

My qualifications for office (about 985 words)

Memo: Before we begin my campaign, the party office has requested information on items in my background that might cause trouble in the press. Here are the ones I can think of so far.

Every statement below is correct, but swearing to them wouldn't help, especially number eight.

(1) Family religious background. My wife's great-great-great-(some number)-grandfather Isaac Allender came to the United States on the Mayflower, and was one of the very first people run out of Plymouth Colony as a heretic. The heresy was that he advocated doing business with the Quakers, when they offered the best price. To this day I continue to buy Quaker Oats Oatmeal, unless the house brand is cheaper.

(2) Family political background. My own ancestors came to the United States roughly one hundred years ago, escaping from Czarist Russia in the years before the 1917 Russian Revolution. This raises the natural question of whether they were in favor of the Czar or in favor of the communists. I'm not sure which would look worse in the press.

(3) Ties to revolutionaries. In 1968 I met with Alexander Kerensky, who was Prime Minister in Russia during the brief 1917 interlude between the Czar and the Communists. He spent the entire time explaining that what happened later was not his fault.

(4) Mixed Marriage. My wife's family has included officers of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. My grandmother was an officer of the Greater Boston Association of Retail Liquor Dealers. This will offend single-issue voters on both sides. It also presented problems in deciding on beverages for our wedding reception.

(5) Marital Fidelity. Not a problem, as I am firmly convinced that my wife is the sexiest girl in the world. We may have trouble convincing the voters of this, as she is 86 years old and refuses to let the nude photos be published. The press won't go into my escapades before we were married, will they?

(6) Draft evasion. I did get admitted to divinity school, but my draft board said they were acquainted with my religious beliefs and would draft me in a minute if I tried to enter the ministry. The ROTC commander at my college, who also advised the Student Peace Union on organizing peace marches, offered to write a letter saying he had seen me attempt to march and that the army would be better off without me. The draft board avoided this issue by deferring me on condition that I go into an essential occupation, teaching.

(7) Family military heritage. My wife's great-great-(et cetera)-uncle James Breakenridge was an officer in the Vermont forces in the war between Vermont and New York in 1771. This apparently does not appear in any history books except in Vermont, which won. The winners write the history books, but sometimes have trouble selling them out-of-state. The fact that no shots were actually fired in this war may cost us donations from the ammunition manufacturers.

(8) Honesty under oath. I have not lied under oath in a courtroom for several years. In the jury qualification questions the prosecutor asked the name of my wife's last employer, and I couldn't remember how to spell it. Besides, it had letters in the name that are not in the US alphabet (an "eth" and lots of accents), so I was just making life easy for the court reporter.

(9) Arrest record. Can I say "I don't know?" When my wife and I were teaching in the Faeroe Islands (see #8 above) we were collected by the local policeman. Apparently we lacked the correct working permits in our passports. The Rector of the school which we were teaching, the one I can't spell, came and had a long talk with the police. Perhaps we were arrested and released into the Rector's custody, but I don't know since the conversations were all in Faroese and the Rector declined to translate.

As for the time the Turkish Police picked me up on suspicion of drug smuggling, I was just in the wrong company. Again, I don't know Turkish so if they told me I was arrested I didn't understand it. They let me go after I made a speech on the general subject of faith, hope and charity in broken Hebrew, cribbed from the Yom Kippur Prayer Book. I'm not sure if they thought I was crazy, or took it as a plea for mercy in broken Arabic. I just hope no recording of this survives, in case I'm ever tried for heresy.

(10) Immigration record. So far as I can determine, neither my ancestors nor my wife's ancestors had either passports or visas when they came to this country. Even more distressingly, there is no evidence that any of the ships they came on carried metal detectors. Can we arrange to have

the election postponed until there is a full investigation of everyone who had a family member on the Mayflower?

(11) Birth certificates. I think mine will pass muster. But my father was born only a month after his parents got off the boat from Russia and, perhaps due to lack of English or fear of the Czar, they neglected to have his birth recorded by the government. A birth certificate had to be concocted years later when he got a Presidential appointment, and when it was put in the state files they spelled his last name incorrectly.

(12) International negotiations. On a trip to visit monasteries clinging to the side of cliffs in the eastern Himalayas, I found myself the only Jew in a room containing Tantric Buddhists and a delegation of devout Christian Scientists. I organized a panel discussion, and the two sides agreed that they had enjoyed dinner together and that the room would be cold in the winter.

(13) I'm probably too old to be good at catching dogs anyway.

Edward Ordman