The election eye . . .

Church is featured at both conventions

The Post-Register
The political pulse

C-6 Idaho Falls, Idaho, Thursday, July 3, 1980

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U.S. Sen. Frank Church was featured at both the Democratic and Republican state conventions, but in a far different light at each.

The Democratic gathering at Pocatello three weeks ago was almost known as "The Church Convention" and the Republican gabfest at Boise last weekend could almost be described as "The anti-Church Convention."

Even the presidential contest appeared to have taken second place in convention activities to the titular senatorial donneybrook offered to Idaho voters this fall, touted as one of the top contests in the nation.

The House, legislative and county races received scant attention in the convention proceedings, although these are highly important for the political parties.

The 2nd District Congressional match appears a walkaway for Republican U.S. Rep. George Hansen over Democrat Diane Bilyeu but the 1st District battle between Republican State Sen. Larry Craig, Midvale, and Democrat Glen Nichols, former Idaho Department of Employment director, could be tight. Then there are legislative races at which control of the State Senate is a feature, plus the county sheriff, county commissioners, prosecuting and coroner contests.

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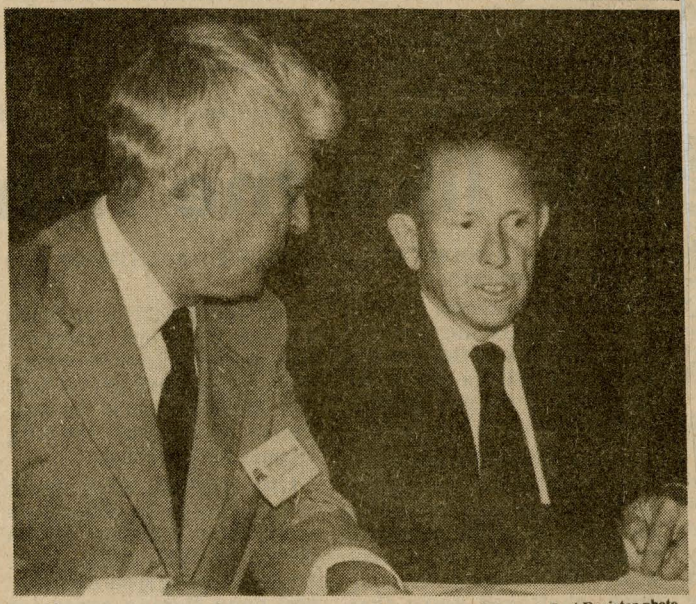
The Democratic convention rallied around Church but the name of his opponent, Republican Steve Symms, was barely mentioned. When done so, it was in a rather jocular fashion. Not so among the Republicans. Nearly every speaker took the opportunity to attack Church, some viciously. Many of the more moderate Republican delegates, including legislators, rightfully described it as a Church overkill that could well backfire.

Indicative of this strategy was the announcement by State Republican Chairman Dennis M. Olsen, Idaho Falls, a "prominent Democrat" would deliver a talk at the opening session attacking Church.



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Generals command

BOISE—TWO RETIRED generals, Lt. Gen. Daniel O. Graham, left, and Maj. Gen. John K. Singlaub, took the lead in attacking Democrat U.S. Sen. Frank Church at the Idaho Republican Convention at Boise last weekend.

The self-styled Democrat was Bruce D. Loebs, chairman of the speech department at Idaho State University at Pocatello, whose remarks lambasted Church's record based on the theme that Church "is the strongest congressional advocate for a weak America." His speech generally faulted Church's voting record against what he called vital defense appropriations.

Democratic State Chairman Wayne Fuller, Caldwell, called a news conference near the convention center that same afternoon to disavow Dr. Loeb's supposed high standing in the party.

Pocatello newsmen and legislators said they didn't even remember who Loeb was.

It developed he headed a Democrats for Nixon movement in 1972, but it appeared mostly a committee of one. His wife had once worked at Bannock Democratic headquarters, but he has never run for a Democratic Party position.

Loeb, who has delivered similar assaults against Church at Republican and other meetings in Southeastern Idaho, said he worked for 2nd District congressional candidate, Ralph Harding, two years ago, and has generally voted Democratic.

Olsen said copies of Loeb's talk could be purchased for $1 apiece.

Church's Pocatello office said Loeb is miffed because Church has ignored his challenge to debate him on Vietnam.

This writer who has been around for 35 years and personally knows most present and past legislators and party leaders and top workers has never heard of him.

It would appear that Loeb may be a Democrat, but hardly "prominent" as widely advertised by Olsen.

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The main attackers against Church were two retired generals, Jack Singlaub and Daniel Graham, representing two ultra conservative groups, the Peace Through Strength organization and the American Security Council.

Their remarks centered on Church's record of voting on what they said was inadequate appropriations to keep up America's military strength.

It must be remembered both are military men and for them there is never enough military appropriations. They appear sincere in their concern over America's military strength as they took early retirement in protest to President Carter's foreign policy.

U.S. Sen. James A. McClure, in a telephone hookup talk at a luncheon, also strongly attacked his colleague. This is something that has not been done traditionally among Idaho U.S. senators. He branded Church, along with others voting against some military appropriations, with "criminal neglect in sending young men to war with antiquated equipment," for example. That's strong language against a fellow senator.

But McClure was not much different than most of the Republican speakers who all leveled vitrolic blasts against Church to the delight of the large audience.

Symms, in his main talk at the banquet Friday night, lamented Church's name-calling and said he would talk about issues. Yet, he accused Church of lack of integrity by saying he talked and acted different in Washington than in Idaho, lampooned his record of achievements as detrimental to Idaho and the nation and said Church used his seniority to support policies that made foreign and domestic problems worse.

Church's main talk at the Democratic convention was confined mostly to his own record, but did lightly ridicule Symms for his lack of congressional performance and ineffectivism.

The keynote speaker, House Minority Leader John Rhodes, Arizona, tempered his remarks against Church, mostly praising Symms and the other Republican members of the Idaho congressional delegation.

Rhodes' only mention of Church was to say "the present senator" broke the news about Soviet brigade in Cuba and warned about the peril but observed his concerns had quickly faded.

It has generally been an axiom in politics that one doesn't mention his opponent's name, such as Rhodes observed. However, among most of the Republican speakers, Church's name was even better publicized at their convention than among the Democrats.