

Date: SUN, 5/3/1987  
Section: METRO  
Page: B1  
Edition: HOME  
Memo:  
Corrections:  
Origin: JIM BOREN Bee politics writer  
Dateline:

Headline: MADDY HAS THE MARKETABILITY, BUT DOES HE HAVE THE  
MOTIVATION?

Body Text:

When the political kingmakers put together their list of the state's top Republican candidates, state Sen. Kenneth L. Maddy gets plenty of attention.

The Fresno Republican first earned statewide respect during an unsuccessful but well-received run for governor in 1978. He has stayed among the GOP elite by honing a reputation as a solid legislator who knows how to get things done in the tricky world of Sacramento politics.

But today, while Maddy remains near the top of the GOP list, one thing has changed. After questioning himself deep inside, Maddy says he may no longer have the obsession to run statewide.

Although he won't close the door on a statewide candidacy, Maddy candidly admits that he is not sure if he has the "fire in the belly" needed to push him up and down the state for a year or more meeting voters and asking big contributors for money.

Maddy's movie star good looks and quick wit have always charmed voters, while political consultants would love to get the chance to market his charisma in 30-second television spots.

But he almost teases those who would like to see him run for higher office. Each time it appears that Maddy might make another statewide run, he pulls back. The timing isn't right, he would say, or other commitments prevent him from putting all his energy into a run for statewide office. But with candidates already talking about the 1990 campaign, Maddy's political instincts have him doping out the possible seats and potential opponents. If the timing is right, he said again the other day, he just may go for it.

At age 52, with 17 years as a legislator behind him and opportunities for higher office ahead, Maddy is like the reluctant bridegroom who can't quite make that final commitment.

"There was a time when I was really consumed by my political career and what was happening in Sacramento," Maddy said in an interview. "It was a factor in the ending of

my first marriage and was a difficult time in my life. My children were growing up and I did not give that as high a priority as I would have liked."

Maddy said that at 52 he has finally put politics in perspective. His marriage in 1981 to Norma Foster, the widow of Foster Farms President Paul Foster, was a turning point.

"There is a great deal more to our lives now," said Maddy. "The question is how much of your life you want to give up to run for higher office."

Norma Maddy says if her husband wants to seek statewide office, she would encourage him.

"Of course timing is everything in politics and you have to be at the right place at the right time," she said. "One of his strengths is that he understands that everything doesn't have to happen today. I wouldn't discourage a run for governor or any other position."

Doug Watts, a former political aide to Gov. Deukmejian and now a Washington lobbyist, believes that Maddy is the "most marketable" candidate the GOP can look to in California. But he admits that Maddy needs encouragement to run.

"He takes more motivation than your garden variety politicians who generally take themselves way too seriously," said Watts, who helped run Maddy's 1978 gubernatorial campaign. "He is not so presumptuous to think that the world is clamoring for him as a candidate."

Watts said he thinks Maddy would run if he had a cause to rally around. In the 1978 campaign, Maddy's support base was California agriculture, which believed it was being victimized by Gov. Jerry Brown and the farmworker movement.

"There is no doubt that he has the necessary resources and currency to be a major player for any office he chooses," Watts said. "The question is whether he has that fire in the belly to be successful in today's political environment."

But Watts is sold on Maddy's political future, saying that the Fresno Republican is the only candidate whose campaign he would return to California to run.

Marvin Baxter, a Fresno attorney who now serves as Gov. Deukmejian's appointments secretary, called Maddy one of the brightest stars in the state Senate.

"He has all the attributes that one would hope for to be successful as a statewide candidate," said Baxter. "His philosophy on issues is mainstream and he has the charisma and energy needed to succeed. He makes an excellent impression as a candidate."

Maddy's ability to draw votes was displayed in the 1978 Republican governor's race when he came out of nowhere to finish a strong third behind nominee Evelle Younger and former Los Angeles Police Chief Ed Davis and well ahead of Pete Wilson, now a U.S. senator.

Maddy polled almost a half-million votes despite coming out against Proposition 13, which passed overwhelmingly, and his admission during the campaign that he had once experimented with marijuana.

Even though Maddy has been reluctant to run statewide, he has been a major force in the state Senate's Republican caucus. He said he has enough votes lined up to pull off a Republican leadership coup after the May 12 special Senate election in Southern California.

Four years ago, Maddy, GOP caucus chairman at the time, and Minority Leader William Campbell were the victims of a similar coup led by GOP conservatives. A sign of Maddy's ability to play politics is that this time around he is teaming with conservative GOP Sen. John Doolittle in the ouster move.

While Maddy has jockeyed for the leadership post, he also has been a legislative advocate for the horse-racing industry. Horse racing has been one of his passions since his childhood in Southern California when his mother and father used to take him to the track.

"They were typical \$2 bettors," Maddy said. "We would go to Santa Anita and Hollywood Park on Saturday afternoons for as long as I can remember. I must have been 10 when I started going to the races."

He later got a job at Hollywood Park walking horses after their workouts and then he became a groom. The family lived in Inglewood and Maddy rode a motor scooter to his job at the track.

Now Maddy carries legislation for the horse racing industry and plays the horses every chance he gets. He regularly attends the Kentucky Derby and he and Norma were at Churchill Downs Saturday for the 113th running of the Derby.

Norma Maddy said she never really got to know her husband until the first time he took her to the races at Santa Anita.

"He really opened up," she chuckled. "Ken was in his element."

Racing pictures dominate the art in his Capitol office and a plaque on the wall lets visitors know Maddy was the California Derby Club's Man of the Year for 1986.

On a recent day in Sacramento, Maddy was scurrying around meeting with lobbyists for the racing industry and appearing at hearings to ask for positive votes on a number of racing bills that he is carrying this session.

Maddy has owned race horses, going broke on the first nag that he and his mother bought a number of years ago. The ranch east of Modesto where Norma and Ken Maddy spend most of their time has facilities for horses.

While Maddy clearly is a respected legislator in a number of areas, including the health field and agriculture, one of his legislative colleagues suggested that Maddy may no longer have the drive that he once had because of the comfortable lifestyle that he has attained.

Maddy admits that he is comfortable with his station in life, but he said that has more to do with his political stability than his lifestyle.

"I have not been struggling like I did the first few years to get re-elected," he said. "I'm in a comfortable position here in the Senate and whether I have a leadership position or not, I think I'm generally well accepted.

"In terms of my private life, I'm comfortable in what I do. It is quality time that I spend with my wife and family. All of that does put you in a position where it is much more difficult to take a chance. You begin to get into a routine or pace."

When Maddy was first elected to the Assembly in 1970, he pointed out that he represented an overwhelmingly Democratic district.

"My pace was so fast and I was so consumed with the Legislature that it was natural to think about going up -- working to get into a better position. I did not have to speed up when I ran for governor in 1978 because I was already in that kind of a fast pace."

His pace would have to pick up if he made another run for governor, he admitted.

At first, Norma Maddy was a little uncomfortable with her role as a political wife. She didn't realize that many people believe a politician is public property.

"The most difficult thing I had to overcome was sharing him with the public," she said. "I also wasn't used to walking a step-and-a-half behind the man I'm with when we entered a room. People would be crawling over me to get to him."

But she said her husband quickly understood the problem and made sure "to protect me."

Norma Maddy has moved into the political field herself, being named by the governor to the highly publicized state task force on self-esteem.

Norma Maddy's wealth has been a sensitive issue for the senator to deal with. It has been neutralized to some extent by Maddy's high public profile.

"I think it helps that I am a senator," Maddy said. "It is a nice counterbalance to her wealth and position. It offsets the fact that I'm married to a wealthy woman."

That may be one reason that Maddy would be reluctant to give up his seat for a long shot bid for statewide office.

"It would be difficult moving from the very good position of being a senator," Maddy said. "It would be easy to stay a senator along with my outside life and be very fulfilled."

Asked what he would do if he left politics, Maddy said he could return to law practice or he would consider seeking a judicial appointment.

"I can see a number of things as my life progresses," he said. "But this job is still fun and exciting."