

CENTER FOR MEDIA AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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August 1, 1988

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Republicans Are Funnier on "Tonight Show"

Republican candidates were the butt of jokes nearly twice as often as Democrats in Johnny Carson's monologues during the primary season, according to a Center for Media and Public Affairs study.

Researchers examined Carson's monologues for political humor from January 1 through the last primaries on June 7. Republicans were the targets of 73 jokes compared to 41 that skewered Democrats. George Bush led with 32, while only three were aimed at Mike Dukakis. Hart led the Democrats with 15 jokes.

Most of the jokes steered clear of pure politics. They focused instead on candidates' verbal gaffes and personality or character flaws.

Samples:

Bush: "The last time George Bush gave a speech someone came up and drew a chalk outline around the body."

Robertson: "Robertson called Oral Roberts to see if he could raise his campaign from the dead."

Babbitt: "Babbitt lending support to Dukakis is like Sandy Duncan lending her bra to Oprah Winfrey."

Hart: "Gary Hart (said today) if he was elected he would not be the first adulterer in the White House, but he would be the best."

The study was co-authored by Dan Amundson, CMPA Research Director, and S. Robert Lichter, a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. It appears in the July/August issue of Public Opinion magazine.

The Center for Media and Public Affairs is a nonpartisan and nonprofit research organization that conducts scientific media studies. It is directed by social scientists Robert and Linda Lichter.