DOWN AND OUT IN IOWA: THE 1984 GLENN CAMPAIGN

Richard F. Fenno, Jr.
University of Rochester

Paper prepared for Conference on the Iowa Caucuses, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, February 6-8, 1988
The Campaign-Without-Voters

Presidential nomination campaigns take place over time and proceed in sequence through a number of stages.¹ For each recognizable stage there is a recognizable context—different stages, different contexts. Winning campaigns grow out of favorable contexts and the capacity successively to exploit these contexts. Among the ingredients essential to such a capacity are resources, strategies and a campaign model.² In these general terms, a presidential campaign is like any other political campaign. But it differs from all others in the length of its stages and in the complexity of its contexts. It is also more competitive than other campaigns—attracting an exceptionally large field of candidates and exceptionally intense media scrutiny. For the candidates, therefore, the campaign is long and punishing; and it puts a premium on endurance. The frontrunner at convention time is less a winner than a survivor.³ Similarly, most of the other candidates can be viewed less as losers than as non-survivors. As one observer put it: "nobody loses, you just run out of money."

This paper discusses the presidential campaign of one of the non-survivors of 1984, Senator John Glenn of Ohio—a candidate whose once-promising campaign died in Iowa four years ago. The story of his demise reminds us of the life and death power of the Iowa caucuses. It also suggests to us that something might be learned about our nomination process by studying the campaigns of some non-survivors. Among the more diagnostic of these would be candidates with well-developed campaigns who nonetheless were driven out of the contest by the earliest votes in Iowa and/or New Hampshire. For these non-survivors, the campaign that matters is the
campaign that takes place before the Iowa caucuses. We might think of it as the campaign-without-voters.

From the standpoint of the candidates, a great deal of activity takes place during the campaign that precedes the voting in Iowa. This campaign cannot determine the ultimate survivor; but it invariably produces a number of non-survivors. One or two declared candidates may drop out well in advance of the Iowa caucuses. But most candidates survive until the voting begins. And their activity during the campaign-without-voters determines their likelihood of survival during the campaign-with-voters. Admittedly, the period before the voting is less structured and, therefore, less amenable to analysis than the period during which voting takes place. Doubtless that is why our studies of the nomination process typically focus on the period of actual delegate selection. But the preceding period has all the ingredients and patternings of the voting period. It proceeds in stages. It displays resources and strategies, plans and dynamics. It draws the attention and the evaluation of interested parties such as professional politicians and media scorekeepers. It even has a crude form of citizen participation, through horse-race polls. In short, the campaign-without-voters is a campaign. And it can be analyzed—more, at least, than it has been. Furthermore, if what happens during that campaign is of life and death importance to the candidates—as surely it was to John Glenn—we should make the effort.

**Campaign Stages**

John Glenn's campaign went through several discernible stages—the last of which ended at about the point where most political science studies of nomination politics begin.⁴ In the titles of the early magazine
articles and in the headlines of the later running accounts, we can trace the campaign's broad outlines.

2. February 1982 (Washingtonian) "An Astronaut in the White House?"
3. March 1982 (Newsweek) "The Right Stuff for '84"
4. May 1982 (New Republic) "John Glenn's Right Stuff"
5. June 1982 (Parade) "Can John Glenn Be President?"
6. April 1983 (Washington Post) "Glenn With Hero's Send Off Launches Bid for Presidency"
7. July 1983 (National Journal) "Democratic State Party Leaders See Race Even as Glenn Gains on Mondale"
8. August 1983 (Washington Post) "Democratic Governors Show Increasing Interest in Glenn"
10. October 1983 (Washington Post) "In Last 3 Months, Glenn's Fund Raising Outpaced Mondale's"
15. December 1983 (Washington Post) "Glenn, Hoping to Make up for Lost Time, Reorganizes at Top"
16. December 1983 (US News and World Report) "Bare Knuckle Time for Glenn, Mondale"
17. December 1983 (National Journal) "Democratic State Party Leaders See Mondale Pulling Away from Glenn"
18. January 1984 (Washington Post) "Fund Raising Problems Force Glenn to Cut Staff"
20. February 1984 (Wall Street Journal) "Why is John Glenn, Once So Popular, Running So Poorly?"
21. February 1984 (Dallas Morning News) "Big News is Depth of Glenn's (Iowa) Defeat"
22. February 1984 (Concord Journal) "New Hampshire Do or Die for Glenn—(says) Aide"
23. February 1984 (Washington Post) "Hart Upsets Mondale to Win in N.H.; Glenn Third"
24. March 1984 (Boston Globe) "Glenn Abandons Quest for Presidency"

This view from the media is highly selective. But it conveys the sense of a campaign sequence, of a campaign that did go through
identifiable—albeit overlapping—stages. There were four of them. The first (headlines 1-5) was a period of exploration and indecision. It began immediately after Glenn's landslide reelection to the Senate in November 1980 and continued until December of 1982. The second stage (headlines 6-9) was a period of momentum and hope which began in January 1983 and continued until September of that year. The third (headlines 11-20) was the period of confrontation and decline. It began in October and lasted until the Iowa caucuses. The fourth stage (headlines 21-24) was a period of defeat and withdrawal which lasted from the Iowa caucuses on February 20th until he abandoned the race three weeks later.

Viewed from over the shoulder of the candidate, these stages are easily identified. But they are inevitably, somewhat arbitrary. Whether or not the same stages—not to mention the precise dating—would make sense from the perspective of any other candidate in the 1984 (or any other) nomination contest is impossible to know. But in Glenn's case the four stages do get defined reasonably well by two contextual variables. And these might be used to identify stages in the campaigns of other candidates. They are: the structure of competition and the focus of the media scorekeepers. Further, as we shall see, each substantial recombination of these variables into a newly identifiable stage, created a changed strategic context for the candidate. Thus, each stage of the campaign came to have a distinctive set of strategic decisions associated with it.

Throughout the first, exploratory stage of his campaign, John Glenn was a visibly interested but determinedly undecided Senator in a large array of potential Democratic candidates. That period came to a sudden end.
in December 1982, when Ted Kennedy, formally withdrew from the contest, thereby radically altering the structure of competition. Until that time, horse-race polls and campaign watchers had made Kennedy the frontrunner and put Walter Mondale in second place in the "top tier" of candidates. The others were placed in a "second tier" well behind. By the time Kennedy withdrew, however, Glenn had come to be widely recognized as the leader of the second tier candidates. Media interest in Glenn took the form of intermittent, in-depth profiles, focussing on the kind of person he was. They emphasized his marine-astronaut background, the strength of character exemplified in that experience and the appealing human being revealed by it. They detailed enough of his nine-year, middle of the road, Senate record to indicate that he was a legitimate, as well as an attractive, presidential possibility. Their contents testified to Glenn's high and favorable name recognition. It was their "first look" at the potential candidate. They focussed on the intriguing speculation that America's greatest peacetime hero might, indeed, have "the right stuff" to become its President.

The second stage of the Glenn campaign began with the Kennedy withdrawal. It forced Glenn to commit himself irrevocably to candidacy. And he moved up quickly into a clear, second place position in the new structure of competition. He became, in his mind and everyone else's, "the alternative" to the frontrunning Mondale. Soon, they stood alone in the revised "top tier", with the other candidates trailing in the "second tier" far behind. The spring and summer of 1983 were Glenn's time of momentum and hope. He recruited a staff, raised money, drew favorable reviews from professional politicians and attracted disproportionate media coverage. He
pulled close to Mondale in the horse-race polls; and he ran ahead of Mondale in trial heats against President Reagan. He enjoyed all the harbingers of a winning campaign; his chances of winning seemed to be getting better. And he believed he could do it.

The media, as usual, followed the polls. Which meant that Glenn's newly acquired competitive status brought increased, intense scorekeeper scrutiny. The media's "second look" took them behind the person to the politician, and to his resources, his strategies and his plans. Now, they had a serious candidate and an actual campaign to look at and to judge. Accordingly, they focussed on Glenn's strengths and weaknesses as a candidate. The result of this analytical exercise was to bring forth more information and to raise, despite his apparent momentum, questions about his, and his campaign's, readiness for the competition which lay ahead.

Glenn's time of confrontation and decline began in early October, when Mondale launched his first detailed attack on Glenn's Senate voting record. Glenn counterattacked strongly and stayed on the attack against Mondale until the Iowa caucuses. Throughout this third stage of his campaign, the structure of competition continued to be described as: frontrunner Mondale, alternative Glenn, and the rest of the candidates bringing up the rear. But it was a period in which the horse-race gap between the top two candidates steadily widened and in which Glenn's performance in the polls eventually carried him back toward the pack—leaving him closer to the fourth and fifth place candidates than to the frontrunner. Media scorekeepers followed and recorded both the confrontation and the shift in momentum. They concentrated their "third look" on the top two candidates. But, in a change in emphasis from the previous period, they focussed
directly and heavily on the ongoing Mondale-Glenn contest. As the period progressed, their commentary on Glenn once again followed the polls—this time downward. They came increasingly to emphasize the relative weaknesses of candidate Glenn and his campaign—weaknesses of concept, resources and strategy.

Glenn's fourth stage, of defeat and withdrawal, began the day the campaign-without-voters ended. The first voters of the campaign, in Iowa, totally and irrevocably altered the structure of competition. Gary Hart emerged as the alternative to Mondale. Glenn's fifth place finish was far below expectations and imparted a precipitous downward spiral to his candidacy. He became a victim of reverse momentum. The media, having set second place expectations for him, treated him as the big loser. They drastically reduced their coverage of him, increased the negative component of it and, in effect, buried his campaign. He stayed in the race after Iowa; but his candidacy was dead on arrival in New Hampshire and in the South. He formally withdrew after Super Tuesday.

John Glenn's presidential campaign took place in a number of state-wide contexts. But its failure was first registered—and fatally amplified—in Iowa. So no story of Glenn's overall campaign can be written without special attention to its manifestations and its collapse in that state. It was Iowa that made him a non-survivor. The remainder of the paper will be devoted to the Iowa story. And as much as possible, our story will be told in the stages and the contexts outlined earlier. It will be told partly from the viewpoint of the politicians and reporters who covered the campaign, and partly from my own viewpoint as an observer of
Senator John Glenn's political career. It will, necessarily, move in and out of the specific Iowa context.

Exploration and Indecision

Five months after his 1980 reelection, John Glenn began to explore the idea of running for President—accepting out of town speaking engagements, making himself available to politicians, media people and prospective supporters, watching the President, and reading the polls. During this period, it became clear that he had considerable personal resources on which to draw, should he decide to run. Above all, he enjoyed high and favorable name recognition and, with that, the threshold resource without which no campaign can succeed. His favorable name recognition came from a combination of heroism and strength of character. The latter has often been described (before it became the trendy theme for 1987-88) as the essential qualification for the presidency.6

At out of town gatherings, he was invariably introduced as a "truly national" or a "great American," or a "real American" or an "All American" or a "truly authentic American" hero.7 The earliest media profiles described his personal attributes as: "a naturalness and a simplicity rarely found in a public figure," "an aw shucks niceness," "stability, moderation, caution, steadiness and self-confidence," "goodness...and serene self confidence," "integrity and studious application." "Glenn is solid, reasonable, cautious, collected, steady, sure. He is not flamboyant, dazzling, sparkling, soaring, riveting, nifty or super." He was, they reported, "a genuinely nice person," "a believable man," "as up-to-date as tomorrow's technology...and as comfortable as an old shoe," "almost abnormally normal," "a warm Ike, a man who "knows who he is (and
is) comfortable with himself," "an admirable human being" and "almost too
good to be true."\(^8\) There were doubts expressed about his political
persona, but not about his character.

His other prominent resource was a middle of the road position on the
issues. His Senate record showed strong support for national defense, for
liberal social policies and for fiscal responsibility—with special
emphasis on nuclear non-proliferation in foreign affairs and on education,
research and development on the domestic side. Media scorekeepers
described him as: "the possible moderate alternative to Teddy and Fritz,"
"middle of the road senator," "thoughtful moderate," "a cautious
progressive...a centrist, but...center left," "in the moderate Democratic
opposition (to Reagan).\(^9\) More important, his record contributed
substantially to the plausibility of his candidacy—at least among
influential scorekeepers. James Reston of the \textit{New York Times} described him
as "a moderate liberal, standing closer to the middle of American politics
than either Kennedy or Mondale."\(^10\) Jack Germond and Jules Witcover
commented that,

\begin{quote}
Aside from his remarkable political success in Ohio, it
is his record on issues that has done the most to
stimulate curiosity about Glenn in the political
community. On the face of it, he seems exceptionally
well positioned for the times...\(^11\)
\end{quote}

The net of such judgments was to stress his electability and, thereby, to
markedly enhance his credibility as a candidate.

On the strength of this resource base, Glenn established himself in
third place in the early horse-race preference polls. A March 1982 poll
among Democrats and Independents reported: Kennedy 32% Mondale 20%
Glenn 13%. An October 1982 poll among Democrats reported: Kennedy 35%
Mondale 24% Glenn 11% Hart 3%. These favorable signs encouraged him to
pursue what his Senate staffers called "the presidential thing." But they
did not convince him to commit himself to that course. Indeed, they seemed
to have the opposite effect. If he was doing so well without making a firm
decision to run, why rush into one.

During the exploration stage of his campaign, Glenn had two crucial
decisions to make. Should I run? And if so, when should I make my
decision known to others? When, in other words, would exploration turn
into commitment? If there was to be a campaign, his second decision—about
timing—could well be his single most important decision. For he would
have to get started in timely fashion to prepare for the long, complicated
and grueling campaign. And the decision about when to begin could well be
the strategic decision over which the candidate would have the most
personal control. Once he committed to a campaign, the contextual
uncontrollables—the structure of competition, external events, and media
scorekeeping—would take over. As it turned out, Glenn delayed making this
strategic decision until Ted Kennedy forced him to in December of 1982. It
may have been the most costly mistake of the entire campaign.

Glenn's long delay is partly attributable to the idea that he was
doing very well anyway. But it was partly the result, too, of his notion
that because of his favorable name recognition he did not have to follow
the normal political calculations. When asked on Meet the Press in the
summer of 1982 when he planned to start "building a political
organization", he answered
Sometime later this year or very early next year...I think I have one luxury, I guess, that my name is known around the country. I don't have to go around shaking hands and building up name recognition; so I think I have that advantage.13

When he was asked about his timetable, he would say, "I don't need to be out there like Jimmy Carter for two years before the first caucuses. You need a 14-16 month lead time for the early caucuses."14 If he meant 14-16 months after a formal announcement, there was little problem. If he meant 14-16 months after starting from scratch, there was a problem. And he meant the latter.

It was his habit as a Senator to keep tight personal control over his decision-making process until the last possible moment. And the consequence of this style was that until he committed to candidacy, there could be no campaign—no campaign manager, no campaign organization, no advisory group on the issues, no press secretary and very little fund raising capacity—only an amateurish Senate staff and a few friends from Ohio. Until he revealed his decision to others, everything was frozen in place. His unwillingness to commit, quite predictably, had its greatest campaign consequences in those states that were the first to vote and required the earliest attention—Iowa and New Hampshire. Especially Iowa.

Time, of course, is as precious a resource as reputation. For time is needed to acquire non-personal campaign resources—organization and money. Throughout 1982, Glenn seemed to be squandering a lot of available time, particularly time needed to organize. "He has been painfully slow" wrote one scorekeeper that October,

in putting together a staff and a campaign apparatus to supplant the inexperienced Ohio aides on whom he has relied. The lack of organization has become a matter
of concern among leading Democratic party figures who see Glenn as an electable contrast to Kennedy and Mondale.15

A little earlier, a top official of the Democratic National Committee put the situation more dramatically. "It's a three candidate race," he said.

It's not a two candidate race. I'm not sure who the third candidate is. I think it is John Glenn. I don't think Hart can get it all together. He may have a future in another election, not this one. But John Glenn is already there. He is the kind of person people want for president—mature, serious, experienced, solid. I think he is the third force in the party. You want to know what I really think? I think that if you took six of the best professional party operatives—took them off the Kennedy and Mondale campaigns—they could make John Glenn the next President of the United States. But he is so badly staffed, it is astonishing.

It was an apt comment on the promise and the problems of the Glenn campaign as his period of exploration and indecision neared its end.

Momentum and Hope

From the time of Kennedy's withdrawal to the end of summer 1983, all outward signs were positive for the Glenn campaign. As Mondale's campaign manager put it later "The whole point of that period was John Glenn...He seemed to be sailing."16 The first post-Kennedy horse-race poll among Democrats recorded Mondale 42%, Glenn 18%, Morris Udall 8%, Gary Hart 3%, Alan Cranston 3%.17 From there, Glenn steadily and everywhere narrowed the gap between himself and Mondale. The Iowa poll, which showed him running 55%-17% (among Democrats) behind Mondale in March registered an improved 45%-30% in July.18 In national polls, he drew even closer. He trailed Mondale by only 34%-32% according to the CBS-New York Times in June; and he trailed by only 48% to 46% in the Harris poll in July.19 But the main
effect of all the horse-race polls from December 1982 to July 1983 was to portray the race as strictly a two-person contest. And it was imperative that Glenn hold this second place position until such time as his candidacy took off on its run to first place. "The whole strategic premise of the Glenn campaign," said an advisor, "was to be the sole alternative to Fritz Mondale and make it a two-person race."\(^{20}\) And the media, their scorekeeping task simplified by the two-person contest quickly adopted it. This perceived structure of competition became, for Glenn, a major campaign resource in itself. To the end of the campaign—without-voters Glenn and Mondale dominated campaign coverage.\(^{21}\) And Glenn enjoyed the benefits of a self fulfilling cycle—credibility produced poll results; poll results produced media coverage; media coverage increased credibility; credibility increased poll results. During the second stage of his campaign, it was an unbroken cycle.

The main business of John Glenn's period of momentum and hope was to think seriously about the campaign and to organize it. Its fundamental premise was his electability in a contest with Ronald Reagan. His campaigners argued that he was the Democrat’s best hope—perhaps their only hope—to defeat the President. As he stated his case in August, "It doesn't do... (us) any good to win the nomination. That's not the objective... The objective... is going to be who can replace Reagan in the White House. That's what we have to keep in mind. In that regard, the polls have very consistently shown me to be ahead in that department."\(^{22}\) He was encouraged by such summertime interpretations of horse-race polls as this one in July by the Los Angeles Times:
The claim made by Glenn's strategists that he would be the most easily elected Democratic contender is one of the underpinnings of his candidacy. For the time being at least, the Times poll, as well as other recent surveys, tends to lend credence to that assertion.23

A month later James Gannon, editor of Iowa's influential Des Moines Register was describing Glenn as "A candidate tailor made to oppose Ronald Reagan."24 All the summertime trial heats pitting Glenn against Reagan and Mondale against Reagan supported these claims.25

Behind Glenn's assertions about his electability lay an idea of what his winning campaign would look like—a campaign model. It was the same campaign plan that had brought him two overwhelming victories against the Republicans in Ohio. It would be based on the twin assets of personal character and ideological centristm. "Don't forget that big win in Ohio," said one Ohio advisor, "He only spent a quarter of what anyone (else) would...He didn't have any organization, no telephone banks, none of that stuff. His big asset is his personality, which portrays his strength of character."26 As for his centrist position, Glenn said "I'm happy to be there. That's where the American people are and that's what makes me electable. What elects Presidents is the 71% in the middle."27 The question, of course, was whether he could win presidential caucuses and primaries with the "71% in the middle" and without "organization...telephone banks and that stuff." And the question arises because his two smashing victories in Ohio were general election victories against Republicans not nominating election victories against Democrats.

John Glenn's campaign model was, indeed, a general election model. And his adoption of it was the central strategic decision of the second stage of his campaign. It was not that he had never fought a Democratic
primary before. He had fought two of them, in Ohio—a losing one in 1970 and a winning one in 1974. And they were tough, memorable ones. But in thinking about his 1974 victory he had never differentiated between it and his two general election victories. Most particularly, he had never differentiated between his sources of support in the two kinds of contests. In all his victories, he believed, he had received the same "across the board" support from the "rank and file" voters in Ohio. He did not distinguish between a body of "strongest supporters" or "hard core volunteers" or "especially loyal supporters" who would stand behind him in a nominating contest and those less intense supporters who might vote for him in the general election. He did not think or act in terms of distinctions between nominating constituencies and general election constituencies.

When I asked his campaign manager to describe his 1974 primary election support, he answered

I hate to say this, but it's the truth—the people. He could go around the party organization and the labor unions and establish contact with the ordinary voter. He had absolutely no base whatsoever, and not anywhere, with the party organization.

This is the campaign model Glenn carried into the presidential contest. In a November press conference in Sioux City, Iowa, he was asked to assess the importance of organizational endorsements to his candidacy. He replied in terms of his 1974 primary victory.

We've studied very, very carefully the voting patterns of people back in Ohio with regard to that. And you don't find that kind of close correlation between what organizational heads recommend and the voting pattern of their membership. So early on in this campaign, I
set out to speak to the people of this country across the board... (What about labor?) Speaking about the rank and file, absolutely, I've done that in Ohio in the past. In Ohio I was not always the choice of organized labor...we overcame that by doing just what I was talking about. We went to the rank and file and talked to them...we went in there and said 'compare the issues' and laid it out...That's exactly what we did and they responded. So we're doing the same sort of thing nationally.

As he always had in Ohio, he would campaign for support "across the board," from "the rank and file," "the ordinary voter," "the people," the "71% in the middle."

There is—and was—a good deal of evidence that nominating constituencies are not identical to general election constituencies. Primary voters are thought to be, for example, more activist, more connected to groups, better educated, more issue oriented and, in general, more intense about their politics than the general electorate.28 Within the Democratic party, moreover, there are thought to be a number of especially active and interested core constituencies whose intensity and hard work gives them special weight in low turnout, nominating elections. Close observers of Iowa politics, furthermore, agreed that Democratic caucus goers were dominated by "Democratic activists" by "liberal activists," by those "on the liberal side," that they were "more liberal" than the rest of the Democratic electorate or the larger Iowa electorate, and that Iowa's "Independents...do not participate at all" in caucuses.29 It was characteristic of Glenn that as a politician he had never made a special, intense effort to cultivate the liberal Democratic activist groups—labor, environmentalists, blacks, teachers, Jews, peace advocates, women. He had supported all of them with his Senate votes, but not with a
special emotional commitment or exceptional personal attentiveness. In
sum, he neither thought nor acted in ways that made for a natural
sensitivity to distinctive nominating constituencies or made for the
adoption of a distinctive nomination strategy.

His freshly minted campaign staff could have interjected a different
view. Instead they adopted and reinforced Glenn's familiar Ohio model.
His new press secretary, Greg Schneider's conceptualized Glenn's targeted
base of support as "the constituency of the whole".30 Glenn could win the
nomination, Schneider's argued, by reaching beyond the distinctive
nominating constituencies to win the support of the broad mass of
Democrats. The idea fit with all of the candidates' preconceptions. The
"constituency of the whole" would be the national equivalent of "the rank
and file" or the "across the board" support or "the people" that brought
him victory in Ohio. It would make no sharp distinction between the
general election and the primary election. It would offset the influence
of the activist constituencies by "expanding the electorate" for the
caucuses and primaries, by bringing to the polls people who did not
normally participate, by changing turnout patterns, by activating "weak
Democrats" or "middle Democrats" or "independent Democrats" or "new voters"
or "new blood" or "the floating electorate" or, as he came later to
describe them, "the sensible center".31

The main strategic consequence of the "constituency of the whole" and
the "expanded electorate" conceptualizations was to push the Glenn campaign
toward more of a wholesale operation than a retail operation, toward more
of a national campaign than a set of state-specific campaigns, and toward
more of a media campaign than an organizational campaign. Again,
Schneiders gave voice to the idea. "Mondale's strategy", he said

is an organizational, constituency-based strategy. In
the Glenn campaign, we place a premium on communication
that goes directly to the voters. While not ignoring
organization, it is possible that organizational
structure will turn out to be like sandcastles on a
beach when a tidal wave comes in.32

The tidal wave would be a nation-wide phenomenon and it was to be created
by the media.

Glenn accepted this campaign corollary, too. "People buy almost
everything they need through television. They're not going to break that
pattern when it comes to electing their leaders."33 Or, "I've got my own
little theory that television has replaced party organization and personal
visits as the way you knock on people's doors."34 His campaigners planned
to launch their national media campaign on the eve of the premiere of "The
Right Stuff", the movie about Glenn and his fellow astronauts. "Mondale
will get all these endorsements—the AFL-CIO, the teachers union",
predicted one Glenn strategist, "and then the movie's going to open and
everyone's going to forget about the endorsements."35 Convinced that
Glenn's unique resource was his combination of heroism and strength of
character, his campaigners planned to deliver it to the voters wholesale,
in packages provided by the media. This plan reenforced the general
election strategy they had adopted.

John Glenn approached Iowa, therefore, constrained by two basic
strategic decisions—he would start later than most other candidates and he
would run a general election campaign. For students of the Iowa caucuses
both decisions were remarkable for their failure to understand, appreciate
or pay special attention to what lay ahead in that state. By common
consensus, Iowa was a very special case and it required, like it or not, an inordinate amount of a candidate's thought and effort. And it required it early. As the first state to act, Iowa provided an impulse that would, on the historical record, rearrange everything that followed. Success in Iowa probably meant success elsewhere; failure in Iowa probably meant failure elsewhere. But nothing in the strategizing of the Glenn campaign took cognizance of that common calculation. It conveyed no sense for the crucial sequential effects of the first vote on the next vote, or of the dynamic relationship between early starts, early success and campaign momentum. It conveyed in short, no sense that Iowa required extraordinary sensitivity and early cultivation.

As befitted their general election concept, they contemplated a national campaign in which Iowa was one among many states and in which their campaign's initial impulse would be provided by a big victory on super Tuesday, three weeks after Iowa. His campaign manager's 191 page "campaign blueprint" called for a 50-state campaign and it targeted twelve states for "special, early efforts." Iowa was included simply as one of the twelve. Two months before the caucuses, when asked about the state of his campaign, Glenn answered.

I consistently have been the Democrat that runs better against Ronald Reagan in the general election context than anyone else. We have a good organization now. We're active in—I think we have steering groups in 43 different states now, something like that. We're all set to move into this...We're right on target as far as our plans to expand organization in different states and we move right into this time period now—in late February, where we start out with Iowa and New Hampshire and then comes that big Super Tuesday on March 13th where we have 12 different states vote on that one day. It will be closer to a national primary day than we have ever had before. And that's what
In thinking about his campaign, his focus was much wider than Iowa and his gaze was directed further into the future than the first caucuses.

The argument being constructed here is that John Glenn ran his Iowa campaign without special regard for the Iowa context. But he did, of course, run a campaign there. Because of his own indecision, it began late. And because of his lateness plus his emphasis on the media, it lacked effective grass roots organization. In August one scorekeeper reported from Iowa that,

The Glenn campaign is the most puzzling. Despite his gains in the public opinion polls, the Ohio Democrat has been slow to put together an effective campaign organization according to most Iowa political observers...Glenn didn't open an Iowa office until four months after Mondale.

According to a state Democratic official, who watched from nearby, the Iowa office was as ineffective as it was tardy.

The people who ran the campaign in Iowa from February to November had no political experience and did not know what they were doing. (One of them) had worked part time in the evening for three weeks in a Senate campaign. He walked over to the Glenn headquarters and they gave him the top job in Iowa. He had no idea what he was doing and he didn't know enough to know he didn't know. Just one example: He had one staff member spend three months—when manpower was a scarce resource—looking up the addresses and telephone numbers of all the newspapers, TV and radio stations in the state. We had all that information here at the state party. Or he could have gotten the newspaper information from the Iowa Press Association and the other information from the Iowa Broadcaster's Association. Just one or two phone calls. He didn't know enough to ask. Someone worked on that for 3 months!
Both the amateurishness and the durability of this arrangement was
testimony to the lack of emphasis on organization in the Glenn campaign's
general election model.

In the fall, the dominant media theme became the contrast between
Glenn's popular appeal and his organization's inability to follow up
personal appearances with recruiting efforts. "Up to now," said "a
prominent Iowa Democrat" in November,

the Glenn campaign has been the greatest waste of a
Presidential candidate I've ever seen. They have an
ideal candidate who has enormous popular appeal, but in
between those two things there has been one of the
worst organizational efforts I have ever seen. There
are a lot of people here who are ready to march for
John Glenn if someone will give them the word.39

That same month, the Iowa staff was reorganized, but as part of a sweeping
eight state shakeup—a move which reflected a national campaign concern
more than any special concern for Iowa. It was overhauled for the third
time in January, too late in the game to matter.

In the strategic thinking of the Glenn people it was not the retail
organizational effort that mattered most in Iowa anyway, but the wholesale
media effort. Glenn ranked first among the eight candidates in money spent
(mostly on media) in Iowa. But in terms of personal attention to the
state, i.e., number of days spent there, he ranked 6th among the eight.40
That revealing allocation of resources ran counter to what anyone who paid
special attention to Iowa caucus politics would have recommended. For Iowa
was thought to be a place of retail politics par excellence. "Money and a
famous name will not carry a presidential candidate very far in Iowa"
generalized one observer. "Television spots will help little because a favorable image is not enough. A candidate in Iowa needs committed Iowans...And that takes a gigantic grass roots effort." Another echoed, "Iowa may be the only state where a candidate is routinely asked not only how much he is spending on television, but how many precinct captains he has lined up." Glenn clearly had trouble with precinct captains. In December, he had no precinct captains at all in Iowa's most populous county. In January, he was still looking for precinct captains. In one of Iowa's six congressional districts, the caucus manuals, intended to guide his precinct captains on caucus night did not even get delivered to them. His organizational weakness remained to the end.

But in the end, organizational weakness was a derivative of his strategic thinking. When it was over, his most prominent Iowa supporter summed up "We were late in organizing and we never caught up. Early is everything in Iowa and we were always late." This comment was a derivative of his very first decision—about timing. The state Democratic Party Chairman concluded that "Glenn seemed slow to appreciate the value of organization in this state. There are three basic rules to winning in Iowa: organization, organization, organization. Glenn broke all three." This comment was a derivative of his campaign model. An Ohio media scorekeeper who had followed the campaign from start to finish added, privately, that, "An argument raged within the Glenn camp as to whether they should get in or get out of Iowa. They resolved it by getting half in and half out. They cut John's schedule there, but they spent all the money." This comment was a derivative of his failure to understand the importance of Iowa in the first place.
Confrontation and Decline

Most of what observers normally think of as a "campaign" took place in what we have called the time of confrontation and decline, from October 1983 to until the Iowa caucuses. It was the period in which the frontrunner and the challenger became locked in one-on-one, headline-producing combat. From Glenn's perspective it was the period in which the astronaut-hero had to continue his momentum by defining his political persona. He had to present his message and display his political skills. An advisor called it "a time of communication in which John Glenn begins to fill in the blanks for the average voter" or, simply "the filling-in-the-blanks time." His efforts were in no sense centered in Iowa; and his contest with Walter Mondale was not just an Iowa contest. But it flowed through Iowa; it was affected by events in Iowa; and the winner was decided in Iowa. The confrontation did not prove helpful to Glenn. By year's end, his momentum had been reversed. All the signs—polls, money, professional judgments—were negative. Media assessments of his prospects were uniformly downbeat.

He began the period with his original resource base—personal attractiveness and ideological centrist—intact. But in the course of his four month battle with Mondale, he failed to capitalize on them and, indeed, suffered damaging losses in both respects.

The contest with Mondale began as a struggle to win, from participants and observers, a strategically favorable interpretation of the electoral context. Glenn wanted the contest to be interpreted as one between the Democrats and Ronald Reagan—as a general election contest in which the essential question would be "which Democrat has the best chance of beating
Ronald Reagan?" In that context, his ideological centrism gave him the comparative advantage. Mondale wanted the contest to be interpreted as one between himself and Glenn—as a primary election contest in which the essential question would be "which candidate is most representative of the Democratic party?" In that context, his ideological liberalism gave him the comparative advantage.

Sequence, however, gave Mondale the initiative, since the primary election had to be settled before the general election. And Mondale's strategy was to press that advantage by provoking an ideological confrontation within the traditional Democratic nominating constituency. "Mondale's people would love to coax Glenn into an ideological fight," reported one scorekeeper, "figuring there is no way Glenn can win such a fight within the Democratic party."49 Or, as Mondale's campaign manager put it afterward, "If we were going to face Glenn as a hero, a non-politician, an astronaut, that's dangerous business. (But) if we face (him) on who's better prepared, who has better values, who's better on key issues, that's winnable."50 In October, in Iowa, in a speech that "took the paint off the walls," Mondale attacked three specific aspects of Glenn's Senate record: a vote in favor of the Reaganomics tax cut, a vote in favor of a new nerve gas system and his opposition to the SALT Two treaty.51 It was a deliberate effort to establish the electoral context as an ideological intra-party fight to be decided by the traditional, left of center Iowa nominating constituency.

Glenn's strategy, on the other hand, was to keep the focus on the campaign against Ronald Reagan. When Mondale's attack came, Glenn was pursuing the argument that the Democrats could not expect to beat Reagan
with their traditional allegiances to special interest groups. The latter was an oblique attack on Mondale. But Glenn was not anxious to provoke open hostilities with the frontrunner. He was, in effect, prospecting for a constituency within the Democratic party to which his centrist ideology and his general election strategy would appeal. When Mondale attacked his record, however, Glenn counterattacked in kind. He accused Mondale of complicity in promoting "the disastrous, failed policies" of the Carter administration. Mondale's attack on his tax cut vote, he said, was "a little like the first mate on the Titanic criticizing someone for going for a lifeboat." Soon he was attacking Mondale for excessive spending, lack of support for defense, and for pandering to special interests. The confrontation between them continued unabated to the eve of the Iowa caucuses. Observers will, perhaps, recall their heated, face to face, shouting, finger pointing, stand up-sit down exchange during the first all-candidate debate in New Hampshire. Throughout the period, as in that instance, Glenn was the aggressor.

Indeed, what had begun as a tactical counterattack became the central strategic decision of the campaign's third stage—to prosecute the confrontation with Mondale. It was his way of undermining the front runner while at the same time "filling in the blanks" of his own political persona. By prosecuting the confrontation, however, Glenn in effect acceded to his opponent's interpretation of what their contest was all about, i.e., an intra-party contest to settle the question "who is the most representative Democrat?" Thus, he surrendered his comparative advantage. As one state chairman described Glenn in December, "Before, he was running
as the candidate who could beat Reagan. Now, he's running as the candidate who is ideologically different from Mondale."53

That is exactly the way Mondale wanted it. For he could argue that Glenn's criticisms of Carter-Mondale policies made him sound just like Ronald Reagan, while by contrast, Mondale could claim that "I am a real Democrat." Glenn was put in the position, too, of seeming to attack Democrats whose support he would need. Iowa observers said that his strong attack on Mondale for being "weak on defense" played especially poorly among the Democrats of that state.54 And his strong attack on Mondale's close ties with labor vitiated his Ohio strategy of appealing to labor's rank and file in Iowa. "We didn't have to explain to our members any longer why we endorsed Mondale over Glenn," said an Iowa labor leader.55

The dynamics of the confrontation pushed Glenn steadily away from his natural center-left position and made him appear much more conservative than he really was. "I never changed my positions one iota," he said afterward, "But if you get stuck with a conservative label, people tend to think you are a way-over conservative like Jessie Helms."56 In truth, his ideological centrism was difficult to define, and, therefore, difficult to present. It was more the artifact of a Senate voting record than it was a philosophical position. In national polls, voters found it particularly hard to place him in ideological terms.57 And attacking Mondale—trying to define himself in that way—did not help much. So, all in all, in the heat of battle his ideological centrism turned into vagueness or into conservatism. Neither was helpful in recruiting a supportive constituency. Not in Iowa, anyway.

Nor, even more damagingly, was his confrontational style. For at the
same time that his confrontational stance cost him the advantage of his moderate political views, it was also costing him the advantage of his character strengths. In the beginning, when Glenn had started hitting hard at Mondale, observers wondered whether he could sustain that strategy and still retain the personal attractiveness on which his campaign, at bottom, rested. "There are valid questions" wrote two scorekeepers in November "about whether John Glenn is capable of sustaining this offensive without undermining his reputation as a political Mr. Nice Guy." And the longer the confrontation lasted, the more the media took up this theme—first, commenting on the vehemence of Glenn's attack and second, commenting on the damage it was doing to Glenn's extraordinarily favorable image.

As the Iowa caucuses approached, media scorekeepers described the situation: "The Message down the stretch is overwhelmingly negative;" "Mr. Glenn has stepped up his attacks and they reached a crescendo this week"; "Glenn has continued to attack Mondale in harsher and harsher terms"; exchanges reflect "Glenn's increasingly negative approach"; they produced "a torrent of invective (as) Glenn repeatedly slashed at Walter Mondale." Mondale's polls showed that Glenn's unfavorability rating had jumped from 9% in July to 33% in February. Three days before the caucuses, the headline in Des Moines Register read, "Mondale and Glenn Trade 'Lie' Charges: (Democratic Party Chairman) Manatt Asks For Harmony or Risk Losing to Reagan."

When it was over, there was a solid consensus that the confrontational strategy with its anti-Mondale emphasis had hurt the Glenn campaign. His task had been to "fill in the blanks," to move beyond the astronaut-hero to present an appealing political persona. But he had not done it. As part
of their explanation for Glenn's weak showing, observers blamed Glenn's "unsmiling negativism," "his constant negative attacks on Mondale," "his acerbic attacks on Mondale," "his harsh and negative campaigning against Mondale." The "diagnosis (was) that the negative campaigning had hurt Glenn," that "attacks on Mondale hurt Glenn particularly in Iowa"; that Glenn "was severely punished in Iowa for his combativeness against Mondale"; that "Iowans...grew clearly less impressed with Glenn's steady stream of attacks on Mondale".

There were two parts to the problem. One was the resultant blurring of Glenn's character. In the paid media, he was a hero of sterling character. His two waves of television ads in Iowa were positive and mild. They concentrated first on his heroism and next on his Senate record. But in the free media, he was less appealing. Scorekeeper judgment was that: "(His campaign) took a candidate with the image of Dwight Eisenhower and turned him into Rocky Marciano." "(His) shrill attacks on Mondale clashed with his good guy image." "Outrage doesn't seem to become John Glenn." "He's not that kind of guy really. It's out of character for him". "When Mr. Glenn tries to act tough, it comes off as mean." "When he attacks, he ends up sounding nasty." "His image has been wholesome, apple pie positive, but he has become an antagonistic, even carping critic..." An Ohio reporter believed "the appearance of a split personality," was "the most significant" of all the factors in the Iowa outcome.

Glenn's strategy was to drag Mondale down by beating Mondale up. It required harsh language. It required suggestions that Mondale was a liar, a shouting match during a debate and negative advertisements depicting Mondale as a wild spendthrift. It failed...because
Glen is an unlikely name caller. The mix was like oil and water... (There was) Glenn the hero, the patriot, the nice man. Then there was Glenn the scheming politician engaged in the politics of the negative... Voters became confused by these conflicting political images... When voters become confused about a candidate, they don't vote for the candidate... In the Iowa aftermath it became clear the get-tough-on-Mondale strategy had tainted an All-American image. 77

"The American people just don't believe a hero like John Glenn should be negative," conceded an adviser—a month later. 78 It was another tardy admission of a costly strategic error.

The other part of the problem involved the special inapplicability of the confrontational strategy to the Iowa context. Samuel Patterson's fine description of Iowa politics emphasizes its moralistic and highminded nature. "Above all," says Patterson, "Iowans and their politicians are moralistic about their politics: Iowa politics is blatantly characterized by honesty, fair play, honorable intentions and good government... Political conflict in Iowa is remarkably civil and highminded." 79 It was a climate tailor-made for Glenn the hero-Senator of unimpeachable character. But it was particularly inhospitable to Glenn the rough and tumble attacker. And Iowa Democrats seem to have been particularly put off by the latter. A state party official generalized,

When Glenn started attacking Mondale, Iowans didn't like it. Iowa Democrats don't like negative campaigning. They were victimized by it twice, in the (Dick) Clark and (John) Culver (U.S. Senate) campaigns. They don't like people turning the machine gun on their own ranks and spraying bullets all around. And they don't like the bullets lying all around waiting for Republicans to use them against Democrats. That hurt Glenn badly.
Glenn's strategy was not only inappropriate to Glenn, it was inappropriate to Iowa. And that was a losing combination.

In his excellent study of momentum during the formal stage of presidential nomination politics, Larry Bartels develops an explanation of voter behavior during the campaign-with-voters which seems applicable to the campaign-without-voters as well. And, as such, it helps us to understand what happened to John Glenn between the summer of 1983 and the winter of 1984. Bartels suggests that an expectations-bandwagon effect exists during the earliest caucuses and primaries but that the effect dies out fairly quickly thereafter. This earliest period, he argues, is not very well structured in terms of candidate positions and voter information. With preferences not well developed, therefore, a substantial number of voters support the person they expect to win. And, out of those votes based on expectations can come the phenomenon of momentum. Since the media has a large influence over expectations, it has a large influence over early momentum. As the nomination process continues, however, voters take in more information, develop their preferences, vote their preferences and project their preferred candidate as the likely winner. Along with this change comes decreased emphasis on diffuse rationales such as "leadership" or "good man" and an increase in more concrete rationales, such as political persona or candidate positions. Expectations and momentum cease to have an effect.

The Glenn case suggests that an analogous sequence takes place during the campaign-without-voters. During the summer of 1983, he seems to have been the beneficiary of a considerable "bandwagon" effect, as politicians and Democrats who were polled "voted" for a person they expected to win.
In Glenn's case these opinions were grounded primarily in name recognition. In the absence of other knowledge, rationales tended to be vague: "he's a hero" and "he's electable." In this unstructured context—with information scarce, with Glenn's political persona undefined and with voter preferences undeveloped—Glenn achieved his summertime momentum. But to the degree that Bartels' arguments are applicable, Glenn's voter support was highly unstable—at best fragile and at worst temporary. Name recognition bestows a big initial advantage. But it is a quickly perishable one. And vague rationales like heroism and electability perish with it. Glenn's early momentum did provide hope. But it provided an unreliable base on which to build and would require much positive reinforcement. And that positive reinforcement, "filling the blanks", did not take place in the period that followed. In the end, Glenn didn't give Iowans a positive and sustainable reason for voting for him. And they didn't.

**Defeat and Withdrawal**

During the weeks preceding the Iowa caucuses, media scorekeepers created the structure of expectations that would guide their interpretation of the event. Mostly, they reinforced the structure that had existed since Ted Kennedy's withdrawal—that Walter Mondale was expected to finish first and John Glenn was expected to finish second. That was the way they had played the nomination story for 14 months. They had given more coverage to Mondale and Glenn than to all the other candidates combined.81 So they had a huge investment in their two-man, two-tier version of the story. On the other hand, all the evidence they had amassed and all the descriptive terms they had been applying to that evidence since the end of the year suggested that John Glenn and his campaign were not behaving in accordance with the
script, that they had performed so poorly for so long that he was, very probably, no longer in second place.

Between the first of the year and the Iowa caucuses, the Glenn campaign was variously described as "floundering", "faltering", "fading", "flagging", "collapsing", "caving in", "wheezing", "plummetering", "plunging", "scrambling", "sagging", "sinking", "skidding", "stumbling", "slipping" and "struggling". In the December and January Iowa polls, Glenn was running 26 and 24 points behind Mondale respectively among likely caucus goers and 23 and 29 points respectively behind Mondale among all Democrats. All the evidence indicated that Glenn was moving in one direction only—back into the pack. In the mid-February Iowa Poll, Glenn was running fourth among the definite caucus goers, 33 points behind Mondale; and he was closer to fifth place (11% to 7%) than he was to second (11% to 17%). All the evidence indicated that the structure of competition had changed. Yet the media remained focussed on the simple Mondale-Glenn competitive structure rather than the complex one involving Glenn and the others. They had invested heavily in the front runner-major challenger story line. And so long as they held to it, they were unable to think of John Glenn as anything but the second place challenger.

There are indications that the scorekeepers had plenty of reservations about this expectation. In early January, one noted that Glenn was "slipping so badly in Iowa that he is in danger of finishing third." Two others reported that the temperature was 6 degrees below zero in Iowa and that Glenn's prospects there "have cooled about as much as the weather." A few days later, a third estimate was that "Iowa could become a major embarrassment to Glenn." And at the beginning of February, a Des Moines
Register story based on interviews with Iowa Democratic politicians Headlined "Leaders: Glenn May Be Red Faced Caucus Night." In mid-February, one scorekeeper reported that "Glenn's second place position is probably weakening in the final days here." Another found Glenn "struggling to stay out of 3rd place. And he's doing badly at it." Another said that Glenn, "Once a sure second place finisher, has been losing ground for weeks." And a fourth summed up, "A lot of reporters are raising the question...of whether Glenn will finish second here." So there were plenty of doubts about the accuracy of media expectations about Glenn. But they did not alter them.

"Campaign histories," wrote one reporter in January, "are replete with instances of reporters and commentators sticking with the early front runners even as they were being overtaken and eclipsed." Clearly, he had John Glenn in mind. Whatever their doubts, the scorekeepers of 1984 continued to think of Glenn as the second place runner and pronounced their expectations that he would finish second. "Expectations For Senator John Glenn...have fallen through the floor. Glenn's standing has dropped steadily in polls here," began one scorekeeper. "Yet," he concluded, "to meet 'expectations', Glenn needs to finish second in Iowa." Or, as most of his colleagues put it, if he couldn't hold onto a secure second place, he was in trouble. There was unanimity on this score: "the real question...is whether Glenn can be denied the solid second place finish many see as crucial to his campaign"; he "would be seriously damaged if edged out of second place"; "anything less than second place would be disastrous," "anything less than a clear second place showing could heighten a sense of impending doom"; "needs a solid second place...to
rescue his flagging campaign";98 "anything less than a second for Glenn means the party's over."99 It was an expectation he could not meet, not in Iowa anyway. And they had every reason to know it. Yet they held him to it anyway.

Once the scorekeepers have set their expectations, it is hard for the campaigners to escape from them. In some cases, they do not wish to do so. Indeed, they may have been co-conspirators in setting the level of expectations. From the time of Kennedy's withdrawal, the Glenn campaigners had deliberately positioned him in second place as the only real alternative to Mondale. And so long as they held to this premise, they needed a confirmatory second place finish in Iowa. Alternatively, they could get out of the conspiracy by altering these longstanding expectations—either by abandoning Iowa and pleading nolo contendere or by attacking media expectations for Iowa as exorbitantly high and setting lower ones. By the time media expectations were set, it was probably too late for the first alternative; and the second alternative risked appearing to concede defeat and demoralizing supporters. So, whether they believed it or were trapped into it, the Glenn campaigners agreed with the media and obligingly predicted a second place finish, with 15-20% of the vote.100

One advisor said that his candidate needed "a respectable second."101 Another said he expected only Mondale and Glenn to score "double digits."102 Another said that "If we came in third behind Cranston or Hart, we've got to worry about damage control."103 A fourth focussed on the longer range "I'm not willing to say we would drop out if we were third in Iowa or New Hampshire. Being realistic, we'll probably be the alternative to Mondale on Super Tuesday. Being second doesn't rattle
him." A fifth, also looking far down the road, avoided the question of Iowa saying only that, "We've got to do well in New Hampshire. Doing well in the South depends on New Hampshire." John Glenn's comment, made earlier, was even more long range. "I have to win somewhere," he said. "You can't come in second all the time. The worst case for us would be to come in second five times in a row." He was wrong. There was a much worse case than that.

When the Iowa results—a fifth place finish and 5% of the votes—came in, and the scorekeepers responded with their predictable interpretation, the total effect on the Glenn campaign could not have been worse. Veteran scorekeepers Jack Germond and Jules Witcover told the essential story.

Once again, the political expectations game has markedly altered a presidential campaign. Senator John Glenn of Ohio has been effectively eliminated as a serious competitor...not just because he finished down among the also rans here, but because he did so when the political community and the press fully expected him to finish second, however distantly.

By setting their expectations for him too high and by pressuring his advisers to agree, the media had set John Glenn up for the kill. They did not, of course, make the Glenn campaign in Iowa fail. It did that all by itself. But they magnified the failure. For it was they who made Glenn's failure THE story of the Iowa caucuses. Further, by making it THE story, they effectively took him out of the race.

Unwilling to downgrade his standing when they could have done so several weeks earlier, they propped him up so that they could write him off after Iowa. It is almost as if they could not wait for an opportunity to unburden themselves once and for all of their outdated two-man, two-tier
story line and get on to a new one. By setting their expectations unrealistically high, they solved a problem for themselves. But they placed a crushing burden on the candidate who needed a very different interpretation—that a big defeat there was to be expected, that Iowa—where Mondale was a virtual native son—was never a good state for him, and that the real test for him lay ahead.

On the morning after Iowa, the nation's headlines wrote THE story. "Glenn Does Poorly", "Glenn Far Back in Pack," "Glenn is Trampled", "Glenn Falls Well Back", "Mondale's Victory Deals Blow to Glenn", "Glenn Suffers Major Setback", "Big News is Depth of Glenn's Defeat." In the accompanying stories, Glenn's performance was described as "a stunning defeat," "a devastating blow," "his last hurrah," "a poor showing," "a crushing and perhaps fatal defeat," "a stunning setback," "an Iowa burnout," "the political choke of the year," "a miserable showing," "a dismal showing," "a misstep," "a debacle," "a public and painful drubbing," "disastrous," "feeble," "embarrassing," "dreary," "a shellacking," "a humiliation," "the beginning of the end" and "the final stages of the most spectacularly bungled presidential campaign in modern American history."

The candidate and the campaign were described as "mortal wounded," "on the ropes," "collapsed in a heap," "hemorraging," "reeling," "near collapse," "down in flames," "crashlanded," "the big loser in Iowa," "the loser in the expectations game," "in deep deep trouble," "wounded and demoralized." The media reached for metaphors: "his back against the wall"; "much of the steam had gone out of (his) campaign"; "the air had gone out of (his) balloon"; "the bottom (had) dropped out"; "at the end of his rope"; and "the worst fear (had) come to pass." He was "the only
astronaut to splash down before he lifted off.\textsuperscript{109} The judgments were merciless and relentless. Iowa was surely a self inflicted wound; and the media scorekeepers had just as surely made it a fatal one.

The Iowa outcome took away his strategic second place status, and put him in a "political free fall." The negative reverberations from Iowa were instantaneous. On Tuesday evening the Glenn campaign was conducting a tracking poll in New Hampshire. Just prior to the nightly network news, they found Glenn riding in second place with 19% of the vote. Immediately after the Iowa results were reported on the news, Glenn dropped to third place with 9% of the vote.\textsuperscript{110} When completed, Glenn's New Hampshire poll—which found Glenn at 25% to Mondale's 32% shortly before Iowa—found Glenn at 11% and Mondale at 34% the day after Iowa. And Gary Hart was in second place at 25%.\textsuperscript{111} "We just looked at that stuff" recalled one adviser, "and we said Holy Christ, we're no longer the alternative. We were out of the campaign. There had to be one alternative to Mondale. It was no longer John Glenn."\textsuperscript{112} The reverberations were nationwide. A CBS-New York Times poll taken four days after Iowa found that Glenn's 7% support nationally was half of what it had been a month earlier.\textsuperscript{113}

Glenn's New Hampshire campaign manager had noted earlier that "New Hampshire likes an underdog but not a loser."\textsuperscript{114} Glenn came out of Iowa a loser. And the loss carried New Hampshire down with it. A New Hampshire pollster attributed Glenn's precipitous fall there largely to people who had originally backed Glenn as the most electable Democrat—a rationale killed in Iowa.\textsuperscript{115} Glenn's expectations momentum had been replaced by Gary Hart's expectations momentum. What Iowa did to New Hampshire, New Hampshire subsequently did to the South. "We were wounded meat after New
Hampshire," said one top aide when it was all over, "After New Hampshire, as we moved south, we had a big opening—but we were no longer the alternative."116

As Glenn struggled toward Super Tuesday in the South—the day toward which the campaign had for so long pointed—one aide said "We kick ourselves every day. If we hadn't finished fifth in Iowa it might be different now. We got in Iowa late...We weren't organized."117 When it was all over, the Ohio Senator pinpointed Iowa simply as "the place where 'things became unglued.'"118 And one of his top strategists elaborated,

If you asked me what happened to the Glenn candidacy, I'd answer in one word: Iowa. Pre-Iowa, Glenn's polls showed him within eight or nine points of Mondale in New Hampshire. If he'd come in second in Iowa, he probably would have won New Hampshire.119

And if he had won New Hampshire?? It was an acknowledgment of the overwhelming strategic importance of Iowa. It came at least a year and a half too late.

John Glenn's campaign—without-voters failed in Iowa. And failing there, it could not survive. It began as a campaign of great promise—even in Iowa. Three days before the caucuses, Iowa's Lieutenant Governor, a Glenn supporter, noted that: "The ironic part of it is that in a way,
Iowa) is Senator Glenn's ideal constituency...If you look at the polls of where Iowans are on the issues, those polls will model Senator Glenn more than any other candidate. The campaign should be doing better.120 But it was a campaign in which nearly everything went wrong. His primary resources such as personal appeal and ideological centrism were dissipated. Secondary resources such as organization and political skill were undeveloped. His campaign model and its general election strategy were inappropriate. His other strategic decisions, from the delayed start at the outset to the prolonged confrontation at the end were faulty. And the media hastened the campaign's demise with a final downward shove.

Beneath all of those difficulties lay a crippling lack of understanding of the strategic importance of Iowa in the nominating process. If the Glenn people understood it, they did not behave as if they did. From that perspective, the campaign represented either ignorance, or miscalculation or a deliberately perilous experiment. So many things went wrong in Iowa, that it is not possible to argue that "but for Iowa" John Glenn would have captured the nomination. For one thing, the candidate had personal weaknesses as a politician that might not have survived the best of campaigns. I have deliberately not focussed on them. But it is possible to argue that if he and his advisors had appreciated the killing power of Iowa, his campaign would have done better than fifth place and he would have survived longer elsewhere. It may also be possible to argue that he would have done better and survived longer if he had not gone into Iowa in the first place. But those are arguments for other candidates to ponder, in other years, as they prepare for and conduct their presidential nominating campaigns in Iowa. And for political scientists to start
generalizing about as they study campaigns-without-voters in the earliest nominating states.
Endnotes


6. A good pre-1987 expression of this now-trendy view will be found in, Howard K. Smith (moderator), "Every Four Years: A Study of the Presidency," Philadelphia, PBS, WAY-IV, 1980.


10. Reston, "Do Ye Ken John Glenn?"


18. David Broder, "Democrats Charge Reagan Has Broken Promises," Washington Post, July 14, 1983. Among "caucus goers", the figures were 44-17 in March and 47-29 in July.


37. Transcript, Meet the Press, December 11, 1983.


47. For a similar assessment, see Dan Balz, "Grounded By His Debts, Glenn Drops '84 Hopes," Washington Post, March 12, 1984.


50. Ibid., p. 394.


54. David Yepsen, Des Moines Register, November 11, 1983.

55. Bill Peterson and Kathy Sawyer, "Mondale Says Nomination May Be Clinched Soon."


67. Usher, "The Undoing of Glenn."


77. Brent Larkin, "The Old Glenn's Back—Is It Too Late?", Cleveland Plain Dealer, February 27, 1981.


82. See Washington Post, January 6, 23, 25, 26, February 3, 14; New York Times, January 9, 27; Cleveland Plain Dealer, January 5, 11, 23, February 14, 20; Chicago Tribune, January 9, 23, February 15; Los Angeles Times, January 31, February 15; Boston Globe, January 17, February 3, 14; Washington Times, January 23, February 16; Wall Street Journal, February 1; Philadelphia Inquirer, January 28; Manchester Union Leader, February 1; Miami Herald, February 1, Hartford Courant, February 2; St. Petersburg Times, February 18; Akron Beacon Journal, January 13.

83. Bill Peterson and Kathy Sawyer, "Temperature and Glenn Outlook Falling in Iowa," Washington Post, January 11, 1984; The Iowa poll results reported in this paragraph were taken on November 28-December 6, December 27-January 10 and February 12-16. They were published on December 18, January 15 and February 19 respectively, in the Des Moines Register.


85. Peterson and Lardner, "Temperatures and Glenn Outlook Falling in Iowa."

86. Malone, "Cranston's Maximum Effort in Iowa."


89. Peterson, "Iowa's No. 1 Question Is 'Who's in Third.'"
90. Willkie, "Uncommitted Vying for 2nd Place In Iowa."
91. Orin, "Front running Jitters...."
92. Schram, "Early Leaders of the Presidential Pack Lure the Newshounds."
105. Ibid.

108. These January 21st headlines are from: Wall Street Journal; Washington Post; Washington Times; Boston Globe; Dallas Times Herald; Jackson (Miss.) Daily News; Dallas Morning News.

109. Descriptions are from stories above as well as stories in: New York Times; Baltimore Sun; New York Daily News; USA Today; Christian Science Monitor; Columbus Journal; Columbus Dispatch; Cleveland Plain Dealer; Philadelphia Inquirer; Los Angeles Times; Chicago Tribune; New York Post.


112. Ibid.


