

The election eye...

Hansen takes unusual low campaign profile

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What is the irrepressible U.S. Rep. George V. Hansen doing these days as the Nov. 4 general election draws nearer?

So far in the campaign, Hansen has done little in the way of campaigning, merely appearing at some Republican Party gatherings where there are captive votes anyway and do little in the way of seeking the vast reservoir of independent electors.

He did appear at the annual Eastern Idaho Republican barbecue and Symms for Senate rallies last month.

He did appear briefly at the opening of the East Idaho State Fair at Blackfoot a couple weeks ago and also was in Twin Falls, Mountain Home and Boise areas.

"I shook 25,000 hands last week so feel I have been active," he said.

He used to disseminate news release almost daily but so far in this campaign he is not even averaging one a week. In fact in the last month, there have only been three.

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In past campaigns, Hansen has figured as the central controversial figure, such as his bitter but victorious struggles with Democrat Stan Kress in the 1978 and 1976 contests for the general elections. He also has faced stiff primary opposition from young Burley attorney Jim Jones in this year's primary in May and in 1978.

Hansen is taking a low profile approach as Frank Church and Steve Symms dominate the Idaho campaign. It appears he is more than satisfied but it's an unusual role for him. Congress will not recess until the first week in October. Connie Hansen, his wife who is the non-paid administrative assistant in charge of his office, said he is not accepting many invitations.

Hansen confirmed that he is playing a secondary role, observing that in view of the vitriolic Church-Symms race "it's a good place to be."

Mrs. Hansen said her husband has scheduled appearances at a Republican rally at Salmon Oct. 11, another party gathering at Boise Oct. 11, an open house at American Falls Oct. 24 and perhaps a state central committee meeting at Boise Sept. 27.

Following a long tradition, he will not appear at the Idaho Falls League of Women Voters Candidate Fair Sept. 27 but instead will be represented by his wife or a staff assistant. Hansen has always shown reluctance in head-to-head debates with his opponents.

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Hansen is observing what he feels is a memorable occasion this weekend — it is his 50th birthday but he is playing this without political fanfare. It will be celebrated with his family and close associates in Washington.

Hansen also is spending time on a book he recently published, which tells of some of the emotional issues he has spearheaded. This included his fight with the Internal Revenue Service.

Occupational Safety and Health Act, and others that follow his traditional thrusts against the encroachment of big government in the lives of the individual and business, and against what he feels is excessive spending.

This book likely won't win a spot on the best seller list but it is interesting reading for the ultra conservatives who are the backbone of Hansen's supporters.

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Perhaps one of the reasons for Hansen's soft campaign approach is his belief that he holds a heavy advantage over his Democratic opponent Diane Bilyeu, the Pocatello realtor and wife of State Sen. Chick Bilyeu, the ISU speech and drama pro-

fessor. He apparently feels it may not be good politics to take excessive aggressive action against such a congenial and attractive woman.

On the contrary, Hansen appears to have discarded what appeared to be his former irresponsible free-swinging tactics and has backed of late some progressive legislation.

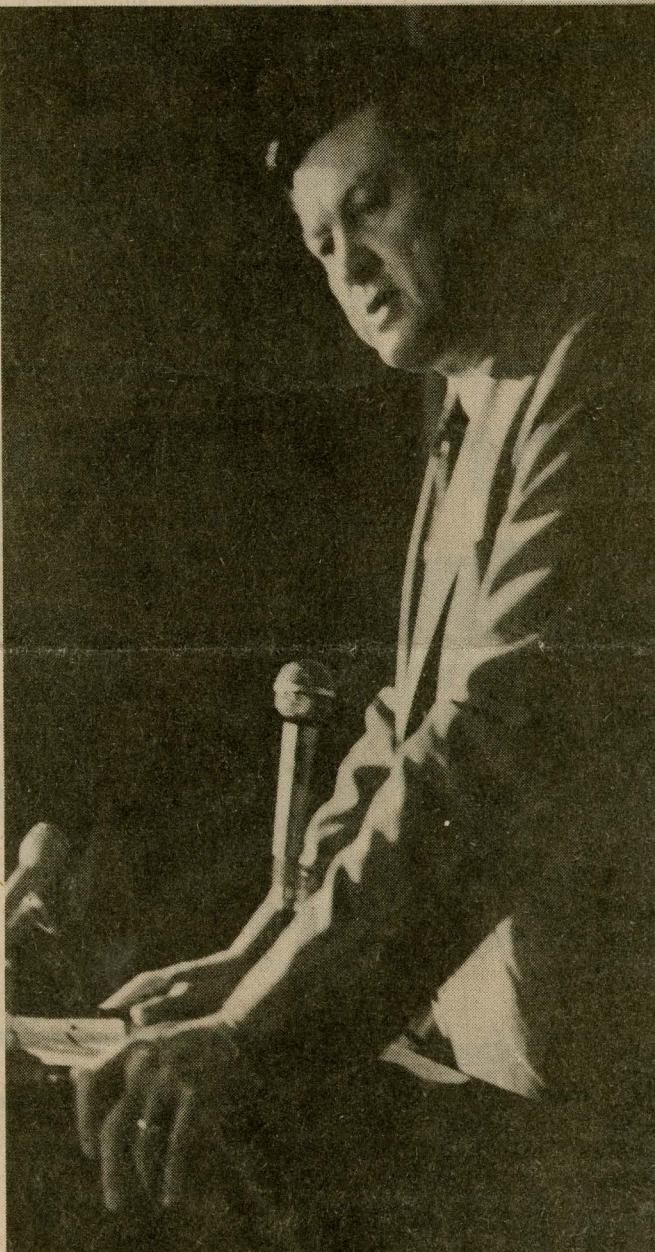
In his latest action a couple weeks ago he spearheaded legislation for increased veteran benefits, for enactment of the 1980 Reclamation Reform Act, proposed a 10 percent across-the-board cut in individual income tax rates, opposed the highly unpopular car safety air bag requirements; and yes, is now seeking to name prosaic Ririe Lake as the Oscar W. Johnson Lake in honor of a venerable Bonneville pioneer.

Maybe all this will change as the campaign enters the crucial stretch but it is certain there will be no lack of fireworks in Idaho on all levels, from the president down to the coroner. But Hansen for the first time since first elected in 1964 and a brief stretch when he served with the USDA 1969-71 following his senatorial defeat by Church in 1968, is not the central campaign figure this year.

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Low profile

U.S. REP. GEORGE V. HANSEN, who is shown formally announcing his candidacy for re-election in Idaho Falls last April, is keeping a low profile in the current Idaho political campaign.