

Somewhere Down the  
Crazy River: Advice  
from a Grizzled  
Veteran for your  
Political Journey

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LGLA Presentation



“You like it now  
But you’ll learn to  
love it later”

•Robbie Robertson



“This could be  
heaven or this  
could be hell”



•Eagles

Political Addiction:  
Personality Deficit  
or Genetic  
Disorder?



As Kenny Rogers  
wisely observed:  
“You got to know  
when to hold ‘em,  
Know when fold  
‘em...”



Three Ways You Know It’s  
Time to Fold ‘em:

1. You eat compulsively  
during meetings. No  
cookie is safe in your  
presence.

2. You are convinced that political office is the only thing standing between you and a great golf score!

3. When you get home, your dog bites you then goes walking with the mailman!

There are only three ways to leave politics...

And two of them don't look like that much fun!



Many things have changed since 1980...

- Cell phones

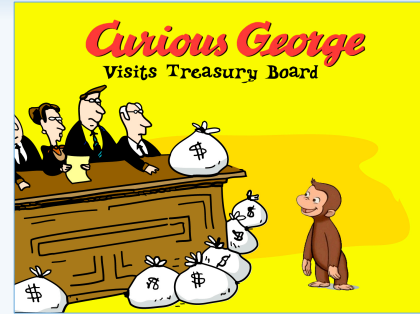


Many things have changed since 1980...

- Internet
- Social media



The Modern Miracle!  
How to destroy your  
political career in 140  
characters or less!



And in this age of  
omnipresent social media...

As Rob Ford's experience suggests...  
be careful who joins you in  
photographs



Don't let your e-  
communication  
devices become your  
alternative (and  
defining) reality

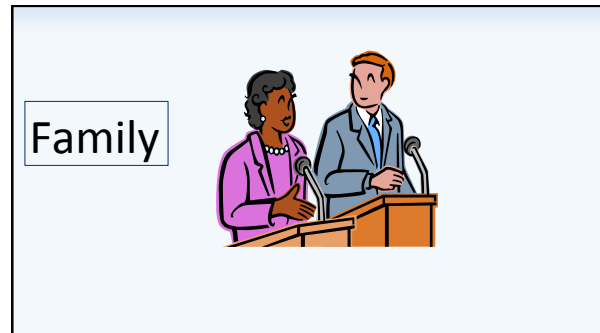
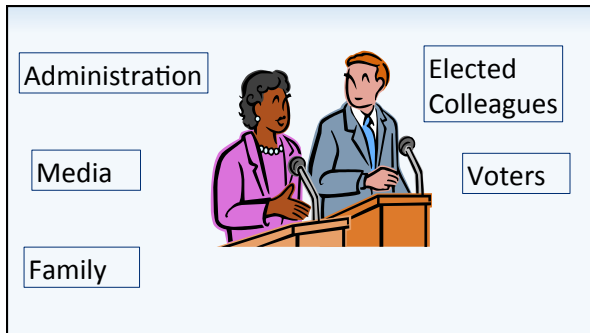


Relationships  
are not  
important in  
politics...



Relationships  
are everything  
in politics!





*Stayin' alive, stayin' alive...*

Finding and keeping your balance in a world where the cup can never be filled

Erich Segal famously observed:

“Being in love is never having to say you’re sorry.”

• Love Story (1970)

Being in politics is never having to go look for trouble...

Trouble has all your contact information... trouble will even recognize you at the supermarket!

In the absence of a full understanding...



People may fill the gap with the worst assumptions about what is intended

Sometimes it feels almost impossible not to respond with anger or some form of negative dismissal...protect your family from that...



If the time or place is not right for a patient, thoughtful explanation say, "I'm sorry can I get your number and give you a call later?"



Elected Colleagues



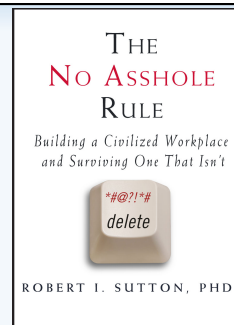
Don't personalize the many challenges you encounter...view them as puzzles to be solved



Most puzzles are solved through collaborative efforts, not solo efforts... never hesitate to quietly call on the experience of your administrative team



The most knowledgeable people in the world know that they only understand a small part of it...they overcome that limitation through collegiality and collaboration



“ R-E-S-P-E-C-T  
Find out what it  
means to me.”

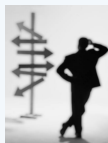
•Aretha Franklin



The prospects of your arguments winning the day will always be stronger if you appear to understand and respect opposing perspectives



Sometimes you will be thrust into the position of “picking your poison”: choosing from a short menu of undesirable choices....



In my experience, when confronted by a truly gut-wrenching choice, you never go wrong by doing what you think is right



“When the music’s over  
Turn out the lights”

•The Doors



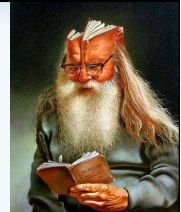
Administration



An effective public servant  
acts as a bridge between  
political and bureaucratic  
worlds...get to know them  
and learn from them!



Shrewd public  
servants, just like  
shrewd elected  
officials, take the time  
to build relationships

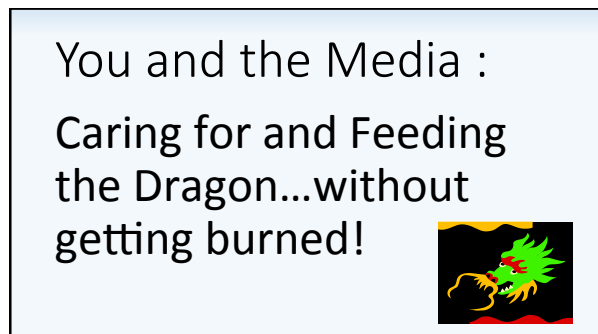
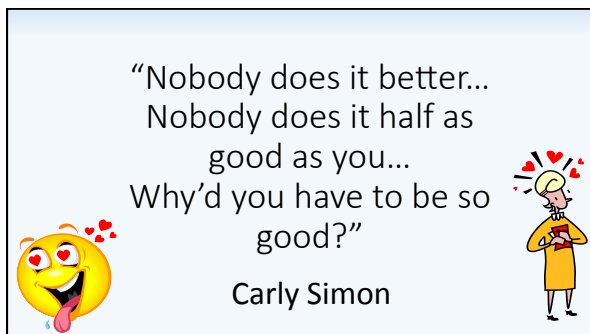
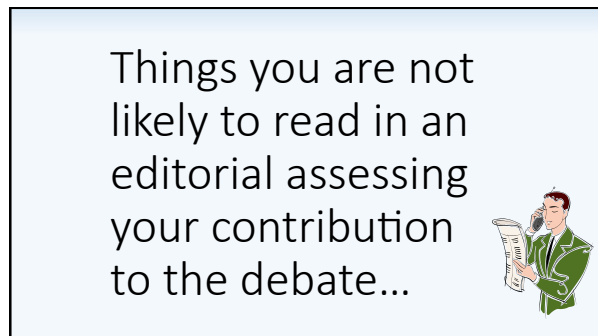
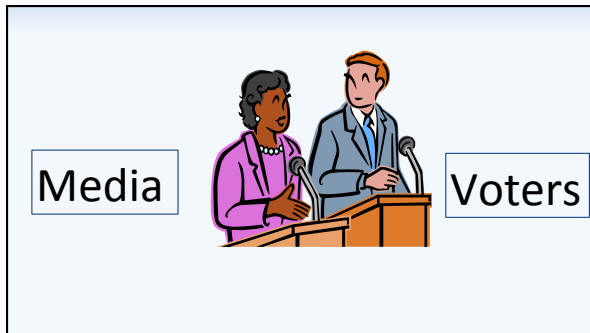


A good administrator will  
understand the political  
dimension of government, but  
won't bring a political agenda  
to the table...the latter almost  
always ends badly.



Your role as an elected official  
is to make wise, constructive,  
and sometimes exceedingly  
difficult public policy  
decisions...it is not to take  
over the day-to-day  
management and operations!










Be visible...  
But don't become a target




"I'm just a soul whose intentions are good  
Oh Lord, please don't let me be misunderstood"

• The Animals



If you are not sure where the debate is going, and you are not sure what you want to contribute...

Exercising your right to remain silent may be your best option




If in doubt follow Sam Rayburn's advice...

"No one has a finer command of language than the person who keeps his mouth shut."


"And then I go and spoil it all by saying something stupid..."

• Nancy Sinatra



"Just hurry up and die!"

- Attributed to the Japanese Finance Minister Taro Aso, 24 January 2013 Globe & Mail
- A more generous translation of his remarks would be: "You deserve nothing less than immortality. How may I help?"



But should you step in it...

Or should controversy  
arise despite your best  
efforts to avoid it...



Anger and vitriol (even  
when merited) NEVER  
play well in the media...  
don't bail out your  
opponent by making your  
emotion the media focus!



A calm, honest and  
measured response  
is always  
appropriate



“Tell it like it is,  
Don't be ashamed of  
it, let your conscience  
be your guide.”

Aaron Neville

“And in the end,  
The love you take  
Is equal to the love  
you make”



•Beatles

THANKS AGAIN!



QUESTIONS?