



2005 FALL EDITOR'S NOTE

Here's a question I'd like to ask every independent in the United States of America: If there are so many of us (35% say they're independents rather than Democrats or Republicans), why do we have so little political power?

There probably is no one answer to this question. Actually, there may be 35 million different ones. Independents are like that. *The Neo-Independent* (whose subscriber base is somewhat under 35 million) was created to foster such a national dialogue. "Back Road to the White House" is a piece of it - at the level of independent leaders, activists and journalists. I'm eager for many more voices to join the conversation.

I hope this issue provides support and "framing" (to use a term popular in political circles these days) to Jeremy Gragert and George Penn in Wisconsin, Jeremy Moody in Maryland, David Cherry in Illinois, Sarah Bayer in Massachusetts, Dave Ellis in Oregon, Jason Olsen in California, Mike Telesca in Connecticut, Bob Miller in Florida, Betty Ward and Jerome Holden in New Hampshire, Jeannette

McCoy in Virginia, Al Bartell and Mike Pickering in Atlanta, Wayne Griffin in South Carolina, Ernest Crawford in North Carolina and so many other independents who are working hard - not just to answer my question, but to do something about it. This issue is dedicated to all of you.

A personal note on the passing of ABC News anchor Peter Jennings. Peter and I worked together almost 35 years ago, when he was first trying to shed his pretty boy image (boy, was he pretty!) and become a serious correspondent. I was a desk assistant at the time, which was the lowliest job in the place - so low that network brass talked freely around you because you basically didn't exist. In 1972, Peter was sent to Munich to cover the Olympics - a "soft" assignment which he wasn't altogether thrilled about, but which unexpectedly turned into the biggest hard news story of the year when "Black September" terrorists seized and then killed a group of Israeli athletes ten days into the Games. Peter was well versed in Arab politics (which made him controversial in the business) and threw himself into covering this stunning turn of events.

Not long after the hostage-taking, Peter did a live feed from a studio in Munich, recapping what had happened. I was in the newsroom with the execs who'd come down to watch the broadcast. Peter was sitting on the set, giving a vivid account of the story, complete - as I recall - with singular insight into the motivations and modus operandi of the terrorists. It was riveting. No one spoke until one of the top guys made a strange, sort of guttural, sound. "Oh my god," he exclaimed. "Peter's not wearing any socks!" All eyes zoomed in on Jennings' bare ankles, visible between his pricey loafers and pant cuffs. "What the hell is wrong with him?" they grumbled.

This was my journalistic introduction to how to cover an international crisis: Whatever's going on, wear your socks. Peter Jennings, of course, survived the sock crisis and, unlike the situation in the Middle East, went on to bigger and better things. I also went on to what I'd like to think are better things, like working in a movement to change the culture of politics and policymaking. These days it's actually getting a little bigger, too.

Rest in peace, Peter Jennings. For the rest of us, let's keep going, with or without our socks.

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