

The election eye...

# Church, Symms stump state, skip vacation

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When political activity should be comparatively low these sweltering summer days, the two contenders for the key U.S. Senate seat are waging an intensive campaign.

Democrat Frank Church and his tenacious challenger, Republican Steve Symms, are not waiting until the brisk days of September to begin their campaign as most of the other candidates are planning.

They are furiously stumping the state every chance they get, taking time off even while Congress is in session.

East Idaho could well be the pivotal section in the state in this election and both are spending considerable time here in their incessant search for votes.

Church has been in the area in recent days, participating in Pioneer Day festivities at St. Anthony, Rexburg and other valley towns and hosted a record crowd of 1,500 for his "birthday picnic" in Idaho Falls a week ago.

Symms also has barnstormed the area and was the guest of honor at two socials earlier in the month, including an "apple pie" treat at which Utah Sen. Jake Garn spoke and which attracted 200.

Symms will return this week to speak to the chamber and Civitans Tuesday in Idaho Falls and at Rexburg and Rigby Saturday.

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Stripped of rhetoric, the two gladiators are each stressing two main points. Church hammers at his prolific record in Congress while noting that Symms' eight years service in the House has resulted in him introducing 136 bills and getting none passed. Symms' main thrust hinges on his conservative philosophy to cut big government and spending, charging Church is a liberal, voting for deficit budgets and that many of his foreign policies have harmed the nation, such as voting for transfer of the Panama Canal.

Church is helped immeasurably by his wife, Bethine, an Idaho Falls native and daughter of Chase Clark, former Idaho Falls mayor, Idaho governor and U.S. district judge. She appears to many to be a more effective campaigner than her husband.

Symms' wife Fran, has been plagued by ill health but is at her husband's side seeking to help

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him in his quest for the high office.

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Church and Symms were both in Idaho Falls for the Fourth of July celebration, standing back to back while soliciting votes during the morning Chuckwagon breakfast at Tautphaus Park sponsored by the Elks. They largely ignored each other but did exchange a few terse comments.

Both acknowledged they are in a tough race but each is confident of victory, Church because he feels the independent voter will recognize his contribution to the state and Symms because he feels a right wing tide is lapping his way.

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Despite the summer activities, the hard campaign will come in

September and October when both will flood the state with advertising. Church has a war-chest of \$1.5 million; Symms is not far behind with \$1 million. It is the most expensive political campaign in Idaho. It appears ludicrous when it is realized they are fighting for a position that pays about \$60,000 a year.

Many observers feel the Idaho Senate seat could decide the party control in the U.S. Senate but this is open to question. The Republicans must win 10 seats and most analysts believe the top number is seven.

Church, despite his nearly 24 years in the Senate, has never run overwhelmingly strong in Idaho, usually garnering between 54 and 60 percent of the votes. He explains that as a Democrat he is always running against a strong Republican current.

Church and Symms each have 40 to 45 percent of the voters solidly in their corner. Based on past Idaho election records, a handful of 15 percent or less of the swing voters will decide the race. They are the ones who have no strong political ties, generally moderate, and may not decide their minds until the closing days.