

Washington, DC
Saturday, July 2, 2016
11:50 a.m. EST

President of the United States Harold Miller was using the long July 4 weekend to bring his campaign staff together. Most would be leaving after the lunch meeting for a much-needed rest before returning to the campaign trail once again on Tuesday.

Harold was in his private bathroom off the Oval Office in the White House. He had removed his dress shirt and tie to wash his face before lunch. No matter how hard he worked with the soap and water, it would never rid him of the nagging question always in the back of his mind.

How could his entry into the White House have gotten off to the worst possible start? From the day he took the oath of office, he had either been trying to resolve problems he had inherited from his predecessor or wrestling with a Congress that failed to understand how the president should lead the country instead of the legislative body.

Two men had been constant thorns in his side. Tom Evans had been in the United States Senate when Miller had been serving as a senator from his home state of New York. They had constantly locked horns with each other over taxes, civil rights, and a host of other issues.

Then there was the upstart from South Carolina. A very inexperienced man who received lots of attention during a national security situation and then nominated as a senator to Washington. Most any new member of congress would be sitting in the back row of their respective chamber and keeping their ears open and their mouths shut.

Not Randy Fisher. Nearly from day one, the young senator had started to put his mark on the legislative agenda on Capitol Hill. His bill to reform the Post Office had been a great piece of legislation that Miller had supported and signed into office. For most new members of Congress, one significant piece of legislation would have been enough for their first two years. However, Fisher had teamed up with Tom Evans and forced their immigration and border security bills through the Congress.

Miller rested his hands on the side edges of the pedestal lavatory bowl. He watched the water swirling in the basin before it slid down the drain. To save face, he had signed the bills since Congress had passed them with a two-thirds majority. Against his direct wishes, they passed those bills.

His fingers moved back along the lavatory to grip the corners of the bowl. As he flexed his fingers, the knuckles turned white from his hard grip on the porcelain. *Against his direct wishes.*

Then those stupid cabinet members his original chief of staff had helped to select. One had conspired with his own senior assistant to steal millions of dollars from his department's research budget. That was bad enough; but it was Randy Fisher and his wife that discovered the theft. The whole mess appeared to the public that Miller did not know what was going on

within his own administration. Of course, nobody cared that he had been spending the first six months of his administration trying to find who was responsible for the nuclear device Randy Fisher had discovered hours before the debate between Miller and President Jonathon Blakely.

Then his Education Cabinet secretary got his personal secretary pregnant and caused a new scandal to blindside him even before the first scandal was off the front pages of nearly every newspaper across the country.

Miller leaned down towards the sink and cupped his hands to catch the water flowing from the faucet. He brought the clear liquid to his lips and slurped several handfuls into his mouth.

Spitting out the water, he shook the excess from his hands and then grabbed the thick hand towel to dry his face and hands. When he removed the towel, he took a quick look in the mirror. He was only one year older than Tom Evans was but the California senator had that “surfer boy” good looks and could pass for 10 years younger than his real age. Now he was in a fight against not only Evans, but also members within his own party.

He finished in the restroom and passed through the doorway into the Oval Office. He crossed over the large area rug and walked behind the Resolute Desk towards the windows looking out over the Rose Gardens. The beautiful flowers, tended by professional gardeners, were at the height of their summer beauty, but the colors were lost on Miller.

The number two hundred eleven burned within his memory. That was the number of delegates short for a nomination on the first ballot at the upcoming GOP convention. His nomination by the Republican Party for a second term was in doubt because of Jerrod Wyman and Leonard Graham.

Wyman he could understand. They were together the first go-round. Miller was from New York State and the industrial north. Wyman was a highly rated two-term governor from Texas and favored by the voters in the Bible belt across the southern states. On paper, they made a great team, but almost from the start of their administration, they discovered they could not work together.

From their deep divide over the two pieces of legislation concerning illegal immigration and border security, Wyman had resigned immediately after the mid-term elections. Rumors began that the former VP would challenge the incumbent. Miller had been prepared for Wyman during the primaries with a plan to make the former Texas governor appear far too liberal for the GOP. He would tell the party faithful how Wyman had sided more with the liberal Democrats than the people who voted to put him into office. He would brand him disloyal to the party and the Republican platform.

What Harold Miller and his campaign staff failed to plan for was Leonard Graham. The former Speaker of the House of Representatives had come out of retirement with a large bucket of money—money provide by “big business” to fuel a well-organized campaign against Harold Miller.

Twice in the past, in 2008 and 2012, Graham had tried and failed to garner enough delegates to become the Republican candidate. He lost his bid early the first time due to a war chest lacking sufficient funds. The second time, in 2012, was a race between the senator from New York and the Speaker from Pennsylvania. Miller had the support of Wall Street and their ties into the industrial heart of America. Perhaps it was just a decision of who had the better chance to beat Blakely out of a second term. Graham came up short once again.

This time, Graham had gone to the large corporate board members and convinced them that Harold Miller had betrayed their trust with his Corporate American Fair Share Tax Bill. It might have failed in the Senate late in 2015, but they had no guarantee that Miller would not try another trick to raise corporate tax obligations.

Support that had been in Miller's back pocket in 2012 was now behind Graham. Even with support from big business, Leonard still had the problem of appealing to the middle-class voter. His 556 pledged delegates was well below the 1,205 needed for the nomination, but they were enough to keep both Harold Miller and Jerrod Wyman from raising the winning flag at the GOP convention in September without cutting some type of deal with the former Speaker.

The president turned back towards his desk. He slipped his right fingers among several papers lying next to the telephone until he found the one sheet with the final primary election results.

Miller	Wyman	Graham
994	851	556

None of the three contenders could win on their own. Someone had to make a deal, and the members of the press were watching for who would blink first.