The ghost of Joe Clark has been lurking around the edges of political news lately following the election of Pennsylvania Democrat Bob Casey Jr. to the Senate. Clark served as US Senator from Pennsylvania from 1957 until 1969. Before entering the Senate, he was mayor of Philadelphia, a lawyer, a writer (author of two books), and something of an intellectual (a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences).

Clark is remembered due to the historical significance of his last electoral victory; in 1962 he was the last Democrat to be elected to a full six-year term until Bob Casey turned the trick in 2006. Clark and Casey have this history in common. But the two men seem almost polar opposites in most other ways. Tracing the backgrounds, careers, and philosophies of the pair reveal them to be virtual political antonyms—the yin and yang of Pennsylvania politics.

Consider:

- **Divergent Family Background**—Clark was the quintessential blue blood, coming from a family with roots in the state dating back to the early 19th century. His family hobnobbed with the likes of lawyer/financier Jay Cooke. He attended Harvard as did his dad. He lived a life to the manor born with private country clubs and debutante parties. On the other hand, Casey was the grandson of a coal miner, was reared in a hard scrabble town, and attended Catholic school. One of seven siblings, his early background was solidly middle class, his values solidly middle American, and his politics solidly FDR Democrat.

- **Different Professional Experiences**—Clark’s political skills were honed in an urban setting and the politics of reform. He was the first Philadelphia controller and then mayor before entering the Senate. He and sidekick Richardson Dilworth ushered in the end of the Republican machine in Philadelphia, ironically paving the way for the Democratic machine. Whereas Casey’s formative political experiences were entirely on the state level. The son of a former governor, he served successively as auditor general and treasurer, and seemed likely to fulfill his personal dream of following his father into the governorship.

- **Contrasting Ideologies**—Clark was a liberal in a party dominated by conservatives. Fervently progressive, Clark first fought the corruption that dominated Philadelphia politics and then in the Senate for congressional reform, opposed the much reviled Senate filibuster, supported the landmark Great Society legislation, including civil rights, and was an early and outspoken critic of the Vietnam War. Casey, by contrast, is a social conservative in a party dominated by liberals. While moving in recent months to oppose the war in Iraq, he has not made it his defining issue. And although he criticizes what he calls the "failed policies" of the Bush Administration, his policies are conservative or centrist and his ideology is that of the moderate.

- **Distinct Personal Styles**—Casey by temperament and personality is warm and convivial in private, and generally at ease around ordinary people. Mild mannered and polite, his commonsense decency and unfailing good manners have become a trademark characteristic. He is also comfortable within the Democratic Party, and he genuinely enjoys the company of party regulars. Clark, by contrast,
tended to be smug, diffident, aloof, and at times, arrogant. He was uncomfortable around the poor. While mayor, he once told his driver never again to take him into one of the poor neighborhoods of the city. It offended his patrician sensibilities. And he was combative. His feuds with the leaders of his own party have become the fabric of legends. He fought causes, one after another, until his style and unwillingness to compromise doomed his career.

Where does Clark stand among those who served in the Senate from Pennsylvania? Not the best but certainly not the worst. In fact, Pennsylvania has sent some first-rate rascals to the US Senate. Names like Simon Cameron, Boies Penrose, Matthew Quay, and William Vare comprise a veritable rogue’s galley of senatorial sinners. Cameron typifies the breed. He was Lincoln’s Secretary of War until the Great Emancipator had to fire him to prevent his looting the War Department during the Civil War. Cameron is probably best remembered for his infamous definition of an "honest politician" as "one who, when he is bought, stays bought."

Not that all Pennsylvania US Senators have been scoundrels; far from it. The state has sent some illustrious personages to the US Senate. These include such figures as Robert Morris, known to history as the financier of the American Revolution, Albert Gallatin, Secretary of the Treasury under Jefferson, George Dallas, who served as Vice President under Polk, and David Wilmot, noted abolitionist and author of the Wilmot Proviso.

More recent 20th century primo politicians entering the Senate from Pennsylvania have included Philander Knox, Secretary of State under Taft, James J. Davis, who served as Secretary of Labor under three successive presidents, Hugh Scott, who was Minority Leader during the Watergate Era, Arlen Specter, who has distinguished himself as chair and ranking member of the Judiciary Committee, and Rick Santorum, the number three ranking Republican Senator until his defeat last fall.

Clark clearly belongs in this latter group of distinguished US Senators. Certainly he was no Cameron or Quay; neither was he the equal of a Gallatin, a Wilmot, or even a Scott. Possessed of a first rate mind, but a third rate temperament, Clark achieved far more than most, and far less than he might have.

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