

Three Republican Archetypes Square Off in North Georgia

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In the northernmost corner of Georgia, Democrats had controlled the State Senate seat since Reconstruction. Eventually the political climate changed, however, and Republican Nancy Schaefer beat Democrat Bob Stowe in her first successful bid for election. On the day Schaefer's predecessor, former Senator Carol Jackson, decided to not run again, she may have sealed the fate of her party in Georgia's northernmost district for the coming decade.¹ The general election, however, proved to be dull in comparison to the primary and following run-off elections. Superior name recognition, political experience, a strong support network, a conservative North Georgia political climate, and favorable events in national politics combined to bring Schaefer victory.

NORTH GEORGIA POLITICS

The political climate in North Georgia significantly differs from not only that of metro and suburban Atlanta, but also from rural, southern Georgia. North Georgians, especially when compared to Republicans from other areas of the state, are more ideologically libertarian. An interesting history precedes this phenomenon. According to Kristin Wyatt, an Associated Press reporter who has specialized in North Georgia politics for years, conservative Republicans existed in North Georgia even when the rest of the state was Southern Democrat. At the time of the Civil War, parts of mountainous North Georgia did not want to secede. In many cases, Republicans' descendents have stayed in the same place as their ancestors, both geographically and politically.²

¹ Shearer, Lee. "Several district seats up for grabs." *Online Athens* 29 Oct. 2004. 18 Mar. 2005 <http://onlineathens.com/stories/102904/new_20041029063.shtml>.

² Wyatt, Kristin. Telephone interview by the author. 5 Apr. 2005.

THE CANDIDATES

The three Republican candidates in the primary election for the 50th state Senate seat were distinctly different individuals, best characterized as a staunch conservative activist, relatively more liberal lawyer, and gentleman educator.

Nancy Schaefer

The most well-known candidate in the race was Nancy Smith Schaefer, 68, a native of Georgia.³ A lifelong conservative activist, Schaefer stepped up her lobbying efforts in 1986 by founding Family Concerns, Inc., and its arm, Citizens for Public Awareness, Inc. The latter raises and distributes funds for Family Concerns. According to the organization's website, its goal is "strengthening and protecting the family through local, state, national and international policy, and through the education of citizens and leaders in the vital importance of obeying God's moral law in our society and in our culture."⁴ In the past 12 years, Family Concerns has lobbied against the lottery, a national gay and lesbian rights month, many United Nations programs, emergency birth control availability, human cloning, and the modern feminist agenda. Monthly newsletters and issue alerts have been sent out to mailing lists,⁵ allowing president and founder Schaefer to gain name recognition and a clearly defined platform. One of her primary issues was abortion, and in 1988 she founded The Family Concerns Pregnancy Center. This center operated until 1998, assisting nearly 5000 women in the Atlanta area.

Nancy Schaefer hosted two radio programs, "Live Talk With Nancy" and "Family Concerns with Nancy Schaefer." These daily programs were broadcast by WNIV, "Atlanta's

³ Sen. Nancy Schaefer. 14 Jan. 2005. The Atlanta Journal Constitution. 21 Mar. 2005 <<http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/legis05/0105/14legbio.html?UrAuth=%60NbNUOcNWUbTTUWUXUTUZTZUcUWUcUcUZUbUZUcTYWVVZV>>.

⁴ Family Concerns. Family Concerns. 10 Mar. 2005 <<http://www.familyconcerns.net/index.htm>>.

⁵ Family Concerns: Newsletter & Alert Archives. Family Concerns, Inc. 2 Apr. 2005 <<http://www.familyconcerns.net/newsletter.htm>>.

Christian Talk”⁶ from 1999 until around 2001, when WNIV was acquired by Salem Communications.⁷ As of 2002, Schaefer gave daily commentaries on Northeast Georgia stations WRAF-FM (90.9), WEPC-FM (88.5) and WTFH-FM (89.9).⁸ The programs provided another opportunity for Schaefer to target the Republicans’ core constituency of Christian conservatives in her future district. Multiple decades of political activism made her name notable, her words quotable, and her political ambitions attainable.

Schaefer began her direct involvement in politics with a 1994 campaign for lieutenant governor of Georgia. Although she was endorsed by the Republican Party, her bid failed. In 1998 she ran for the governorship as the first Republican female candidate,⁹ but lost in the primary by a margin of over 175,000 votes to opponent Guy Millner. At the time, Schaefer lived in Atlanta,¹⁰ but she made her strongest showing in Stephens county, within the 50th state senate district. Her ability to attract North Georgia voters may have played a part in her decision to move to Habersham County and run for the Senate in the 50th district in 2000.¹¹ In her first bid for the 50th district Georgia Senate seat, Schaefer lost to Guy Middleton with 47.3% of the vote against his 52.7%. However, she carried Habersham County with 66% of the vote, Rabun with 67%, Stephens with 72%, and White with 51%,¹² foreshadowing her future victory.

⁶ WNIV-AM. WNIV. 02 Apr. 2005 <<http://www.wniv.com/>>.

⁷ Carter, Jeff. Online interview by the author. 3 Apr. 2005.

⁸ Nancy Schaefer. 5 May 2002. 3 Apr. 2005
<http://www.ajc.com/opinion/content/opinion/woman/bio_nancy0405.html>.

⁹ Senator Nancy Schaefer: Endorsements. 5 Mar. 2005
<<http://www.nancyschaeferforsenate.com/endorsements.php>>.

¹⁰ Nancy Schaefer.

¹¹ Cox, Cathy. Official Results of the July 21, 1998 Primary Election: Governor. 29 July 1998. Georgia Secretary of State. 30 Feb. 2005 <http://www.sos.state.ga.us/elections/election_results/1998_0721/0000220.htm>.

¹² Cox, Cathy. Official Results of the July 18, 2000 Primary Election: State Senator - District 50. 27 July 2000. Georgia Secretary of State. 12 Mar. 2005
<http://www.sos.state.ga.us/elections/election_results/2000_0718/0006320.htm>.

Chan Caudell

Schaefer's opponents in the 2004 election were relatively unknown in the political landscape. Neither Chan Caudell nor Stanley "Butch" Darnell founded national organizations or broadcast their messages to captive radio audiences. Yet Chan Caudell had an advantage over Stanley Darnell. Caudell, 37, won a seat on the Habersham County Commission in 2002.¹³ Through this position, he got his name into the local and state papers, made contacts, and learned about the difficulties facing local officials, a point he would later emphasize. Unfortunately for Caudell, his actions as a commissioner and part of the local government divided the people of Habersham County. When Habersham's county manager, Bill Shanahan, resigned amid controversy in April 2004, citizens' criticisms brought to light a significant amount of frustration toward local officials. Resident Joe Goss indirectly referenced Caudell in his statement that "County government has become a wedge between the citizens of this great county. If this kind of government continues, we'll have neighbor against neighbor, even family against family and church against church."¹⁴

Caudell's status in the private sector may have also raised concerns among voters. According to a CNN and FindLaw forum, 39 percent of Americans consider lawyers to be especially dishonest or somewhat dishonest, 60 percent consider lawyers overpaid, and 41 percent do not think lawyers play a beneficial role in the community.¹⁵ Caudell had many years of law experience when he decided to run for Georgia senator. He was also vice president of the Georgia Trial Lawyers Association from 2004 to 2005.¹⁶

¹³ Caudell, Chan. Telephone interview by the author. 22 Mar. 2005.

¹⁴ Price, Benjamin. "Some Thank Shanahan, Others Vent Their Anger." The Northeast Georgian 9 Apr. 2004. 2 Apr. 2005 <http://www.thenortheastgeorgian.com/articles/2004/04/09/news/top_stories/03topstory.txt>.

¹⁵ Dorf, Michael C. "FindLaw Forum: Americans Believe Lawyers to be Necessary but Dishonest, Survey Finds." CNN.com 17 Apr. 2002. 2 Apr. 2005 <<http://archives.cnn.com/2002/LAW/04/columns/fl.dorf.lawyers.04.17/>>

¹⁶ GTLA 2004-2005 Vice Presidents. The Georgia Trial Lawyers Association. 12 Mar. 2005 <<http://www.gtla.org/about/vice-president-list.htm>>.

Caudell entered the race with numerous other advantages that made up for his unfortunate choice of profession . He was young with many family ties in his community, had proven his electability as a county commissioner, and was highly regarded by those who knew him well. According to his campaign manager, former state senator and Georgia Republican Party chairman Rusty Paul, Chan Caudell was “what you would consider in most districts the ideal candidate.”¹⁷

Stanley “Butch” Darnell

The least well-known of the three Republican candidates for the primary, Stanley “Butch” Darnell, had a personality advantage. The man whose professed reason for running for office was his “love of North Georgia and its people”¹⁹ had the kind, helpful manner of a Southern gentleman. Darnell’s resume included 17 years as a middle and high school teacher, director of student life, and assistant professor at the college level. In addition to experience balancing multi-million dollar school budgets, he owned and operated a grocery store and produce company and managed \$60 million of construction and renovation projects. Darnell served as chairman of the board for the Chamber of Commerce, two terms on the Dillard City Council, and as chairman of the Board of Trustees for the North Georgia Technical College Foundation. He used his many endeavors as a strategy for connecting with the people of North Georgia, stating, “I have worked long, hard hours and know what it is like to have to make a

¹⁷ Paul, Rusty. Telephone interview by the author. 4 Apr. 2005.

¹⁹ Darnell, Stanley. Interview with Ross Willis. The Toccoa Record. 13 July 2004. 3 Apr. 2005
<http://www.thetoccoarecord.com/articles/2004/07/13/news/elected_officials/03electedofficialdarnell.txt>.

payroll.” He currently lives in Rabun Gap with a large, extended family, including his wife, Kay Duvall Darnell, and his two sons and their families.²⁰

STRATEGIES

Target Groups

The race for the State Senate seat covered a relatively small and demographically uniform voter base. Candidates could not afford to neglect any large or influential group of voters, since relatively few such groups existed. The same principle applied to areas and counties. According to Rusty Paul, Caudell’s campaign manager, deciding not to focus on Stephens County was his biggest mistake. He stated, “We made a strategic decision not to do a lot of campaigning in Stephens County because that was Nancy’s home turf...Stephens was our biggest mistake.”²¹ Some targeting, however, was done by all of the candidates, who used the publicly available voter records to focus on those who voted in previous Republican primaries.

From the beginning, Darnell decided not to solicit votes at churches other than his own, stating that churches and religion should not be used for political gain. On the other hand, Nancy Schaefer made good use of her connections and the appeal of her strong moral stance to Christian conservatives. She spoke at many churches, and she also switched churches during the race. Her destination church was very large and located in Toccoa. Darnell believed that switch was a significant factor in the 1,208 votes she got in Toccoa versus his 137 and Caudell’s 412.²²

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All three candidates worked hard to meet as many people as possible. Darnell’s campaign was an entirely grassroots, door-to-door effort. Hundreds of personal visits to

²⁰ Darnell, Stanley. Interview with Ross Willis.

²¹ Paul, Rusty. Telephone interview by the author.

²² Darnell, Stanley. Telephone interview by the author. 5 Apr. 2005.

²³ Georgia. Secretary of State. Official Results of the July 20, 2004 Primary Election. 30 July 2004. 4 Mar. 2005 <http://www.sos.state.ga.us/elections/election_results/2004_0720/0006520.htm>.

businesses, restaurants, and homes both assisted and limited his campaign. On one hand, he had a high success rate for each effort (a visit or phone call with a friendly voice means more than a glossy ad), but on the other hand, his range was restricted. In a district covering such a large area, Darnell could only visit a limited number of places per day.²⁴

During his door-to-door efforts for the run-off election, Caudell experienced the same problem. He realized after the primary that he lacked sufficient name recognition outside of Habersham, so he turned to phone banks, which he considered the most effective technique used to contact voters in his campaign.²⁵ In fact, Chan Caudell's adoption of heavy phone banking was one of the few changes that occurred between the primary and runoff elections. The issues highlighted by each candidate remained constant, although the method of advertisement occasionally changed to reflect the one-on-one nature of the run-off.

Fundraising

Dramatic differences existed between the amount the two frontrunners raised and spent and the funds utilized by Stanley Darnell. By July 2004, Darnell's campaign had raised \$3,800, compared to Schaefer's \$36,000 and Caudell's \$54,000. The three remained in similar relative positions throughout the primary campaign. Caudell eventually raised \$117,598.67 to Schaefer's \$87,450.00 and Darnell's \$26,799.75. Each of the three candidates had a distinct approach to fundraising. Schaefer received by far the bulk of the Political Action Committee (PAC) money, while most of Caudell's donations were from fellow attorneys, and Darnell's funds came from a variety of individual donors.²⁶

²⁴ Darnell, Stanley. Telephone interview by the author.

²⁵ Darnell, Stanley. Interview with Ross Willis. The Toccoa Record. 13 July 2004. 3 Apr. 2005 <http://www.thetoccoarecord.com/articles/2004/07/13/news/elected_officials/03electedofficialdarnell.txt>.

²⁶ Cox, Cathy. Secretary of State. Campaign Contribution Disclosure Reports & Candidate Financial Disclosure Statements. 20 Mar. 2005 <http://www.sos.state.ga.us/elections/campaign_disclosures/disclosure.htm>.

Schaefer received funds from 28 PACs. The best represented group was service providers in the health care industry, including physicians, orthodontists, nurses, and generalized organizations such as the Georgia Medical Association and Georgia Nursing Home Association. Insurance interests were also well-represented, whether by individual donors employed in the insurance industry, firms, or insurance-related PACS. Clearly Schaefer, the daughter of a physician, was the candidate of choice for groups such as doctors and insurers seeking tort reform. Indeed, her campaign website stated that she would work to “support tort reform/ healthcare/ liability insurance protection for hospitals, and physicians, especially in rural areas.”²⁷ In an interview with *The Toccoa Record*, Schaefer reiterated that she would support tort reform, while Caudell minced words and skirted the issue. Banking and mining interests as well as entrepreneurs also contributed in strong numbers. Based upon reports filed with the Secretary of State Cathy Cox, Schaefer’s campaign appears to have solicited individual donations through August 17th, after which point her focus shifted to wealthier interests: business owners and PACs. Approximately 50% of the individuals who donated to Schaefer in the beginning of the race were retired, indicating that her messages appealed significantly to elderly conservatives of North Georgia.²⁸

Caudell, on the other hand, utilized wealthy resources among his attorney peers. The average donation by an attorney almost always amounted to the maximum allowable donation, \$2,000—more than four times the average donation by a PAC to Nancy Schaefer. The attorneys who donated to Caudell included former associates and those looking for an opponent to tort reform. When asked by the *Toccoa Record* about his strategy for providing affordable health services to those in need, Caudell responded, “I will work to provide affordable healthcare and

²⁷ Issues Of Concern, Nancy Schaefer for Senate, 20 Feb. 2005 <<http://nancyschaeferforsenate.com/issues.php>>.

²⁸ Cox, Cathy. Campaign Contribution Disclosure Reports & Candidate Financial Disclosure Statements.

prescription drugs to the elderly and the uninsured by looking at different ways to fund the Medicaid budget. I will also look and address the cause of skyrocketing healthcare.”²⁹ On a similar subject, Schaefer claimed, “I believe it is a crime for hospitals, physicians and nurses to live in fear of their very existence because of lawsuits or even perceived negatives when they are doing the best job they can do”.³⁰ PACs and attorneys were able to discern from the political rhetoric what each candidate appeared likely to do, thus the stark division of support. Not a single physician, health care provider, or affiliated PAC donated to Caudell. Farmers, bankers, and real estate entrepreneurs were well-represented among the remainder of his donations.³¹

Darnell’s donors came from a variety of backgrounds, a third of whom were retired. The remainder included exactly two car dealers, two insurers, a real state agent, nurse, banker, teacher, attorney, and pharmacist. The fact that Stanley Darnell’s donations spread both sides of the tort reform controversy is testimony to his personalized efforts. His donations were solicited individually at courthouses, restaurants, and individual businesses. The limitations of Darnell’s budget—it was one third of Schaefer’s and a fourth of Caudell’s—changed his campaign methods. Instead of using expensive mailings and repeated ads, Darnell attempted to meet as many people as possible. In an interview with the author, Darnell stated, “In retrospect, I would have to say that everyone I talked one-on-one to voted for me.”³² Unfortunately for him, the 50th state Senate district is too large and sparsely populated to allow for the success of such an inefficient method.³³

²⁹ Caudell, Chan. Interview with Ross Willis.

³⁰ Schaefer, Nancy S. Interview with Ross Willis.

³¹ Cox, Cathy. Campaign Contribution Disclosure Reports & Candidate Financial Disclosure Statements.

³² Darnell, Stanley. Telephone interview by the author.

³³ Ibid.

ISSUES

The 10 Commandments

The single most important issue to Schaefer's campaign was the Ten Commandments Display in Habersham County. The Commandments first went to court in October.³⁴ A Baptist minister, Reverend Charles Turner, joined a self-proclaimed atheist, Gregg Holder, and the ACLU to fight the display on constitutional grounds. From the beginning of his fight, Turner acknowledged that most residents of Habersham County wanted the Ten Commandments to stay in the courthouse.³⁵ Nevertheless, Federal Judge William O'Kelley ruled on the 17th of November that the display did not pass a test set by the Supreme Court in 1971 by failing to "retreat from the unambiguous religious purpose."³⁶

Schaefer became involved in the case far before her senatorial candidacy, as the president of Family Concerns. Because she was often quoted in local news reports, Schaefer's name and face became associated with the battle from its earliest stages. As the County Commissioners, including Caudell, mulled over whether to appeal Judge O'Kelley's ruling, Christian conservatives were inspired by many organizations, including Family Concerns, to raise thousands of dollars to continue the legal fight. Schaefer declared, "It's not just about the Ten Commandments. It is about the acknowledgement of God in our states."³⁷ Schaefer urged the United States Congress to get involved in the judicial process, stating, "I feel like millions of Americans need to really put the pressure on Congress now, to restrict these judges, these

³⁴ Shirek, Jon. "Judge Rules Against Commandments." Ed. Manav Tanneeru. 11 Alive 19 Nov. 2003. 5 Mar. 2005 <http://www.11alive.com/help/search/search_article.aspx?storyid=39374>.

³⁵ Shirek, Jon. "Commandments Dispute Left to Judge." 11 Alive 31 Oct. 2003. 8 Mar. 2005 <http://www.11alive.com/help/search/search_article.aspx?storyid=38153>.

³⁶ Shirek, Jon. "Judge Rules Against Commandments."

³⁷ Shirek, Jon. "County Mulling Commandments Appeal." Ed. Manav Tanneeru. 11 Alive 20 Nov. 2005. 5 Mar. 2005 <http://www.11alive.com/help/search/search_article.aspx?storyid=39450>.

unelected judges, from making these decisions, which is almost introducing a false history to our nation.”³⁸

Although Habersham County had yet to spend public funds to defend the right to display the Commandments, the county attorney expressed qualms about continuing to accept private donations. Habersham Commissioner Caudell believed that public funds should not be spent on the battle, given the limited funds in the county treasury and the unlimited issues facing the county each day, nor should the private funds be accepted. Caudell made the successful motion to give up the fight, not realizing how large the issue would become in the future.³⁹

While the other two candidates attempted to put the fight into a more moderate perspective, Schaefer held rallies and mobilized her faithful supporters in an effort to center the race on a single, large issue. Such a situation was to her benefit because Caudell had effectively ended the legal battle,⁴⁰ and Darnell felt that the issue had nothing to do with the senatorial race because it would be decided in the courts, not the General Assembly.⁴¹ Schaefer printed shirts and glossy mail outs with the slogan “Ten Commandments Candidate,” held numerous rallies on the subject, and, with like-minded organizations, raised thousands of dollars. She succeeded in her efforts. Darnell spent day after day at hundreds of restaurants, courthouses, and businesses, and upon entering the run-off election he told Caudell, “It’s a huge issue.”⁴² The people, however, did not express their opinions to Caudell directly, so he continued to focus on other

³⁸ Shirek, Jon. "County Mulling Commandments Appeal."

³⁹ Baxter, Tom, and Jim Galloway. "The Lesson of Roy Moore: Let the other justice have the honor of putting his name on a decision." *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* 3 June 2004. 5 Mar. 2005
< <http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/insider/0604a/060304.html>>.

⁴⁰ Caudell, Chan. Telephone interview by the author.

⁴¹ Darnell, Stanley. Telephone interview by the author.

⁴² Caudell, Chan. Telephone interview by the author.

concerns. In retrospect, Caudell stated that the Ten Commandments was one of two pivotal issues in the campaign—a turning point that occurred before the race even began.⁴³

Tort Reform

The second critical issue was tort reform. Tort reform became a top concern in the General Assembly when legislation was extensively debated, but not passed, due to party divisions in both the Senate and House. According to former House Judiciary Chairman Tom Bordeaux (Dem.), the medical lobbying during the 2004 election season was “rabid,”⁴⁴ as the three candidates for the 50th state senate district already knew.

As evidenced by the black and white division of campaign donations—lawyers for Caudell and health care interests for Schaefer—each group knew which candidate to support. While Caudell stated that he would work to reduce medical costs, the words “tort reform” were conspicuously absent from his plan.⁴⁵ Schaefer, however, called hospitals’ and doctors’ fear of negative consequences “a crime” and promised that “health expense care for all would be cut in half if fear was eliminated.”⁴⁶ According to Caudell, the second turning point occurred when many doctors placed ads in their local papers in favor of Schaefer. His campaign did not counter-advertise. The vocal support of doctors, a group significantly more trusted than attorneys by the public, worked in Schaefer’s favor.⁴⁷

The State Flag

To many Georgians, especially those in rural areas, preserving their heritage is of utmost importance. During his tenure as governor, Roy Barnes changed the flag without a statewide

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ “Georgia Doctors Push Tort Reform.” *11 Alive* 14 Mar. 2004. 6 Apr. 2005 <http://www.11alive.com/specials/local/decision2004/decision_article.aspx?storyid=44240>.

⁴⁵ Caudell, Chan. Interview with Ross Willis. *The Toccoa Record*.

⁴⁶ Schaefer, Nancy S. Interview with Ross Willis. *The Toccoa Record*.

⁴⁷ *Which professionals does the public trust the most, and the least?* 10 Jan. 2005. *American Medical News*. 6 Apr. 2005 <<http://www.ama-assn.org/amednews/2005/01/03/prca0103.htm>>.

vote and was met with heavy criticism. The former flag had prominently featured the Confederate emblem and was opposed by African-Americans and business interests, who had feared investors would bypass Georgia as a result. In 2002, Sonny Perdue promised a flag referendum, but the referendum included neither a popular vote with significant options nor the chance to reinstate the former flag. According to Jeff Davis, Former Georgia Republican Party Campaign Chairman and current Georgia Heritage Council (GHC) Chairman, Perdue succumbed to the Black Caucus and Chamber of Commerce in order to win the votes he needed to pass the tobacco tax. Davis stated, “Because of the shenanigans that took place, the GHC and a number of other heritage organizations were angry with the way the people of Georgia had been treated. Promises were broken, lies were told, but we managed to get rid of 26 legislators. We did not endorse them and worked for their opponents. We guesstimate that we placed 60,000 to 80,000 signs locally. Any time we feel like we’re being put upon, we get pretty mad.”⁴⁸

The GHC endorsed Nancy Schaefer and worked on her behalf. The organization had one of the most widely watched political websites in Georgia, with often as many as 30,000 hits per day. After the GHC endorsed Schaefer, other heritage organizations such as the Southern Party of Georgia followed.⁴⁹

Other Issues

Although headline news took the dominant role in the campaign, traditional issues such as the environment, business and job growth, education, and religion in public life were still important to many voters. Fortunately for Nancy Schaefer, the conservative political climate in North Georgia matched that of the nation as a whole.

⁴⁸ Davis, Jeff. Telephone interview by the author. 22 Mar. 2004.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

The Chattahoochee River and Blue Ridge Mountains are valuable natural resources for North Georgia, should it decide to continue using them for tourism and business growth. However, the environmental lobby is very strong in the 50th district. According to Carl Cavalli, professor of political science at North Georgia College & State University, “the confluence of economic and environmental issues”⁵⁰ is the most significant, sustained issue in North Georgia politics. Business interests seek to clear mountains and forests for roads and developments, but many local interests fight to preserve the land on which their families have lived for generations. Caudell and Darnell were the two candidates who took the side of environmental protection, while Nancy Schaefer opposed environmental special interest groups.⁵¹ Although the environment matters to North Georgians, it may be that because of recent economic downturns, citizens began to focus more on growth. Habersham, Hart, Stephens, and Towns counties all have a greater number of citizens working outside their county of residence than within.⁵²

As a former educator and current superintendent of the Rabun Gap Schools, Darnell claimed to understand the needs of educators, and he made education his first priority.⁵³ Both of the other candidates had professed support for the public education system. Nonetheless, education was not an issue of primary importance during the 2004 campaign although Schaefer emphasized the need for God in public schools. She stated, “With the acknowledgment of God in our schools, education would improve in all areas.”⁵⁴ In promoting direct religious involvement in the public sphere, Schaefer differed significantly from her opponents. She also used an element of Darnell’s past against him. A school over which he presided at the time had

⁵⁰ Cavalli, Carl. Telephone interview by the author. 29 Mar. 2004.

⁵¹ "Nancy Schaefer: Setting The Record Straight." Turnerville: Nancy Schaefer for State Senate, 2004.

⁵² Bachel, Douglas C. The Georgia County Guide. Comp. Susan R. Boatright. 22nd ed. Athens: The University of Georgia, 2003. 95-96.

⁵³ Darnell, Stanley. Interview with Ross Willis. The Toccoa Record.

⁵⁴ Schaefer, Nancy S. Interview with Ross Willis. The Toccoa Record.

hosted a “Gay Day.” Schaefer emphasized this event in a letter to the people in the 50th district, and many Darnell spoke to asked him about it. From Darnell’s standpoint, the day did not affect his plans for the Senate, but it likely distanced Christian conservatives.

ADVERTISEMENT CAMPAIGNS

The 50th senate district encompasses seven entire counties, which affects the practical value of various forms of advertisements. According to 2002 census data, approximately 152,900 individuals lived in the district⁵⁵—an overwhelming number for a candidate to attempt to reach within the given time frame. The difference between the type of advertisements each candidate used was a factor of two variables: money and planning. Caudell and Schaefer were able to raise significantly more money than Darnell,⁵⁶ a distinction that changed their approaches toward voter solicitation. For example, Schaefer and Caudell each sent out tens of thousands of direct mailings. Glossy mailings are an easy way to reach thousands of new voters, but they are very expensive. Schaefer’s advertisements featured pictures of the candidate with Zell Miller, Governor Perdue, former President Ronald Reagan, and Congressman Mac Collins in a clear effort to associate her with leading conservatives. To rural communities looking for a voice in Georgia politics, such an image would be significant.⁵⁷ A Ten Commandments ad included a picture of Schaefer with former Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore, who refused to remove a Ten Commandments monument from his courthouse and was subsequently removed from his post.⁵⁸ The same ad also showed Schaefer with five of her grandchildren—a softening addition to the

⁵⁵ Bachel, Douglas C. The Georgia County Guide. Comp. Susan R. Boatright. 22nd ed. Athens: The University of Georgia, 2003. 109-110.

⁵⁶ Cox, Cathy. Campaign Contribution Disclosure Reports & Candidate Financial Disclosure Statements.

⁵⁷ "Nancy Schaefer For State Senate: Because Integrity Matters." Turnerville: Nancy Schaefer for State Senate, 2004.

⁵⁸ "Ten Commandments judge removed from office." CNN Law Center 14 Nov. 2003. 6 Apr. 2005
<<http://www.cnn.com/2003/LAW/11/13/moore.tencommandments/>>.

political images.⁵⁹ Approximately a week before the primary, her campaign sent out an ad contrasting the two remaining candidates on taxes, tort reform, gun ownership, the environment, and abortion, casting Caudell as the liberal candidate for each issue.⁶⁰

Among the most cost-efficient options available were advertisements in local papers and on radio stations. Each candidate ran radio ads, although Schaefer and Caudell ran more than Darnell. Schaefer's ads ran on the North Georgia stations that had formerly carried her shows: WCON, WKLY, and more prominently, WYHG and WNEG. The *Clayton Tribune* ran ads by both Schaefer and Caudell. Caudell's other ads ran throughout the seven counties in *The Banks County News*, *Clayton Tribune*, *Hartwell Sun*, and *The Northeast Georgian*. Schaefer focused her newspaper ads on a particular county, advertising in the *Towns County Newspaper* and *Towns County Herald*.⁶¹ Her strategy paid off with a 112-vote margin in Towns County.⁶²

Television spots, although more expensive than newspaper ads, offered candidates the opportunity to reach tens of thousands of listeners at once, through the medium that most Americans use to get news. Darnell invested heavily in television ads, running two different ones on WNEG.⁶³ Schaefer also relied upon television ads,⁶⁴ but Caudell did not. In his opinion, omitting television ads was a mistake. Seeing his face and hearing him speak may have forced voters to separate the rhetoric that surrounded the campaign from the candidate.⁶⁵

The single most cost-effective advertisement in today's world is a website. For the cost of running a single TV advertisement, a website can remain available for months. It can be informative to a wide audience of voters, reporters, and researchers. By March 2005, the only

⁵⁹ "Nancy Schaefer: Ten Commandments Candidate." Turnerville: Nancy Schaefer for State Senate, 2004.

⁶⁰ "Nancy Schaefer: Setting The Record Straight."

⁶¹ Georgia. Official Results of the July 20, 2004 Primary Election.

⁶² Cox, Cathy. Georgia Election Results, 5 Mar. 2005
<http://www.sos.state.ga.us/elections/election_results/default.htm>.

⁶³ Darnell, Stanley. Telephone interview by the author.

⁶⁴ Cox, Cathy. Campaign Contribution Disclosure Reports & Candidate Financial Disclosure Statements.

⁶⁵ Caudell, Chan. Telephone interview by the author.

candidate website still accessible was Schaefer's, although Caudell maintained a site at the time of the election. Darnell, on the other hand, never had a site. This made it more difficult for voters to find information about him, especially younger voters familiar with the computer as a research tool.⁶⁶

Low-tech advertisements also played a part in the race. Each candidate printed stickers and buttons to pass out at rallies, meetings, and on the street. Schaefer and Darnell printed campaign t-shirts.⁶⁷ These less costly items were still important—they allowed participants in the campaign to feel part of something official, helped promote team morale, and provided conversation starters in public.

Influences

Schaefer's decades of activism on behalf of Republicans and their core issues undoubtedly earned supporters among state and national politicians. State Senate Majority Leader Bill Stephens, himself a North Georgia native, spotlighted Schaefer in his October 13, 2004, report. He identified her as long-time conservative activist, mentioning her position as founder of Family Concerns three separate times in a sub-400 word letter. Stephens also emphasized Schaefer's local background and large family, all traits likely to appeal to North Georgia voters.⁶⁸ Neither of her opponents received endorsements from the Republican Party.

Scandals

Throughout the campaign both Chan Caudell and Nancy Schaefer claimed to have been subjected to some form of harassment. Schaefer stated in meetings with the Republican

⁶⁶ Georgia. Official Results of the July 20, 2004 Primary Election.

⁶⁷ Cox, Cathy. Campaign Contribution Disclosure Reports & Candidate Financial Disclosure Statements.

⁶⁸ Stephens, Bill. Senator Bill Stephens Majority Leader's Report. 31 Oct. 2004. Georgia GOP. 20 Feb. 2005 <http://www.gagop10.org/SenatorStephensReport10_31_04.htm>.

Women's Club of Gwinnett that she had received pornographic e-mails from Chan Caudell,⁶⁹ and in an interview with the author, Stanley Darnell stated that she had personally called and accused him of the same.⁷⁰ Both Caudell and Darnell firmly deny any knowledge of these e-mails. Caudell reported that he had received both harassing phone calls and hate mail;⁷¹ Stanley Darnell, however, never received any form of harassment.

This scandal may have been the cause of the relationship dynamics between Schaefer's campaign and those of her two opponents, as described by Darnell and indirectly alluded to by Caudell. Both Caudell and Darnell mentioned in interviews with the author that they and their staff had developed meaningful friendships; however, Darnell added that Schaefer and her staff were very distant and even cold.⁷²

RESULTS

Returns

Schaefer led the primary field with 47.0% of the vote to Caudell's 39.5% and Darnell's 13.5%. Schaefer's strongest counties were Hart, Towns, and, most of all, Stephens, each of which she won with a significant margin. Chan Caudell won in Banks and Franklin Counties, and held his own in White. Stanley Darnell won only Rabun county but did so with a wide margin; he received 609 votes to second place finisher Schaefer's 367.⁷³

These results were a surprise to neither Schaefer nor Caudell, who had both been polling throughout the race. Caudell's polling numbers proved to be highly accurate. Darnell, however, had not any done polling of his own. He was aware of a poll done by the Georgia Republican

⁶⁹ Dyer, Judy. Personal interview by the author. 2 Feb. 2004.

⁷⁰ Darnell, Stanley. Telephone interview by the author.

⁷¹ Caudell, Chan. Telephone interview by the author.

⁷² Caudell, Chan and Darnell, Stanley. Telephone interviews by the author.

⁷³ Georgia. Official Results of the July 20, 2004 Primary Election.

party several months into the race that showed him as the frontrunner.⁷⁴ There were no systematic, scientific polls done by news organizations for North Georgia races.⁷⁵

In the runoff, Caudell received 5,068 voters to Schaefer's 5,864, giving her victory with 53.6% of the vote. Schaefer's strongest counties were Hart and Stephens, the location of one of her home churches. Caudell made his best showing in Banks, but could not overtake Schaefer.⁷⁶ In the end, Caudell stated that he had known the race would end this way.⁷⁷

Conclusion

In the end, the lawyer and the gentleman educator were unable to rival Schaefer's momentum throughout the campaign season. Nancy Schaefer won by mobilizing the Republican base of Christian conservatives and casting her opponents as too liberal for North Georgia. The reasons for Nancy Schaefer's victory in the race for the 50th state Senate seat began with her prior political experience. Her tenure at Family Concerns and visibility in former political races afforded Schaefer the opportunity to develop a polished skill set with which she adeptly manipulated the key issues of the race to her favor. She selected the Ten Commandments, tort reform, and liberal pasts as her campaign's focuses, knowing that her opponents were particularly weak in these areas.

The high level of control Schaefer was able to exercise regarding which issues became the headlines is a testament to the power of advertising combined with a compatible political climate. Schaefer's successful fundraising efforts made it possible for her campaign to run recurring ads across all available mediums, saturating the political climate of North Georgia with information about her chosen causes. Although Caudell and Darnell attempted to move the focus

⁷⁴ Darnell, Stanley. Telephone interview by the author.

⁷⁵ Vreeland, Tracy Lee. Telephone interview by the author. 1 Apr. 2005.

⁷⁶ Cox, Cathy. Secretary of State. Official Results of the August 10, 2004 Primary Runoff Election. 19 Apr. 2004. 22 Mar. 2005 <http://www.sos.state.ga.us/elections/election_results/2004_0810/0006520.htm>.

⁷⁷ Caudell, Chan. Telephone interview by the author.

of the race from Schaefer's preferred issues, they were unable to counter her efforts due to a lack of funds and resonance with voters.

The Future

Now that Nancy Schaefer has served a full session in the Georgia General Assembly, it is evident that she intends to continue working feverishly for the promotion of her ultra-conservative agenda. She has sponsored or co-sponsored 90 pieces of legislation in the 39 days the Assembly met, including pieces dealing with education, tort reform, the creation of a Georgia Rural Development Council, abortion, and taxes.⁷⁸

Despite her tenacity and diligence, Schaefer is not invincible. In coming elections, Schaefer's future may be dampened by criticisms of her 2004 campaign strategy. Although she spoke out against special interests, her campaign donations came 75% from PACs. A future opponent could make an issue out of the discrepancy between her statements and actions. Many of Schaefer's supporters shared her staunch conservative beliefs at the time of the election, perhaps making them willing to overlook such inconsistencies. Should the political climate in Georgia shift to the left, Schaefer may find her constituency less forgiving.

Additionally, according to Charles Bullock, Professor of Political Science at the University of Georgia, "Some of the people I have talked to [in Atlanta] were put off by her, and they were Republicans." Her uncompromising zeal, rigid adherence to her beliefs, and strong work ethic have always been assets to her political advancement, but as a state senator, compromise could become a necessity. The skills and resources Schaefer used in the race for the Senate seat may not translate well to consensus building, which is required in order to pass legislation. Without successes to stand behind her words, North Georgians might be unsatisfied

⁷⁸ Legislation Sponsored By Schaefer, Nancy 50th. 31 Mar. 2005. Georgia General Assembly. 5 Mar. 2005 <http://www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/2005_06/mbrs/schaefernancy50th.htm>.

with their level of representation in the General Assembly. If she does not waver, Schaefer's strict adherence to conservative Christian beliefs could bring trouble in 2006.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Lee, Ryan. "Gay Rights Foe Aims For Seat In State Legislature." Southern Voice 29 Oct. 2004. 23 Feb. 2005 <http://sovo.com/print.cfm?content_id=2871>.

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