…What's in a Name?

Political candidates always seek to boost their name identification, particularly in races that normally don't attract too much attention. In a 1980 congressional campaign in San Diego, candidate Bob Wilson didn't have to worry too much about that, because he was seeking to replace a retiring and well-known incumbent named…Bob Wilson, no relation, who had served 28 years in the House. A survey indicated that one-third of district voters didn't know that the two Wilsons were different persons. In the end, however, it didn't make a difference – Wilson lost.

Meanwhile, up the coast in an Orange County-Los Angeles congressional district, another candidate's name also attracted a great deal of attention that year. Simone, a 51-year-old, one-named Democratic activist for civil rights and women's issues was trying to unseat popular Republican House member Dan Lungren. "I always have to take care of the name thing before I can get on with a speech," Simone said during the campaign. She explained that Simone was a family name that came from her European background, which she adopted after a divorce, and simply didn't add a second name because she didn't see the need.

With little money, Simone had a few eager volunteers on her campaign, but she couldn't afford fancy brochures. She ran what she called a "people pyramid" campaign. "Whenever I speak, I ask everyone in the audience to tell two friends about me." Much of her support came from feminist and senior citizen groups. A campaign worker said "little old ladies came up with $5 or $10" to keep the campaign going. With strong support from the senior citizen community, the liberal Simone stunned three other Democrats in the party's primary election. During a candidate forum in Huntington Beach, Lungren couldn't resist a zinger, shouting across the room: "If I'm doing such a bad job, why did you apply for a job in my office?" Simone smiled and responded, "To lead you to the right path." Lungren defeated her by a three-to-one margin.

Sources: Associated Press, Oct. 21, 1980, *Los Angeles Times*, June 5, 1980, *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 19, 1980, *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 24, 1980