Reading Number 74
from No Place for Amateurs
by Dennis Johnson

p. 541, ¶ 1, Quote—“I don’t want to read about you in the press. I’m sick and tired of consultants getting famous at my expense. Any story that comes out during the campaign undermines my candidacy”—Bill Clinton to his new 1996 reelection consultants Dick Morris and Doug Schoen.

p. 541, ¶ 1, line 1 – “Just days before the 1996 Democratic National Convention, a smiling, confident Bill Clinton was featured on the cover of Time magazine. Pasted on Clinton’s right shoulder was a cut-out photo of political consultant Dick Morris, ‘the most influential private citizen in America,’ according to Time.”

p. 541, ¶ 1, line 10 – “Morris worked hard at being the unseen political mastermind and strategist.”

p. 541, ¶ 1, line 12 – “While Bill Clinton’s 1992 consultants were talk-show regulars, wrote best-sellers, and traveled the big dollars lecture circuit, Morris was the back schemer.”

p. 542, ¶ 3, line 1 – “Throughout his career, Bill Clinton had a reputation for discarding political consultants.”

p. 542, ¶ 4, line 1 – “Morris’s anonymity was shattered when he was caught with his long-time prostitute companion by the supermarket tabloid the Star.”

p. 542, ¶ 4, line 16 – “Though the Morris scandal scarcely damaged the Clinton campaign, it ended up being everything President Clinton objected to: Dick Morris was getting famous—and rich—at his expense.”

p. 542, ¶ 5, line 1 – “For years Americans had been unwittingly exposed to campaign posturing and manipulation engineered by political consultants. In the 1990s they grew curious about the manipulators. Suddenly, political consultants were hot properties.”

p. 544, ¶ 2, line 1 – “Despite the notoriety, and self-promotion of Morris, Carville, and others, the celebrity consultants is the exception, not the rule. Most political consultants toil in the background, content to ply their craft in anonymity.”

p. 544, ¶ 2, line 8 – “Very few have ever heard of George W. Bush’s chief strategist Karl Rove, Al Gore’s media consultant Carter Eskew, or John McCain’s consultant Mike Murphy.”

Note: This article was written before Karl Rove gained notoriety in the book and subsequent film
documentary, *Bush’s Brain*.

p. 544, ¶ 3, line 1 – “Political consultants, both controversial and anonymous, have become essential players in the increasingly technological, fast-paced, often brutal world of modern elections. Through it all they have changed the face of modern American politics.”

p. 544, ¶ 4, line 1 – “In earlier decades, campaigns were financed and run by local or state political parties. They were fueled by local party activists and volunteers, by family, friends, and close political supporters.”

p. 544, ¶ 4, line 8 – “By the 1980s every serious presidential candidate, nearly every statewide candidate, and a large number of congressional candidates were using the services of professional political consultants.”

p. 544, ¶ 5, line 1 – “The 1990s witnessed another transformation. Candidates for office below the statewide level were beginning to seek the advice of professional political consultants.”

p. 545, ¶ 1, line 4 – “Professional consulting services, such as phone banks, telemarketing, and direct mail, were supplanting the efforts once provided by volunteers and party loyalists.”

p. 545, ¶ 2, line 1 – “The influence of political consultants goes well beyond getting candidates elected to office. They play and increased roll in ballot measures by helping clients determine ballot strategy, framing issues, and even providing the campaign foot soldiers who gather signatures for ballot petitions. Consultants use marketing and mobilization skills to orchestrate pressure on legislators.”

p. 546, ¶ 2, line 1 – “One of the most difficult but necessary tasks is to even out the steep curves in the election cycle so that money and resources flow more regularly.”

p. 546, ¶ 2, line 8 – “Consultants are becoming more involved in the growing business of initiatives, referenda, and issues management.”

p. 546, ¶ 4, line 1 – “As corporations have discovered the value of grassroots lobbying and issues management, consultants who specialize in direct mail and political telemarketing have shifted focus to legislative and issues work. Corporate and trade association organizations took special notice of the successful political consultant-orchestrated grassroots campaign run against President Clinton’s 1993-94 health care proposal.”

p. 547, ¶ 2, line 1 – “Candidates, not consultants, win or lose elections. In 1996 voters chose Bill Clinton, not media consultant Bob Squier; they rejected Bob Dole, not pollster Bill McInturff.”
p. 547, Footnote — “The Willie Horton ad is famous – or infamous – negative ad from the 1988 Bush-Dukakis presidential campaign. An independent PAC created the initial ad that accused Democratic candidate, Gov. Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts, of allowing convicted murderer William Horton out of prison on a weekend furlough; Horton committed several violent crimes while on furlough. Because Horton was black and his victims were white, the ad stirred up racial tensions that lurked not too far beneath the surface of the 1988 Bush-Dukakis campaign.”

p. 548, ¶ 2, line 1 — “The best candidates are able to define the race on their own terms – not the terms set by the opposition, the media, or outside third parties. In the end, the campaign boils down to letting voters know the answers to some very simple questions: who the candidate is, what the issues are, and why is the race important.”

p. 548, ¶ 3, line 1 — “Professionals also take campaign burdens off the candidate. Campaigns are exhausting, placing extraordinary physical and emotional demands on the candidate. The campaign staff, and especially the campaign manager, absorb as much of the stress of the campaign as possible.”

p. 549, ¶ 2, line 1 — “Above all, consultants bring experiences from other campaigns.”

p. 549, ¶ 3, line 1 — “Growing reliance on professional consultants is costly: the price of admission to elections has risen substantially.”

p. 549, ¶ 4, line 1 — “The best consultants aren’t afraid of a fight. They know that in many cases an election can be won only if they drop the pretense of reasoned civilized campaigning and take the gloves off. Campaigns engage in rough tactics because they work. Opposition researchers dig deep into personal lives, seeking out misdeeds and character flaws. Pollsters test-market negative material before focus and electronic dial meter groups.”

p. 549, ¶ 5, line 1 — “Certainly not all campaigns use negative tactics. Candidates are often very reluctant to engage in mudslinging or demagoguery.”

p. 550, ¶ 1, line 1 — “But campaign consultants see negative campaigning as a tool, not so much a question of political ethics or morality. If the only way to win is to go negative, then negative it is.”

p. 550, ¶ 3, line 1 — “Professional campaigns and the political consulting industry will flourish in the decades to come. Candidates for public office – both incumbents and challengers – will not hesitate to raise increasingly larger sums of campaign funds to pay for professional consultants and their services.”