

Report from a laid back California

Hey, candidates, there's a primary going on out here

By Steve Daley
Media writer

Memo to the Chief:
I'll get right to the point with this expense account business, Boss. That trip for Jeff MacNelly and myself to the mud baths in Calistoga was an absolutely necessary element in our coverage of the California primary June 7.

We are, after all, professionals. As you know, we were there with Pat Robertson and his "invisible army" in Iowa. We were on hand with Al Haig and Pete du Pont and their stirring campaigns in New Hampshire. And we did our bit to chronicle Al Gore's savvy Southern strategy for Super Tuesday.

So, per our instructions, we came to California to cover a big-time

Campaign '88

presidential primary. And, quite frankly, it's not our fault the candidates didn't show up.

We sought out "Campaign '88" from the racquetball courts of Marina del Rey to the aging hippie haunts of Big Sur to the wilds of the Washington Square Bar & Grill in San Francisco. Have the linguine.

Chief, it was brutal. We took the pulse of the mob roller-skating at the beach in Venice, a place where Mike Dukakis should have been chasing votes and buying turquoise jewelry.

Where was he? In Belmar, N.J., probably outlining his position on the sludge menace, that's where. And that was BEFORE he went home to Boston for his wife's surgery on Friday.

Over Memorial Day weekend, we took in the Great Monterey Squid Festival. And we were distressed to learn that George Bush spent that time getting his bottom wet in a pleasure tub off the Maine coast.

I ask you, Chief: where are the standards? Do you think Hubert Humphrey would have missed the crowd at the squid festival?

Jesse Jackson was supposed to spend \$2 million out here, but you can't even find him on TV. Call his campaign office in L.A. and they'll tell you he's spending the day rhyming in New Mexico.

We saw Jackson once, preaching to a crowd of radicals and left-wingers at the corner of Wilshire and La Cienega in Beverly Hills.

There are 24 million people in this state, plus the two of us, all

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looking for a presidential campaign. Do these candidates have super-saver flights to New Jersey, or what?

On the plus side, it makes the campaign trek easier when you realize that whenever the wanna-be leaders of the Western World do gather in California there's only one issue. All they want to talk about is drugs and the Great Noriega Menace.

From our extensive survey of campaign rhetoric, it appears there are no other problems in America in 1988.

In his "war on drugs," Gen. Jesse Jackson wants to unleash the U.S. military, at least what's left of it after his proposed cuts in the defense budget.

George Bush says he wants to visit a "crack house," but his people are having trouble finding one near the family compound in Kennebunkport, Me.

And every time Mike Dukakis makes a get-tough-on-dope speech, he sounds like a miniaturized Broderick Crawford in "Highway Patrol."

When two of these guys wind up actually running for president this fall, they're going to have to wear name tags in California.

Given the current level of enthusiasm in California for the White House aspirants, and vice versa, voters in the Golden State will be pulling the lever for the mystery guest next November.

It's been a wacky week, Chief, and I think you'll find that perspective reflected in our expense accounts, er, reports.

If there were any political reporters out here besides the locals, they'd raise a question. And it's just the sort of question you'd expect to have posed in California:

What if they had a presidential primary and nobody came?



No sign of candidates at The Cheesecake Factory.



Jesse in Beverly Hills.



The Squid Festival: We were there, but George Bush wasn't.