

## They Also Ran

By Bala Prasad

This issue's "Point-Counterpoint" was about fringe political parties, so it seems appropriate to acknowledge the candidates who could have been, but did not become, presidents. It is difficult to include everyone in this distinct list, but here is who comes to mind:

Our first and second presidents, George Washington and John Adams, were elected unopposed. The first candidate for U.S. presidency to lose an election was Charles Cotesworth Pinckney. In fact, he did it twice, first to Thomas Jefferson in 1804, and next to James Madison in 1808. Henry Clay lost the election three times – to John Quincy Adams in 1824, to Andrew Jackson in 1832, and to James Polk in 1844. The first Republican Party candidate for the presidency was John Charles Fremont in 1856. He lost the election to James Buchanan.

Abraham Lincoln defeated Stephen Arnold Douglas in 1860. As a footnote, it should be remembered that one of our greatest presidents was elected with a minority of the popular vote. In the election that followed in 1864, Lincoln defeated the indomitable little general George Brinton McClellan, William Jennings Bryan also lost the election three times, in 1896 and 1900 to William McKinley, and in 1908 to Theodore Roosevelt. Charles Evan Hughes was the first presidential candidate (in 1916), who became U.S. Chief Justice in 1930. The candidates Franklin Delano Roosevelt defeated were Wendell Lewis Wilkie, Alfred Mossman Landon, and Thomas Dewey. The latter was also defeated by Harry Truman in 1948. Adlai Ewing Stevenson lost the election twice to Dwight David Eisenhower. Barry Morris Goldwater lost the election to Lyndon Johnson in 1964. Richard Nixon originally lost the election to John F. Kennedy but later got elected in 1960, when he beat Hubert Horatio Humphrey. George McGovern lost to Nixon in 1972. Gerald Ford lost to James Earl Carter in 1976. Ronald Wilson Reagan later defeated Carter in 1980 and Walter Mondale in 1984. In 1988, George Herbert Walker Bush

defeated Michael Dukakis, but in 1992 it was Bush's turn to lose. George Walker Bush defeated Albert Gore in 2000, and most recently John McCain lost the election to Barak Obama, in 2008.

Every election that was won or lost did not make a monumental difference in the great scheme of things. But some did. Of historical significance was the first president to be elected with a minority of the popular vote – John Quincy Adams. Chances are good that if Pinckney had won against John Adams, we would have fought France and sided with Great Britain. Reading the views of Stephen Douglas, one will have to conclude that, had he been elected in 1860, and not Abraham Lincoln, for better or worse, he would have reached political compromise with southern leaders and thereby avoided the civil war. If George McClellan had been elected in 1864, and not Abraham Lincoln, the latter might have gone down in history as a great bungler and not a great emancipator. He was spared this fate with the capture of Atlanta by William Tecumseh Sherman.

The election of Barry Goldwater, a rock ribbed conservative to the right of Ronald Reagan, would certainly have different views than that of Lyndon Johnson, as would have been the views of George Stanley McGovern's. A do-gooder liberal on the left of Hubert Humphrey to that of Richard Nixon.

There are differences of opinion between two presidential candidates, as they come from two parties with a different take on the same facts. But some of them have stark differences and others subtle.

Sincerely,

*Bala Prasad*