hard working," Schoenbaum said. "There are not many managers around because you do have to spend a lot of time on the campaign and really believe in the man."

Not all candidates choose to have a campaign manager.

Don Ward, Sen. William "Bill" Moore's travel aide, said Moore does not have a campaign manager. Instead, Moore himself handles most of the duties of a campaign manager.

Another important staff person is the travel aide. Many times during a campaign he sees more of the candidate than even his wife, said Tom Mosley, Caperton's travel aide. It's the travel aide's job to make sure the candidate is comfortable during a 10 to 12 hour day.

Caperton spends five or six days on the road each week. He usually begins his day's traveling at 7 a.m. and ends it at 10 or 11 p.m. with stops at dozens of businesses and offices in the 5th District's 19 counties.

During the day, Mosley jots down names and addresses of people Caperton meets while he's out on the road. Mosley's day ends after he finishes writing "follow-up" letters to each of these people.

Step Five: Filing for office.

This is merely a formality, Schoenbaum said. A \$750 filing fee must be paid by each senatorial candidate either in person or by mail to the state party campaign headquarters. These fees are put into escrow and will help pay precinct costs in each county.

After this step is completed, the campaign really begins.

There are different times when a campaign is the hardest, Schoenbaum said.

"For the challenger, the first month of campaigning is the hardest because you're trying to establish yourself and fund your campaign," he said.

For the incumbent the last month is most difficult, he said. "This is when the pressure hits — the challengers are really taking shots at him."

"In a close race, the ones (candidates) who make mistake lose." He said candidates must stay calm, use the media well and concentrate on a program which will work — one that gets people excited and makes them get out and vote.

Schoenbaum said in the last months of campaigning, candidates concentrate on the media. Press relations are very important. "Be nice to reporters and don't try to feed them any garbage or try to put anything over on them — treat them like humans. Also don't send them any

releases that aren't news," he said.

Since public relations and working with the media are so important, many candidates now rely on adver-

Pete Tucker, of Absolute Advertising in College Station, said the hardest and most time-consuming job in a campaign is buying media time — which includes radio and television spots, ads in newspapers and billboards.

tising agencies to help handle campaigns.

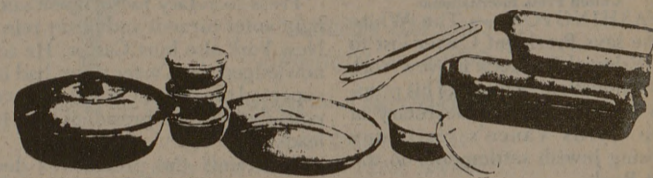
Pete Tucker, co-owner of Absolute Advertising in College Station, said, "The campaign is thrown onto our shoulders when candidates decide to work with our agency."

"The major faux pas for a candidate — who is an attorney and doesn't know how the media works — is to learn how to buy media, learn how to say it (in press releases), learn what to say and still have time to shake hands," he said.

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Even though a candidate works hard to get out and meet his constituents, voter turnout will really tell him if his campaign program was successful, Tucker said.

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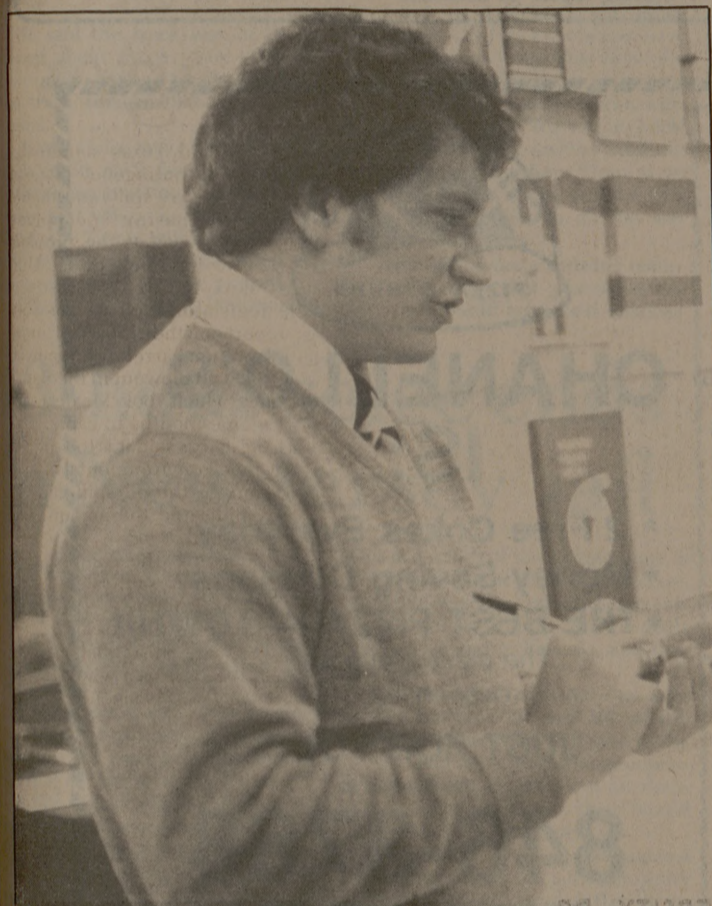
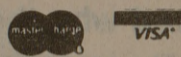
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Tom Mosley is Kent Caperton's travel aide. While campaigning on the road, it is his job to jot down names and addresses of people Caperton meets and send them "follow-up" letters.

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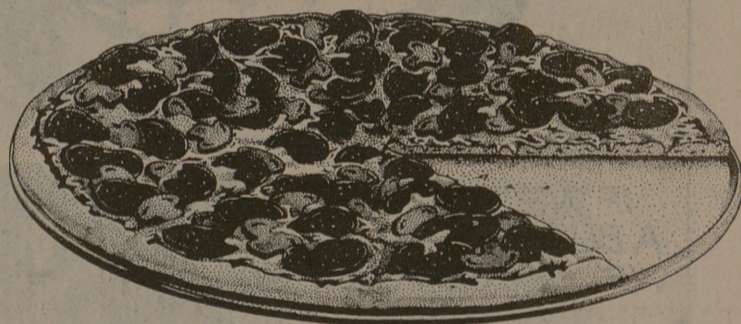
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