

Konnyu Challenger Campbell Walks the Fine Line

Candidate disagrees with mentor McCloskey on Middle East, Rose Bird

For decades prior to his final free-fall collision with the pavement in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1978, the legendary Karl Wallenda often thrilled his audiences with death-defying tightrope stunts. Weeks before his death, Wallenda told reporters that for a

stunt to captivate, two elements must be present: difficulty and danger.

Both elements surfaced this week when 35-year-old Stanford Law Professor Thomas Campbell formally declared his candidacy for the congressional seat held by one-term incumbent Ernest Konnyu (R-Saratoga). Campbell, a Republican with conservative credentials, now finds himself walking a political tightrope with a difficulty that would make even the Great Wallenda

wince.

In his first race for public office, the former director of the Bureau of Competition in President Reagan's Federal Trade Commission faces at least two major obstacles. First, he must defend himself against charges that his primary challenge to an incumbent violates his party's "11th Commandment"—etched in political granite years ago by party patriarch Ronald Reagan—which holds that one "must never speak ill of a fellow

Republican."

In addition to his need to rebut charges that he is disloyal and divisive, Campbell apparently feels he must also put some distance between himself and maverick former Congressman Paul N. "Pete" McCloskey, whose public criticism of Konnyu as "an embarrassment" helped weaken the incumbent and left him vulnerable to Campbell's primary challenge.

Campbell's effort to stymie charges that he's a young GOP housewrecker has been strengthened by the support he enjoys of some key Republicans who have bolted from Konnyu's ranks. Most notable among the defections are Hewlett Packard co-founder David Packard and former 12th District Representative Ed Zschau, both of whom went on record last week as opposing Konnyu's re-election.

In endorsing Campbell, Zschau sought to take the edge off allegations that Campbell's campaign will disrupt party unity, telling a reporter that a contested primary will be "good for the Republican Party, good for this district and good for the country."

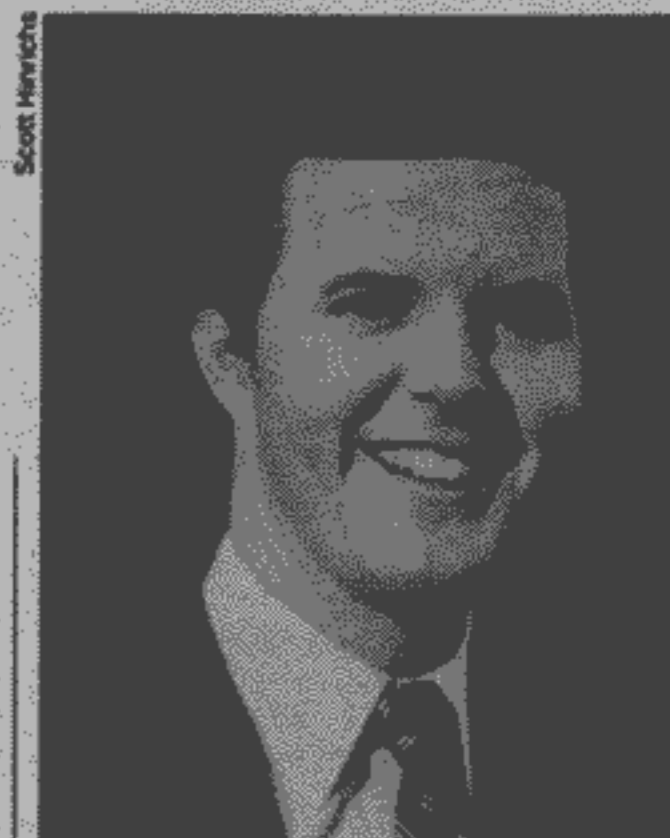
"That remains to be seen," says Tom Skornia, who ran against Konnyu in last year's Republican primary but pledged not to enter the race this year. Skornia says that Campbell's background "commends him for public office at some time and in some place," but that he is not convinced this is the time and place.

Skornia adds that he has adopted a posture of "benevolent neutrality" in the Konnyu-Campbell contest.

Campbell rejects charges that his effort will weaken the party. "What party is anything but strengthened by having new people who have got something to contribute?" Campbell asks. "The implication is that no one should ever challenge an incumbent officeholder," he says, adding, "If that happens, a party becomes moribund."

"In the worst case, having been elected people think that they are then entitled to their office," Campbell says, noting that he means that only generally and not of his opponent.

Campbell says he is miffed by Konnyu's recent attempts to paint his can-



Candidate Thomas Campbell

didacy as a proxy effort inspired by Konnyu archrival McCloskey.

"I have disagreements with McCloskey," Campbell says, rebuffing Konnyu's portrayal of him as little more than a McCloskey clone. "I differ with him on the Middle East and with respect to [former Chief Justice] Rose Bird in particular, as well as on other issues."

Campbell says that, "On the Middle East, it is my view that the Palestine Liberation Organization is a terrorist organization and that Israel is correct in refusing to negotiate with them." He adds that he "has always been a strong supporter of Israel," calling the tiny Mideast parliamentary democracy "America's best ally."

Campbell strongly disagrees with McCloskey on the subject of cutting off financial aid to Israel in order to discourage further Israeli settlements in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. "I do not consider the issue of settlements on the West Bank a basis for cutting off the United States support for Israel," he says flatly.

Campbell also blasts former chief justice Rose Bird—whom McCloskey energetically supported—for what he called her "willingness to take from the people of California their right to use the initiative" process to redistrict California along lines proposed by the California Republican Party.

Campbell's political highwire act may be among the most interesting events in next year's political season. If he can successfully navigate himself across the chasm of allegations that await him, and if he can do so without alienating his political benefactors—Pete McCloskey included—then by next year at this time he may well replace Konnyu as the most senior northern California GOP congressional official. —Hal Plotkin