



Ben Plastino

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Hansen still active

Where's George?

That's George Hansen, who served for seven two-year terms as U.S. representative for Idaho's 2nd Congressional District.

The controversial Hansen always provided fireworks that made the congressional race interesting because of his frequent jousts with federal agencies.

This is the first time in 24 years the name Hansen has not been on the Idaho ballot for either the primary or general election.

George first ran and won in 1964. He served 14 years, 1965-68, and 1975-84. He lost to the present Democrat incumbent, Richard Stallings, by 170 votes in 1984. Orval Hansen (no relation) served six years, 1969-74. George's wife, Connie, ran and lost in the 1986 Republican primary to Idaho Falls radio broadcaster Mel Richardson.

This year, Dane Watkins, Idaho Falls, a former seven-term state senator, is furnishing the opposition but faces a stiff uphill fight against Stallings.

Not much has been heard from Hansen in recent months, but he's still active.

Presently, he is working for the George Bush campaign, particularly on tax matters. He also is a consultant for conservative organizations, particularly the American Conservative Foundation, as president of the George Hansen Associates.

John Scoresby, Hansen's loyal Idaho Falls representative, divulged that Hansen furnished information to Bush, who recently lambasted his Democratic rival, Michael Dukakis,

for suggesting more IRS activity for collecting taxes. Bush recently remarked in a campaign talk, "we certainly don't need more IRA agents around," a familiar refrain of Hansen when he was battling IRS.

If Bush were to win, it might not be too surprising if Hansen wins a federal appointment. Scoresby laughingly suggested that Hansen should be appointed IRS commissioner. That certainly would pose an interesting situation.

It can be recalled that Hansen did serve with the U.S. Department of Agriculture after he lost a U.S. Senate bid in 1968.

Actually, Hansen was more interested in battling federal agencies than in tending to congressional duties. He was often reported to have had the poorest attendance record in Congress.

Although a devout Republican, he was fiercely independent and could hardly be considered a team player. He rarely, for example, was seen traveling on the campaign trail with his Idaho Republican colleagues, Sens. James McClure and Steve Symms or U.S. Rep. Larry Craig, of the 1st District.

In fact, relations between him and McClure were far from warm.

The reason is clear. In 1972, Hansen sought the Senate seat relinquished by U.S. Sen. Len B. Jordan. McClure, then a congressman from the 1st District, also entered as did others.

In a bitter primary battle, McClure won, with Hansen second. Hansen, never exactly a gracious loser, held a full-dressed press conference in Idaho Falls after the election to accuse McClure of being a tool of big business and freezing him out of large business contributions. There may have been truth to his charges but it wasn't smart politics.

It is recalled that when Hansen faced court troubles Symms often

came to Hansen's defense, but McClure never did.

Hansen was a past master at raising money for his campaigns and conservative causes.

The former representative still has a hard core of rightwing supporters, but he needs to expand that base if he were ever to again become a serious congressional contender.

Despite his federal prison term, he can run for federal office. He can't run for state office, however.

"George is keeping plenty busy with his work," said Scoresby.

Hansen likes to call himself a staunch conservative Republican, but he actually is a lonely, quixotic battler, often leaving tatters of outrage and some amusement in his wake.

In a surge of enthusiasm, he once said at an Idaho Falls Republican party rally, "The only true Americans are Republicans." The statement was greeted with thunderous applause from his avid and numerous rightwing supporters in eastern Idaho.

Hansen rejected the Populist Party nomination in 1984 and refused a similar offer from the American Party before that.

He has fallen far from his stately congressional position. He sold both his houses and the family car to pay his fines and some campaign debts. He is still in the hole from previous campaign debts. Just recently, he was sued by a Rexburg couple over a \$10,000 promissory note.

He still wears a 98th Congress lapel pin, giving him entry to Capitol Hill.

There is little doubt he will be heard from again, but probably in a different role. It could be interesting to watch.

(Ben Plastino is a Post-Register columnist.)



George Hansen