

1 of 1 DOCUMENT

Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN)

April 5, 2000, Wednesday, Metro Edition

See Mark Dayton run - this time for U.S. Senate; His surprise decision suddenly makes the DFL contest a lot more interesting

Doug Grow; Staff Writer

SECTION: NEWS; Doug Grow; Pg. 2B

LENGTH: 801 words

Is Mark Dayton approaching gadfly country?

Dayton surprised just about everyone in Minnesota on Monday when he announced that he will seek the U.S. Senate seat of Republican Rod Grams. He became the ninth DFL candidate shooting for the chance to run against Grams.

His entry into the field drew some gasps, some groans and one great line. Steve Miles, another DFL candidate, had this to say: "He has no political base and appears to be running because he has nothing else to do. He should get a hobby."

Is that it? Has Dayton, 53, become a poor little rich man in need of something to do?

"I have hobbies," Dayton said.

It's not a long list. He's into chess, watching sports (especially college and high-school hockey) and listening to music (especially the Beatles and Rolling Stones). He also works out with weights daily, though he says that's not a hobby because "a hobby should be something you enjoy." Dayton also has a little investment company to run.

So why run again for office? After all, his campaign record is one win, two losses. In his most recent try, the DFL gubernatorial primary in 1998, he finished a dismal fourth.

The question of what makes Dayton run is intriguing because he would seem to have a dream life. He has a magic name in Minnesota. He has more money than he ever could spend. Why would he mess up the dream by getting bruised in politics? Why risk becoming one of those goofy perennial candidates of the Stassen variety?

But consider Dayton's view of his life:

- On the magic name: "Read the stories in the newspapers yesterday. I'm Mark Dayton The Department Store Heir. It's like an appendage to my name. I'm 53 years old. I have a career, a life in public service. Yet, that's my moniker. There's this sense, 'Here's the rich man looking for something to do.' "

- On wealth _ and happiness: "There's this illusion if you have material wealth, your life must be happy and easy. I know that isn't true. On the other hand, as Jesse Jackson says, there's learning by burning. I believe I have gained in experience; maybe I've even come to some wisdom."

- On risking wearing the gadfly label: "This is my fourth race in 20 years. I'm not somebody who runs each election

See Mark Dayton run - this time for U.S. Senate; His surprise decision suddenly makes the DFL contest a lot more interesting Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN) April 5, 2000, Wednesday, Metro Edition

_ I pick my time with great care. I wouldn't do this if I thought I'd worn out my welcome. But this could be my last chance to be taken seriously."

Dayton's an open man. For example, ask most politicians why they're running a race, and they'll fill the air with pomposity.

Dayton bluntly says that if he'd saved his second marriage, to Janice Haarstick, he'd still be working on the couple's beef farm in Goodhue County.

"Until the end of January, my first priority was to save the marriage," Dayton said.

He interrupted himself with a laugh.

"I was like one of those beef cattle," he continued. "You're treated well. You're fed everything you could want. Life is good, and then, one day, they show up with a truck and haul you down the road. That's when you know you're in deep manure."

With his marriage over, and his sons from his first marriage no longer in need of a father/hockey coach, Dayton said he decided there was nothing to prevent him from a Senate run.

Those observations fuel Miles' crack that Dayton is in need of a hobby. It's almost as if, on whim, Dayton woke up and decided to spend a few million dollars on a Senate race.

"I am not a whimsical man," Dayton said.

He is an intense worker and extremely competitive. And, according to the political pros, he has to be taken seriously because he has money and a strong belief in his ideas, which will tend to be the most radical in the DFL field.

Dayton's entrance suddenly makes the race a lot more interesting, in part because his name makes him a celebrity.

But he's also interesting because, unlike many pols, he can laugh at himself _ just a little. For example, he talks of growing up in a Republican household.

"Politics wasn't a major subject around our dinner table," Dayton said. "I once asked my father, 'What's a Democrat?' He didn't know, either. We had to look it up in the dictionary."

And unlike many pols, he appears to be driven by convictions as much as ambition. He became radicalized at Yale in the 1960s and was educated to a world he'd never known when he went off to teach in poor schools in New York City.

"That taught me the difference between the haves and have-nots," Dayton said. "I realized, through circumstances of birth, that these kids were given so few opportunities, while I was given so many. I've believed in public service ever since."

So he's taking another run, likely his last run before gadfly country.

LOAD-DATE: April 5, 2000

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

GRAPHIC: PHOTO