

The longest shot

Miami Beach

Sissy Farenthold's career has been equal parts luck, integrity and the political smarts to take advantage of a good thing when it comes along. All of her races have been long shots, but, to date, the vice presidency has been the longest shot of all.

It all started in Texas July 7 when three Baylor students began circulating a petition touting Farenthold as the best of all possible running mates for George McGovern. Upon hearing the news, the draftee fell victim to rare and prolonged laughter. "Poor George," she said, gasping to regain control of her usually somber faculties. Historians may someday quibble over which George the first female nominated for the vice presidency had reference to. Neither George the presidential candidate nor George the husband were particularly taken with the campaign.

But others were. Drue Pollan, Bob Bass and Larry Patty, chairman, secretary and treasurer, respectively, of the Farenthold for Vice President Committee, proceeded to Miami Beach, where they set up headquarters in Flamingo Park. It was, perhaps, the first national campaign since Alexander Graham Bell reached voting age to be conducted without a telephone.

FARENTHOLD, OF COURSE, was complimented by the Baylor Brain Trust's boomlet, but she was also a little embarrassed by their efforts. Bernard Rapoport, the fundraiser and financier from Waco, was present during the candidate's first meeting with her devoted committee, and he shared none of Sissy's reluctance. Soon the irrepressible B. was bounding up and down 12 flights of the Doral, the anointed McGovern hotel where the elevators were on the fritz.

The Brain Trust gained a telephone, a hotel room and access to some of McGovern's closest advisers.

John Kenneth Galbraith, the Harvard economist who loves all things anti-Lyndon, became the godfather of the boomlet. He ambled around the convention floor showing everyone he could collar a telegram from Sam Houston Johnson, LBJ's brother, endorsing the Farenthold veepency.

During the first three days of the convention, Sissy remained aloof from the campaign, but she was getting angry. George McGovern was her candidate, had been since January of 1971, but he was running the convention like Ben Barnes ran the Texas Senate. Nobody did anything without his approval. Women got screwed on the South Carolina challenge and then again on the abortion plank. McGovern failed even to meet with the *chicano*



The candidate

caucus, an omission Farenthold thought inexcusable. "I was irritated," she recalled later.

The campaign came to life at 1 p.m. Thursday, the day McGovern's running mate was to be selected. That's when Gloria Steinem called to say Sissy had been endorsed by the National Women's Political Caucus. A rally was scheduled in front of the Doral at 3:30 p.m.

Everyone knew the candidate meant business when she said, "I think I'd better get my hair fixed." Sissy Farenthold goes to the beauty parlor like Clark Kent slips into a phone booth: neither is messing around.

The telephone started ringing non-stop in the Farenthold boiler room. Callers were backed up on the Versailles Hotel switchboard like 707's over Kennedy International on a foggy day.

Liz Carpenter, one of the moderate mainstays of the Women's Caucus, allowed as how she didn't want to give advice, but ... a rally might not be such a good thing ... it would be best to play footsie with McGovern ... she would be available if Sissy wanted to talk.

Sam Houston Johnson's ghostwriter offered his assistance.

Galbraith ... Lowenstein ... Rapoport ... Eckhardt. The calls continued.

Drue jogged in to say that Gary Hart had

said that McGovern had said that Sissy was under quote serious consideration unquote for the nomination.

(How serious is serious? The top 55 perhaps? She wasn't in the top seven, or the top nine.)

The Baylor Brain Trust was downstairs monopolizing the Versailles' pay phones. The press was alerted. Someone named Margo was chastised for abandoning her post at hq. Two thousand Farenthold posters brought from Texas by the committee were dispatched to the Doral.

A RALLY, a press conference and then a strategy session were set up for midafternoon. At 3:30 McGovern stole a march by endorsing Tom Eagleton for vice president. The Farenthold troops, massed by the Women's Caucus, milled around outside Eagleton's press conference, chanting "We Want Sissy."

Only a few Texas reporters were on hand for the official launching of the Farenthold campaign. Roland Lindsey, capitol bureau chief for UPI in Austin, had made the long trip from the Marco Polo where the Texas delegation was stashed. "Who's Gloria Steinem?" he asked.

The press conference went off without a hitch, but finding a little privacy for Gloria Steinem, Bella Abzug, Betty Friedan and the first female veep proved to be difficult — until Steinem happened upon the perfect spot — quiet, elegant and off limits to the swarming horde of cameramen who were on their heels. The initial strategy session took place in the Doral's first floor powder room.

No time for an organized campaign. Nobody was organized enough for one anyway. Just time enough to round up nominators.

Sissy calmly in command. Gloria ... cool, delicately boned and brilliant. Bella ... the most impressive of the bunch, neither big nor brassy, wearing makeup no less and, of course, the hat. Betty Friedan ... softer than the others, eager to help.

Galbraith couldn't make the nomination after all, Sissy explained. He'd spent the afternoon talking George McGovern out of endorsing Boston Mayor Kevin White.

Bob Eckhardt was weaseling. Liz Carpenter didn't want to. Fannie Lou Hamer was ill but game. Lowenstein was aching to get to the podium.

The Doral's switchboard was jammed, naturally. Steinem raced upstairs (the elevators were jammed as well), got Fred Harris of Oklahoma out of the shower and asked him to do the honors. Alas, Tom Eagleton is his seatmate in the Senate.

CONVENTION TIME already. The campaigners moved to a caucus room at the auditorium, picking up volunteers as

they went — Larry Goodwyn, a former *Observer* editor who teaches at Duke; Ralph Collins, the Farenthold effort's Mr. Unflappable; the Brain Trust; quiet Emilie Farenthold.

Goodwyn commandeered an ancient portable typewriter and set to work on the speeches. They were a stirring lot, salted with suggestions from Sam Houston Johnson, two *Observer* editors and Nick von Hoffman of *The Washington Post*.

Steinem and Abzug, both delegates, worked the floor. Collins managed to shake three floor passes loose from the national committee for himself, Drue and Friedan. They set out to firm up the nominators.

Galbraith lobbied the Massachusetts delegation, eventually getting 27 votes for Sissy.

Gov. Dale Bumpers made the mistake of going backstage, and, while he was gone, some Arkansas women managed to swing 19 of the state's 27 delegates to Farenthold.

Von Hoffman seemed to be in six places at once, always saying the same thing: "Now, this woman carried 45 percent of the vote in Texas."

Imamu Baraka got involved somehow.

The candidate strolled elegantly around the floor, granting interviews from time to time.

The count for Farenthold in the New York delegation rose to more than 100 at one point. Gary Hart of McGovern's staff intervened and talked it back down to 79 votes for Sissy. The McGovern people also had to pull California and Oregon back into line.

The Texas delegation — a capitol reporter dubbed it "the Daley delegation from Texas" — gave Clay Smothers, a professionally patriotic Negro Wallace alternate from Dallas, twice as many votes for the vice presidency as it gave Farenthold. That pretty well sums up the Texas delegation.

Steinem did the nominating: "Unless you dare to give her your vote and support, you will have wasted an opportunity to tell the country what is different about the 1972 convention."

Houston School Board member David T. Lopez, a McGovern delegate, actually read one of the prepared speeches.

Ms. Hamer's message was short and sweet: "If she's good enough for Shirley Chisholm, she's good enough for Fannie Lou Hamer."

Tearing along at about 78 rpm's, Allard Lowenstein gave his regulation #2 state-of-the-Nixon-economy speech, adding that to defeat the incumbent, Democrats must "multiply" their ticket with Sissy Farenthold.

For a half-day campaign, the results were pretty good. Farenthold, with 407 votes, came in second behind Eagleton. The women had shown they weren't necessarily going to go along with McGovern at any cost, and they got more votes than George Wallace.

Sissy was pleased. She'd asserted her sense of independence once again. And besides, it's not every day you can get a couple hundred thousand dollars worth of network time for the price of a hairdo.

Before going out to celebrate, Sissy asked Pierre Salinger, the McGovern liaison man for the Texas delegation, if she could have her McGovern telephone back. Salinger just smiled.

"Gloria kissed me. Gloria, Gloria..." Drue was heard to mutter before he

staggered back to close down campaign headquarters.

The candidate finally reached George the husband by phone about 7 a.m. He'd been working late and had turned on a radio about 10:30 p.m. "I heard something about Farenthold... vice president," he said. "I thought it was one of your whims."

"It was more than that," she assured him. And then she settled down for a long summer's nap. K.N.

How Texas voted and, more or less, why

Miami Beach

Out of the 15-hour state convention in San Antonio on June 13 came 130 delegates to the National Democratic Convention pledged as follows: uncommitted — 30; Wallace — 42; McGovern — 34; Humphrey — 21; others — 3.

On July 12 those same people voted for the Democratic nominee thusly: McGovern — 54; Wallace — 48; Jackson — 23; Chisholm — 4 and Muskie — 1.

And in the meantime, in between times, ain't they had fun? Probably the Texas delegate who had the most fun was the famous or infamous lobbyist Jimmy Day. Day kept cheerfully announcing until the last possible moment that he had come as an uncommitted delegate and intended to stay that way. "Being uncommitted is great," he said. "All these people want to wine me and dine me. After all the years I've spent wining and dining other people, this is just dandy. Am I ever uncommitted! I'm so uncommitted I'll take food, booze and flattery from McGovern, Wallace or King George the Third." Day eventually voted for Sen. Henry Jackson.

The Texas delegate who had the least fun was Dolph Briscoe. On Monday the 10th, Briscoe was leaning toward Humphrey. On Tuesday he signed a petition for Henry Jackson. On Wednesday he came out for Wallace and early Tuesday morning he voted for McGovern. It was not an inspiring performance.

THE TROUBLE with trying to analyze why Briscoe did what he did is that Briscoe and his merry men have done considerable instant historical re-write. The first part is easy enough — Briscoe leaned toward Humphrey, Humphrey withdrew and so Briscoe leaned toward Jackson. The Wallace-McGovern switch can be most kindly described as a mistake, an unnecessary mistake of such stupidity as to stagger even those who were beginning to think they understood Briscoe. Briscoe announced his decision to support Wallace at 4 p.m. Wednesday afternoon.

"I believe that my support of Governor Wallace in the presidential balloting can be of important value in demonstrating to all factions of our party that those ideas and principles which he represents have widespread support throughout Texas," Briscoe said. "Governor Wallace and his supporters are needed as full partners in the Texas Democratic Party today and in November and throughout the many future struggles where a balanced Democratic Party is needed for the good of our country."

The official Briscoe line on the decision is that Briscoe was afraid the Wallace people would walk out of the party, leaving him to face a September state convention comprised of liberal delegates. The official theory #2 is that Briscoe didn't think the Wallace people would walk out, but he wanted an I.O.U. from them so he could either control them at the September convention and/or get their help in writing a conservative platform in September. In point of fact, angry Wallace supporters have been holding post-convention meetings on how to take over the September convention from Briscoe.

Briscoe won the gubernatorial nomination as a moderate or moderate-conservative. George Wallace does not fit in with anyone's idea of a moderate. Getting shot has upped his respectability quotient considerably and his speech to the convention was sane. But some of those who heard Wallace say, "I am for equal educational opportunity and always have been" remember a girl named Autherine Lucy. If Briscoe wanted simply to prove to the folks back home that McGovern was too far left for him, he could have voted for Jackson, Terry Sanford or Wilbur Mills, all of whom were still officially in the running. That is what most people expected him to do: it would have occasioned neither surprise nor disappointment. All hell broke loose after Briscoe announced his Wallace support.