Thoughts While Shaving

By Mel Lavine

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Mitt Romney's trip over his tongue at a private fund-raiser demeaning half the country is by no means a rare blunder in presidential campaigns. In last Friday's New York Times John Harwood reminded us of gaffes in the past. Among them:

Senator John Kerry's blooper in 2004 when he said "I actually did vote for the $87 billion, before I voted against it." The Democratic standard-bearer was talking about money to pay for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The comment enabled George W. Bush's campaign to define him as untrustworthy.

Citing an emotionless response of Gov. Michael S. Dukakis in 1988 to a speculative situation in which his wife was raped and murdered. Harwood noted, it "fixed Mr. Dukakis's image as a government technocrat at odds with most Americans on the high-voltage issue of crime and

punishment."

In 1980, as the Republican candidate, Ronald Reagan declared, "Approximately 80 percent of air pollution stems from hydrocarbons released by vegetation." Democrats, as Harwood reminded us, seized on the statement to caricature Reagan "as a know-nothing, extremist, retired actor." But times were hard, Iran was holding American hostages, and a desire for change was stirring in the wind. When Jimmy Carter battled Reagan in debate, Reagan blew him away with the reply, "There you go again."

In 1968, Mitt Romney's father was running for the Republican nomination against Richard Nixon, and famously said, "When I came back from Vietnam I just had the greatest brainwashing anybody can get." He made the statement in the summer of 1967 about his talks with high-ranking American diplomats and generals on the progress of the war in Vietnam. The words came back to haunt him and he gave up the challenge to Nixon.

In today's high tech environment it is surprising to learn of a prominent politician who is not wary of hidden cameras and live mikes. His father's gaffe made a deep impression on Mitt Romney. In his unsuccessful run for the Republican nomination in 2008, Harwood quotes the younger Romney as saying his father's experience was "probably not that applicable today" because candidates were more aware of the pitfalls.

In 2007, Mitt Romney told the Times, "Running for president in the You-Tube era, you realize

you have to be very judicious in what you say. You have to be careful with your humor. You have to recognize that anytime you're running for the presidency of the United States, you're on."

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