

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 10/7/2022

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

In 1950, George Smathers defeated Claude Pepper in the Florida Democratic Primary for the U.S. Senate. An article in TIME magazine dated April 17, 1950, claimed that Smathers had given a speech that shamed Pepper and was directed at uneducated Florida voters. The content of that alleged speech is this:

“Are you aware that Claude Pepper is known all over Washington as a shameless extrovert? Not only that, but this man is reliably reported to practice nepotism with his sister-in-law, he has a brother who is a known homo sapiens, and he has a sister who was once a thespian in wicked New York. Worst of all, it is an established fact that Mr. Pepper before his marriage, habitually practiced celibacy.”

Mr. Smathers denied having made the speech and offered \$10,000.00 to anyone who could prove that he did. No one ever collected on that offer and clearly the speech never happened. But as the stories about the fictitious speech continued to circulate, it expanded to include other descriptions of Mr. Pepper that he “matriculated with coeds at the university” and “vacillated on the Senate floor.” It is, in political circles, the most famous speech never given.

Personal attacks, name calling, and “mud-slinging” have long been part of the political landscape during election campaigns. Candidates seem to put more effort into telling voters why they should not support their opponent instead of why they should support them. An overwhelming number of voters indicate that they do not approve of such tactics, but politicians continue to do it because, well, it works. And it works because many voters listen to the allegations without seeking the truth about the accused or maligned issue.

Though TIME claimed that uneducated voters were easily dupped, the truth is that uninformed voters can be influenced by what they hear or see in political campaigns. We are fortunate that we have the freedom in this country to elect those who will represent us. But with this freedom also comes the responsibility to do our homework about issues and candidates. That includes researching allegations made about resolutions and people. We also need to pay attention to the fine print at the end of ads to see who is paying for this information. Often that will tell you a great deal about the reliability of what is being said and the motivation behind its presentation. As Christians, we should always seek the truth and that includes in elections. We need to have an accurate picture about what candidates stand for and what resolutions will do before we vote. And then, armed with accurate information, we should cast our votes, guided by our consciences and the HOLY SPIRIT.

In CHRIST'S love,
Pastor Jeffrey