

Just when it seemed we had dodged every bullet, a new crisis raised its ugly head. Up 'til now, the campaign had ignored Minnesota, partly out of respect for Mondale, the favorite son. But new polls revealed we were within a few hundred votes in Minnesota. The campaign staff decided they should "leave no stone unturned." As a result, they called me from Air Force One to say they would make a "quick stop" in Minnesota on the way to St. Louis. "We'll be a little late," they confessed.

With a sinking feeling I asked, "How late?"

"Not more than an hour."

An *hour*. That would run the arrival right up to kick-off time of the football game. I reminded them that probably half my crowd held tickets to the game, and thousands had already been there for more than three hours. This was not the kind of last impression we wanted to leave.

"Do your best," they said. Winston Churchill whispered in my ear, *No, succeed in doing what is necessary*.

I called Chris at the site and he got Rick Ahearn on the line also. I explained the situation. They both groaned. "Rick, see if Bob Hope could do a little routine to keep the crowd engaged."

He ran off to check. “Chris, give Art Fleming a bottle of Scotch and tell him to rehearse a human wave or something.”

Rick called me back in a breathless moment. “Mr. Hope can’t do it. He only has material for the introduction.”

I was flabbergasted. “What? He’s been in show business for fifty years and he can’t do a couple of minutes off-the-cuff?”

“What can I tell you, he says he doesn’t have any material.”

I felt like my feet were in cement. “Okay,” I said dejectedly, “we’ll get there as fast as we can.”

I was standing on the tarmac at Lambert Field, watching airplanes land that were not Air Force One, when an idea struck me. Over the three days we had been on the site, there were periods when the landing pattern brought aircraft right down the Mississippi River, past our site, to land at Lambert ten miles away. If Air Force One flew low past the site, the crowd would know the president was only minutes away. That might persuade some football fans to forgo the opening drive.

I called the airplane and presented my request. After several minutes of consultation the word came back: yes, they would fly down the river.

I exultantly called Chris to brief him. “Have Art watch for the plane. The airspace is closed to regular traffic, so if you see an airplane, it is Air Force One.”

Back at the arch, the audience began to drift away. Chris Ambrose and Art Fleming anxiously scanned the sky. “There!” Chris yelled, pointing.

Art went to the microphone, his voice a fever pitch. “Ladies and gentlemen, I have just been told that by the direct order of

the President of the United States, Air Force One is going to fly over to salute us for waiting so long." A loud cheer arose. Some of those departing actually paused.

"There it is," Art screamed. "Let the president hear us." The audience thundered in response and waved their arms at the sky. Art Fleming became positively giddy as he said, "Ladies and gentlemen, what a sight, the finest airplane that flies the skies, Air Force One!"

As the plane flew by, the lettering on the side became visible. "Pan Am," it said. It was the press plane, which usually precedes Air Force One by about a minute. But Art had created such hysteria; it is not clear how many noticed the discrepancy. Hopefully they thought the "second" appearance of Air Force One moments later was a victory lap.

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