

A black and white photograph of Stuart Elway, a man with dark hair, smiling broadly. He is wearing a light-colored button-down shirt and a patterned tie with small stars. His arms are crossed over his chest, and he is wearing a watch on his left wrist. He is sitting in an office chair, and a computer monitor is visible in the background.

# STUART ELWAY

Elway at his Seattle office in 1996.  
*Kathy Quigg photo*

# Taking the Pulse

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**A**s he surveys the debris field of post-Obama politics in the divided states of America, pollster H. Stuart Elway flashes back to a street corner in Longview in 1960. He's 12 years old, standing beside his father, State Senator Harry S. Elway Jr.

"I'm running for Congress," Harry says, extending his hand to passersby. "Sure appreciate your vote!" Stuart offers each a campaign card featuring his dad's track record as a school board member, mayor and legislator. What's more, with Harry you'd get "a family man, union man, business man and sportsman."

Tall and slender with a boyish smile, 40-year-old Harry Elway exudes aw-shucks affability. He'd been a yell leader at Hoquiam High School and an Army sergeant during World War II. When he returned from the South Pacific, he joined the family plumbing business. His kid brother Jack, the family's star athlete, set out to be a football coach.

In 1952, backed by other young vets active in the VFW and American Legion, Harry Elway won election to the Legislature as an Eisenhower Republican from Grays Harbor, then one of the bluest counties in America. By 1960 he was simultaneously mayor of Hoquiam and a state senator, hoping to make it all the way to Washington, D.C.

Practically from the day he learned to walk, Stuart loved to tag along with his dad, who once wore an Uncle Sam outfit for a big parade. "Watch for The Elway Family Trailer 'stumping '60 style in your community!" Harry's ads said.

In Longview, an influential mill town, several pedestrians recognized Harry from his rounds as an industrial supply salesman. Fellow VFW members greeted him warmly. "Then along came one old guy who



Elway and his dad, State Senator Harry S. Elway Jr., R-Hoquiam, on the campaign trail around 1958. *Polson Museum photo*



scowled at Dad and started yelling at me,” Stuart says, chuckling at the memory. “I don’t remember Harry’s reaction, but he probably told me something like ‘You can’t please all the people all the time. That’s just politics.’ ”

From county fairs to crab feeds, Stuart Elway grew up steeped in politics: “Around 7, I got to be an honorary page in Olympia, sitting in the House chamber with the older kids. When my mom was staying with my dad during the legislative session, my grandma would put me on the bus in Hoquiam—I’d be wearing my little coat and tie—and my mom would pick me up at the Greyhound bus station in downtown Olympia.” Some of Stuart’s earliest memories are of walking through the marbled halls of the Capitol—a little boy standing in the rotunda, marveling at the dome. “I still get a feeling of awe every time I’m there. I met some amazing characters, too. My dad once roomed with William ‘Big Daddy’ Day, the Spokane chiropractor who became speaker of the House after dissident Democrats formed a coalition with the Evans Republicans in 1963. Most of my dad’s friends in the Legislature were Democrats. When he was first elected, Harry was a card-carrying member of the Plumbers & Pipefitters Union.” The D’s and R’s would have fierce fights over legislation, Elway says, “but when the day was done you’d find them in the bar at the Tyee Motor Inn, where a lot of legislators stayed, or some other watering hole. A lot of times I would go to the old Olympian Hotel with my mother. It was an ornate, gold-leaf place then. I had my first French dip



Senator Elway’s campaign ad in the 1950s features his wife Lila and kids, Stuart and Jone. *Elway collection*

sandwich there. We'd be sitting in a booth with a lot of the legislative wives. It was all very grown-up."

IN THE 1980s and '90s, while his cousin John—Uncle Jack's prize pupil—was shredding defenses as quarterback of the Denver Broncos, H. Stuart Elway III, Ph.D., was crunching numbers with such accuracy and innovation that Elway Research Inc. became one of the top public-opinion pollsters in America. Few doctoral candidates in political science have had as much experience in the science of politics at the doorbell level.

The older he gets, the more Elway looks like his dad, who died in 1995. Same smile, chiseled nose and lively hazel eyes. At 70, Elway's swept-back hair is thinner but still mostly dark. He looks at least a decade younger. "They say that if you can remember the '60s you weren't there," Elway says with a mischievous smile. "Put it this way: Some events are more clear than others."

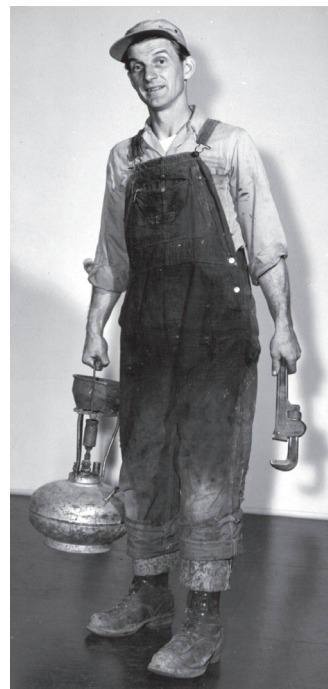
When he turned 20 in the summer of 1968, Elway was part of a youth movement called "Action for Washington." If youth must be served, as the adage goes, what Elway learned in that tumultuous year gives him hope that a new generation—weary of ad hominem malice and the politics of polarization—will emerge to make America as great as he believes it can still be. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Elway reminds us, famously said, "You're entitled to your own opinions but you're not entitled to your own facts." In other words, whose news is fake?

"This increased polarization, this seeming intolerance for opposing viewpoints," troubles a man who has spent the last 43 years taking the pulse of the body politic. "It's the lack of a center where reasonable people can disagree but still work out a policy and enact it into law. Those trends are the issues of our time," Elway says. "I don't know how you run a government—a republic—if these sorts of trends continue or exaggerate even further."

If it's going to change, Elway says, young people will be the catalyst.

Fifty years ago, Baby Boom Democrats were cutting their hair to "Get Clean for Gene" McCarthy, the scholarly anti-war Democrat who challenged Lyndon B. Johnson. One McCarthy ad, headlined OUR CHILDREN HAVE COME HOME, featured the Minnesota senator surrounded by youth. "Suddenly they've come back into the mainstream of American life. And it's a different country. Suddenly the kids have thrown themselves into politics, with their fabulous intelligence and energy. And it's a new election."

Action for Washington mobilized progressive young Republicans to get out the



Stuart's dad was a card-carrying member of the Plumbers & Pipe Fitters Union. *Elway collection*

vote. Dedicated to civil rights and disillusioned by the war in Vietnam, many were as liberal as their Democratic peers. Four years earlier, in 1964, Elway and many of his friends had been junior Goldwaterites. Now they viewed Governor Dan Evans as their political lode-star. A Rockefeller backer, Evans denounced the arch-conservative John Birch Society as “false prophets, phony philosophers and professional bigots.”

Action for Washington was organized in 1967 by 26-year-old Sam Sumner Reed, a future three-term Secretary of State, and 29-year-old Christopher T. Bayley, a Harvard Law graduate who would make his mark as a corruption-fighting King County prosecutor.



Sam Reed as a young gubernatorial aide.  
*Washington State Archives*

Reed’s grandfather, Wenatchee lawyer Sam Sumner, was a Washington legislator early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and state GOP chairman.\* Bayley, from an old-line Seattle family, had been national vice-president of the centrist Ripon Society organized in 1963 by activist young professors and grad students from Harvard, MIT and Tufts. Horrified by the assassination of John F. Kennedy and troubled by Goldwater’s defense of extremism, the Ripons set out to rally “a new generation” of moderate Republicans dedicated to progressive government “in the spirit of Lincoln.” Their manifesto declared, “We feel strongly that the center strategy is the only responsible choice the party can take.” The candidates promoted by Action for Washington in 1968 personified the center strategy. There was a bold stroke, too: “The Action Team” candidate for lieutenant governor, Pasco City Councilman Arthur Fletcher, hoped to become the first black statewide elected official

in Washington history.

“WHEN Chris Bayley and I first started discussing the 1968 election year, the idea was to get young Republicans involved,” Sam Reed remembers. “But the more we discussed it the more we realized we wanted to reach out to independents and Democrats who might be attracted to moderate candidates like Dan Evans and Secretary of State Lud Kramer, who earlier had been a force for civil rights as a Seattle City councilman. Slade Gorton had not yet decided to run for attorney general, and the idea of recruiting Art Fletcher

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\* One of Sam Reed’s best friends during his undergrad days at Washington State University was his fraternity brother, Mike Lowry, an ebullient liberal from St. John, pop. 550, in conservative Whitman County. The future Democratic governor and future Republican secretary of state engaged in lively debates that were nevertheless always civil—an attitude Reed finds sadly lacking in today’s politics.

was still down the road. We decided to call it 'Action for Washington' to give it a bipartisan flavor. It was open to young people of either party—or neither party. Most of our recruits turned out to be young Republicans like Stuart Elway, who was witty and smart, with great political instincts from all the campaigning he had done with his dad. Before long, we had attracted upwards of 2,500 bright, idealistic young people."

Jack Durney, Elway's pal from the Class of 1966 at Hoquiam High School, signed up on the spot. ("Stu was student body president and I was his veep. We were practically the only two young Republicans on Grays Harbor," Durney quips.) Other recruits included Jim Waldo, a Whitman College student with a precocious knack for fundraising; Randy Smith, a Harvard junior who proved adept at logistics, and Steve Excell, a UW sophomore who became a wizard at opposition research. Excell, now Washington's state archivist, remembers getting woozy from the acetone they used when silk-screening campaign posters. "It's possible that some people may have been smoking a little weed back then, but after two hours of cranking out posters you were already higher than a kite."

"It was an extraordinary year," Stuart Elway remembers. "At Grays Harbor College that spring, I was head of Collegians for Evans while Durney was chairman of Youth for Kramer. We got together with the Young Democrats and staged a mock convention, with Governor Evans delivering the key address. He told us he didn't care what party we belonged to. What mattered was that we needed to stop talking and start doing." Durney still has the newspaper clipping from that speech. "We're faced with an apparently unending war in Southeast Asia and growing turmoil here at home," Evans said. "In no segment of our society is enough being done to solve these challenges. We can't do all of it through government, or partisan politics. Active involvement by people of all ages from all walks of life is the only answer. Otherwise, we're going to fail."

"That summer, just before Durney and I enrolled at the University of Washington, we started working for Action for Washington," Elway remembers. "The Evans-Kramer-Gorton-Fletcher ticket was now in place. We needed foot soldiers for a campaign of and by young people. Action for Washington was not a party organization. It was its own autonomous organization. That was a crucial



Leaders of Grays Harbor College's Republican Club map their strategy for the 1968 elections. Stuart Elway, fourth from left, and his Hoquiam High School classmate, Jack Durney, sitting, went on to play key roles in Action for Washington. *GHC Nautilus yearbook*



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## IT'S TIME TO TAKE ACTION

Action for Washington supports these four candidates because they've shown that they care about the thoughts and needs of the young people of this state. If elected, these men are going to work for us for four years — let's give them a couple of hours of our time.



**THE ACTION TEAM NEEDS YOUR HELP**

On November 2, a team of concerned young people from all over the state will be descending on Pierce County for a total campaign blitz of the Tacoma area.

<b>NOVEMBER 2</b>
Cheney Stadium Tacoma, Washington
<b>1:00</b>

MEET THE CANDIDATES  
AT THE RALLY

Big AFW PARTY following THE  
BLITZ. Live Music, Food, and Drink

*bring a friend—plan to work hard and have a good time*

Sponsored by: Action for Washington and College Republican League

## SEE YOU THERE!

A campaign ad for The Action Team. *Washington State Archives*

point—especially to us. It was also a mixed blessing, and minor irritation, to party elders. Sam Reed is right: We didn't care if our recruits were Democrats or Republicans. A number of young Democrats were especially attracted to Dan Evans.

"One day Jim Waldo and I made a swing through Southwest Washington. In Lewis County, we met John Giese, a UW sophomore, and Rene Remund, a senior at Stanford. We proceeded to assemble 200 college students to doorbell Centralia—*blitz the whole town*—in one night. That's the kind of energy Action for Washington generated," Elway says. "We drove down from Seattle to Centralia in an old milk truck someone had donated. The 'grown-ups' in AFW weren't much older than we were, so they just let us do our thing."

Remund, who went on to practice law in Lewis County, remembers that in Centralia, a conservative town with few

people of color, they made a strategic decision to omit handbills featuring Art Fletcher's photo—never mind that Fletcher was a fervent Republican, ostensibly "The Party of Lincoln." One union publication published dark photos of Fletcher to italicize his blackness.

"Art gave us a rousing pep talk after we finished doorbelling," Elway remembers. "And we got even more energized because he was so charismatic. That took place many times over the summer. He was a big man—6-4, a former NFL player—with a preacher's voice and a terrific sense of humor. He could light up a room of college kids. Man, you'd go away feeling like you were really part of something—and we were. I remember having discussions with the elders in big strategy meetings. We'd tell them how inspirational he was for our generation. 'If you want to keep us in, keep Art up front,' we'd say.

"Somehow I ended being the guy who wrote the press releases for Action for Washington," Elway continues. "I would hand-deliver them to the newspapers, AP and UPI. Other times, you'd do whatever was needed to advance the cause. One time I ended up driving First Lady Nancy Evans to a meeting in Longview in a borrowed VW Beetle. She was a trouper and a real asset to the campaign, with her progressive views on women's rights."

Polls indicated Evans and Kramer were well ahead, while Gorton and Fletcher were in tight races—Fletcher especially. Waldo remembers the day college students from

Pullman and Walla Walla arrived to join collegians from the UW and Seattle U to canvass priority precincts in King County for Gorton and Fletcher. “For three days 175 to 200 students worked all day, then partied into the night. We knew we were making a difference.” Waldo, an influential Tacoma attorney, remembers those days as a highlight of his half century of civic activism.

“We’re waking up the Republican Party to the New Politics,” Paul Peterson, an Action for Washington volunteer, told the UW’s *tyee Magazine* that fall. “It is coming to realize it can no longer afford to ignore its youth.” Their “main goal” was to elect Fletcher, Peterson said.

It was “a huge disappointment” for Action for Washington when Fletcher lost to the three-term incumbent, John Cherberg, by 48,000 votes out of 1.2 million cast. A smear campaign by a right-wing weekly in Eastern Washington and opposition from the Teamsters and hard-hat unions likely cost him the election, according to Slade Gorton and Sam Reed. Cherberg, a Democrat, carried Lewis County, one of the state’s most reliably Republican counties. Gorton also lost in Lewis County, perhaps because he and Fletcher had campaigned there together.

Evans and Kramer, as expected, easily won re-election, while Gorton was elected attorney general in a cliffhanger, prevailing by 5,000 votes. “Without Action for Washington my political career could have ended right then and there,” says Gorton who went on to serve in the U.S. Senate after three terms as attorney general. “Those kids made a huge difference in my election. Without them I wouldn’t have won. And they nearly won it for Art Fletcher, too. Stuart Elway was a political prodigy who obviously had learned a lot from his dad’s campaigns. Jim Waldo, meantime, had a beard and ran around in bib overalls. But he was the only young guy I’ve ever come across who could raise money. He could charm birds out of the trees. Jim alone of all those young guys went out and talked to rich people and got money out of them. It was remarkable.”

A civil rights pioneer, Art Fletcher was scooped up by the Nixon Administration as an affirmative action specialist with the Department of Labor. He also served in the administrations of Ford, Reagan and George H.W. Bush and headed the United Negro College Fund. He died in 2005. Elway, Gorton, Evans and many others who were in the political trenches with Fletcher in 1968 believe that had he been elected lieutenant governor he might have gone on to become the state’s first African American governor or U.S. senator. Given what Fletcher accomplished nationally, however, Washington’s loss clearly was America’s gain, says Fletcher’s good friend, Nat Jackson, a civil rights leader who served as one of Governor Evans’ top aides.

YOU MAY BE wondering about the rest of another story—whether Stuart Elway’s dad got elected to Congress in 1960. He did not, despite the efforts of his own army of teenage volunteers. Stuart remembers barnstorming Southwest Washington in a rented trailer fes-



tooned with Elway for Congress signs. “When I was 12 I saw every county fair in the nine counties of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District that summer.”

The winner was State Rep. Julia Butler Hansen, a formidable Democrat from Cathlamet in tiny Wahkiakum County. Elway says Julia shrewdly encouraged a popular Aberdeen Democrat, Gene Neva, to enter the race, knowing his candidacy would split the Grays Harbor vote in the primary. Stuart’s dad finished third in the race for the GOP nomination. Come November Julia won going away, undefeated in 41 consecutive elections in a storied career.

“Gene Neva and my dad were friends,” Elway remembers. “They even looked alike. We’d go to their house for dinner. The story was that Republican Congressman Russell V. Mack, the Hoquiam newspaperman, told Harry, ‘I want you to succeed me.’ Of course he probably told that to 50 others guys. Then Mack died on the floor of Congress, and Julia saw her chance. Harry and Julia got along, too. It was nothing personal. Just politics.”

Harry S. Elway Jr. went on to become assistant director of two state agencies—first with the Department of Labor & Industries and finally with the Department of Personnel, where he was an activist for affirmative action. He retired from state government in 1979 and opened a popular restaurant and sports bar in Tumwater. The back bar featured a photo of members of the clan huddled around John Elway after a Broncos’ victory.

WEIGHING the events of 1968 vs. 2018, Elway vividly recalls the excitement of arriving at a major American university campus fizzing with energy—left and right and black and white. The Black Student Union was pushing for higher minority admissions and Black Studies courses. The Black Panthers were militating and the Students for a Democratic Society mobilizing against the military-industrial complex. Women’s liberation activists were demanding equal rights, equal pay and safe and legal abortion on demand. Elway joined the College Republicans—not as square as that may sound today. “There was an important distinction in those days between the College Republicans—the progressive Dan Evans wing of the party—and the very conservative Young Republicans. We clashed a lot.”

Elway and Richard B. Sanders, a conservative UW Law School student, dueling on the editorial page of the *UW Daily*, with Sanders asserting that the “real reason” for the push to boycott grapes in solidarity with striking migrant workers was “to force the workers to accept a union they don’t want.”\*

The divide between conservative young Republicans and liberal young Republicans was so wide, Elway remembers, that the liberal wing manufactured “Nixon-Maggie” campaign buttons that summer to demonstrate its support for U.S. Senator



The Nixon-Magnuson button produced by liberal young Republicans. *Elway collection*

\* Sanders went on to serve on the State Supreme Court, where his pro-life and libertarian views generated controversy.

Warren Magnuson, a New Deal Democrat, in his race with Jack “The Giant Killer” Metcalf, a conservative state lawmaker. Nixon, meantime, promised “peace with honor” in Vietnam. And, ironically, “law and order” at home.

BY 1970, his senior year at the university, Elway was state president of College Republicans. “Thousands of us were marching on the freeways to stop the war. I gave the keynote address to the Whatcom County Republican Convention, speaking against the war in Vietnam. Basically my message was, ‘Nothing that’s going on over there is worth what’s going on over here.’ And Duane Berentsen, the county chairman—a future Speaker of the House and candidate for governor—got up and gave a 10-minute rebuttal. The debate over the war was raging everywhere, in everybody’s household—in everybody’s mind. I was having arguments with Harry Jr. They were never huge, but a couple got pretty elevated. And yet in 1970 when I’m going for my draft physical Dad is giving me advice to tell them about my knee injury from my high school days as a member of the track team. So he’d changed too.”

After graduation, Elway joined Governor Evans’ staff, first as a summer intern, then full time with the heady title of special assistant to the governor.

“In those days, there were 23 people in the governor’s office, including the clerical staff. (It’s now nearly 100.) My office is now a stairwell. I helped with the correspondence, monitored legislation and pretty soon was doing constituent work as the governor’s representative in Spokane. Sometimes, I’d fly over in the State Patrol plane. Every two weeks I’d go to an office staffed by Gerri Reed, Sam Reed’s mom, who was director of Evans’ Eastern Washington office. She’d put a notice in the paper that the governor’s guy would be in town. I would sit there all day and hear people’s problems, then go back to Olympia

and call Labor & Industries or some other agency and try to solve them. My hair’s down to my collar and I’m wearing beads over the top of my tie. People would come in, do a double take and go, ‘You’re the governor’s guy?’ The governor didn’t seem to care. If he did I wouldn’t have been doing it. I had walk-in privileges to see the governor. That’s the kind of office Evans wanted. We didn’t have staff meetings. You knew what your job was; you knew what was expected and you set out to do it. I’d get a



Elway with Governor Evans in 1971. Elway collection

stack of letters each morning with ‘See me’ jotted on them by Jim Dolliver, the governor’s chief of staff. He’d give me pointers on what to do. Dolliver was a remarkable person—a future chief justice of the State Supreme Court and one of the most magnificent people I’ve ever met. He was a champion of civil rights, backed equal pay for women and opposed the death penalty—a true intellectual who also understood practical politics. It was a real education in how a public servant’s office ought to work.”

Was there a lasting lesson from that constituent work? “It’s that real people have real problems and they depend on government to help them. Sometimes the bureaucracy really does screw people. And that’s appalling. It’s *their* government.”\*

AFTER A YEAR with the governor’s office, Elway learned he had been accepted to law school. Conflicted, he told Dolliver he’d rather stay. Dolliver smiled and nodded. “So I stayed an extra year—two in all. All the while, I got to live law school vicariously through Jim Waldo and a lot of other friends studying law. I started talking with Kirk Hart, who was on the UW Business School faculty, but was also a former pre-law adviser. He’d begin with, ‘Tell me again about your obsession to go to law school.’ I’d tell him and he would slice it all up, saying, ‘All the guys lining up to go to law school thought they’d be sitting behind mahogany desks dispensing important advice, becoming partners and earning great money.’ ”

Disabused, Elway thought about running for the Legislature or some other office. “I weighed everything I’d learned from my dad being in politics—the toll it takes on families. I couldn’t see myself sitting through a lot of hearings and meetings. Then one day Hart looked at me and said, ‘Communications!’ It was like the scene in *The Graduate* where the old guy confronts Dustin Hoffman, the young college graduate worried about his future. ‘I want to say one word to you,’ he says. ‘Just one word: *Plastics!* There’s a great future in plastics.’ Well, communications was where the future was going to be, Hart said. It was great advice. Earlier, as an intern with the office of Planning & Community Affairs, I attended a conference in Seattle and heard futurist Robert Theobald say, ‘Someday communications will replace transportation as the way to get together to do work.’ That was the epiphany. What Kirk Hart said summed it up: ‘In essence, if you don’t want to be a lawyer, don’t go to law school. Go into communications.’ ”

ELWAY ENTERED the master’s degree program at the University of Washington’s Department of Communications in 1972. His first class, fortuitously, was Professor Alex Edelstein’s overview of public opinion research. A masterful lecturer, Edelstein is remembered

\* A chilling footnote from that era revolves around another bright young Dan Evans Republican, a UW prelaw major named Ted Bundy. Elway and Bundy, who had been Art Fletcher’s driver on several outings during the 1968 campaign, once spent a fruitless week hunting for an apartment and went separate ways. It was around that time that Bundy, one of the most monstrous serial killers in U.S. history, attempted his first kidnapping. Elway remembers Ted as “a charming guy with a good sense of humor. We all liked him. He spoke in a clipped style that sounded like it may have been some kind of British accent, which added to a slight sense of mystery. But nothing ever registered as sinister.”



as “a true Renaissance man” who in childhood barely survived the Russian Revolution. Edelstein worked at the *San Francisco Call Bulletin* after high school and fell in love with journalism. As an academic who understood the mainstream press and the power of propaganda, “Edelstein ran and analyzed public-opinion polls, an interest that sprang from a dissatisfaction with what he felt were misleading news-media polls that sought quick responses to haphazardly shaped questions, rather than a real understanding of an issue. ‘Poll respondents answer the question that is put before them, just as most of us eat the dinner that is put before us,’ he wrote in a commentary. ‘Public opinion in many cases is simply answers to the pollsters’ questions.’ ”

“It was a perfect start to a master’s degree,” Elway says. “I learned there was more to polling than just asking questions. They have to be the right questions. The course blended my interest in communications with my interest in politics. Then, in 1975, as I was finishing work on my master’s degree, I ran into Ross Davis, chairman of the State Republican Party and an old comrade from my Dan Evans/Action for Washington days. He asked, ‘Can you do a survey?’ I instinctively knew the first rule of consulting, which is to say ‘Yes!’ ”

Elway’s first survey helped elect a GOP candidate running for the Legislature in a special election. His second was for Rolland “Rollie” Schmitten, a personable Marine Corps veteran from Cashmere who went on to serve three terms in the Washington House of Representatives before heading the Department of Fisheries. “For Rollie, I did pie charts, which I hand drew with a compass and labeled with the typefaces that came on rub-off sheets. ‘Wow!’” Ross Davis said, ‘we need to do more of this!’ So we did. I started with a rented typewriter on the dining room table using the university’s computer.”

Elway did surveys for candidates from both parties, but abandoned partisan polling when he started conducting polls for *The Seattle Times*. In 1981, he took a year off to serve as chief of staff for Lands Commissioner Brian Boyle.

Elway received his Ph.D. from the University of Washington in 1983 with a thesis exploring “Political Identification Among Independents.” Elway Research Inc. was incorporated in 1985.

The depth and accuracy of Elway’s political polling for *The Times* led to his involvement with the newspaper’s Front Porch Forum, a commitment to “civic journalism” that became a hallmark of the Blethen family’s stewardship of the newspaper. Working also with the Evans School of Public Affairs at the UW, National Public Radio and PBS, Elway oversaw focus groups and surveys, as well as town halls “designed to engage citizens in the civic discussion and giving them a voice in the coverage.”

In 1994, when the political writers at *The Times* were skeptical of Elway’s polling data on the upcoming congressional elections, he wagered a buck on each of the Republican candidates. When the delegation switched from being 8-1 Democrat to 7-2 Republican, “he picked the pockets of every political reporter and editor in the building,” former *Times* editor David Boardman recalled. The newsroom learned an important lesson: Don’t

make political bets with pollsters—or at least with H. Stuart Elway.

“I liked being around a newsroom; being around the table with the reporters and editors working on the stories; thinking up questions, coming back and interpreting the results,” Elway says. “The collaboration was energizing. It was immensely satisfying work. My dream job would have been being the pollster for *The Washington Post*.” He laments the decline of general-circulation newspapers committed to rigorous investigative reporting—and the rise of short attention spans, with tweets masquerading as accurate polling. “I worked on a recent project with the *Portland Oregonian*, once one of the great newspapers in the West. When I walked into that grand old building it looked like a neutron bomb had gone off.”

Quoted in *The New York Times*, *Time*, *Newsweek* and *The Economist*, Elway emerged in the 1990s as the go-to expert on Northwest political trends. He prides himself on conducting scrupulously nonpartisan research. In 2009, he was named to the Communications Department Alumni Hall of Fame at the University of Washington.

In the fall of 2018, Elway jumped on a new opportunity to collaborate with first-rate reporters and editors. He entered into a partnership with Cascade Media, an alliance of KCTS9, Seattle’s PBS affiliate; Crosscut, the independent, reader-supported news site, and Spark Media, a film and digital media production company that has produced award-winning documentaries. Elway will continue to design and direct quarterly polls in collaboration with the Crosscut news staff. “The poll will bring additional perspectives to Crosscut and KCTS9, while they add new breadth and depth to the poll,” Elway says. “I’m excited about the opportunity to enhance the public conversation in the Northwest.”

IS POLLING trickier today, given the mercurial nature of the electorate and changing technology? “Absolutely,” Elway says. “The industry has learned to deal with the cellphone world, but now it’s migrating off phones entirely. It’s going to be more on-line work. And to get a random sample—which is the gold standard—of an on-line audience is impossible. Sampling is a lot more complex. There aren’t Yellow Pages or White Pages for email addresses. We do a lot of hybrid surveys. If we have a phone number, we’ll call a person. If not, we’ll write them a letter and ask them to go on line. The whole public opinion research industry is changing.”

A decade ago, when Chris Gregoire was governor and Brian Sonntag state auditor, Elway Research oversaw two projects analyzing governmental performance audits. “We did town hall surveys and focus groups, including a random-sample, interactive statewide poll on live television with TVW. I don’t think that had been done before,” Elway says. “It involved so many aspects of what I do. Real people, not just some abstract random sample.”

That said, carefully designed random samples increasingly document the frustrations of real people. In the spring of 2018, Elway Research surveyed 403 registered voters by phone for *The Spokesman-Review*, KHQ-TV, the *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin*, Spokane Pub-

lic Radio and the *Lewiston Morning Tribune*. Using landline and cellphone numbers, Elway's researchers contacted Eastern Washington voters who cast ballots in at least two of the past four elections, plus a sampling of new voters who registered to vote since the 2016 presidential election. "Split by voters' views of President Trump and gender, Eastern Washington's electorate is highly polarized and possibly headed for the closest race in the 5th Congressional District in years," *The Spokesman-Review* concluded.

That real people are becoming increasingly tribal troubles Elway and Slade Gorton, who turned 90 at the dawn of 2018. The former senator was in the political trenches in the 1960s when Republicans and Democrats were locked in mortal combat over redistricting. Gorton believes Washington's politically balanced redistricting panel—a citizen-enacted mandate—is now a model for the nation. But what can be done about the demographics of division in Washington State today? High-tech Seattle has become San Francisco North politically and the axis of statewide electability. Gorton remembers when Seattle routinely elected mainstream Republicans. Today, in what he has dubbed "The State of Space Needle," liberal Democrats reign supreme. A candidate seeking statewide office "can see all the votes he or she needs within the shadow of the Space Needle," Gorton says, adding that nationally "the two parties are now mirror images of one another in one respect: New people coming into the Republican Party almost always come in from the right. Then if they win and get elected to office and tend to moderate, they're overtaken by another wave from the right. In the Democratic Party, new people come in from the left—the 'Berniecrats'—and the same thing happens to them. So in my view the result is that in the 2016 presidential election both parties failed the American people because they left the center entirely unoccupied."

In 1968, Elway saw himself as occupying part of the center. Governor Evans summed it up in his third inaugural address, Elway says, when he declared, "I'd rather cross the aisle than cross the people."

"I haven't been a Republican for a long time," Elway says, "and I certainly wouldn't sign up now." In this, the veteran pollster is part of the state's long tradition of fierce resistance to party registration. Washingtonians want to be able to vote for the person, not the party. Nevertheless, there are two de-facto parties. The urban/rural divide, which Elway has documented for years, increasingly is the compelling issue in Washington State politics. "In the 2016 elections, the 'Politics of Resentment' was overlaid on the divide, with Trump carrying places like Grays Harbor that had been reliably Democrat since the coming of the New Deal," he says. "That resentment is more problematic to solve than the economic challenge. As Gummie Johnson, the legendary State Republican chairman, used to say, the economic thing is 'Simple but not easy: Give 'em jobs.' The resentment issue goes deeper than that. They want an economic future, but there's a visceral feeling of being disrespected. I think resentment had more to do with Trump getting elected than the economics. It's certainly related, but what pushed him over the top was resentment." Grays Harbor hasn't





Elway at a recent Foley Institute Forum in Olympia. *Office of the Secretary of State*

gone Republican, Elway says. It has gone rogue, saying it can't be taken for granted. Tired of it, in fact—with a jobless rate twice the state average.

Denouncing any criticism as “fake news” and ginning up support with tweets—what passes for “Fireside Chats” in the 21st Century—Trump has masterfully capitalized on the politics of polarization, Elway says. “One of the recurring thoughts I’ve had lately is that I’ve literally been doing this my whole life—ever since I was 5. And it comes to this? Policies [designed to divide] are dangerous, and it’s going to take a generation to unwind them. But the norms and mores being destroyed by Trump are possibly more dangerous because democracy can’t exist if you have to enforce every law, every time. For a free society to function, people have to adhere to the mores, even if they know they are not going to be arrested for breaking a law. You have to have buy-in from the citizens. You have to have an abiding belief that, ‘OK, I didn’t carry the day. Majority wins. But we’ll live to fight again another day with my worthy opponent.’ That’s what my dad believed. That’s what he fought to defend in World War II.”

Civility, conscience and integrity have to matter more than doctrinaire politics, Elway says, “as opposed to just getting power so you can undo the last guy’s executive orders when it’s your turn. There’s this leap-frogging of parties whose first rule for action is to undo what the last party did. Well, how does that get us anywhere? It’s the mores, the norms and the belief in the system that should endure. Someone said the founding fathers anticipated a president like this, but they didn’t anticipate a Congress like this—one that supports a president like this. They thought it was going to be checks and balances.”

Rene Remund, now a retired lawyer, remembers the most important thing he learned when he was 22, doorbelling in the summer of ’68: “That a relatively small number of people committed to a purpose can make a change. The members of Action for Washington acquired a group understanding of the dynamics of democracy and went on to affect politics in the State of Washington for years to come. It was one of those drop-the-rock-in-the-water events where the ripples go out. Ultimately, however, they fade out. I believe we have reached that fade-out point because we have this failure of the center—the worrisome rural-urban divide that Stuart’s research documents.”

“I think we got more out of Action for Washington than we ever contributed,” says John Giese, who went on to work for congressmen and governors. “It was a sense that you could actually do something—a confidence and understanding that there are

ways to be more effective than just volunteering to doorbell.”

In 1968, young people who saw injustice, a war prolonged by lies, and politics polluted by cynicism took to the streets. A half century later, Elway hopes that someday soon his polls will discover a new generation of young registered voters intent on making ripples that become waves. Maybe they’ll call it #ActionForWashington.

**John C. Hughes**  
**Legacy Washington**  
**Office of the Secretary of State**

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***1968: The Year That Rocked Washington*** looks back at 1968 and its impact on Washington state through the stories of some remarkable people who lived through it. On college campuses, the campaign trail and evergreen peaks, Washingtonians were spurred to action. It was the year when Vietnam, civil rights, women's liberation and conservation coalesced—the year when tragedy led the 6 o'clock news with numbing regularity. 1968 changed us in ways still rippling through our society a half century later. *1968: The Year That Rocked Washington* features a collection of online stories and an exhibit at the Washington State Capitol in the fall of 2018. Legacy Washington documents the activism and aftershocks of a landmark year in world history. [www.sos.wa.gov/legacy/sixty-eight/](http://www.sos.wa.gov/legacy/sixty-eight/)