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A Name Is Familiar, The Face, Less So

By JENNIFER STEINHAUER

PHOENIX — Ben Quayle was born two days after his father, Dan, was first elected to Congress, and remembers well tossing a football with him on Capitol Hill between votes. He could have lived without the constant ribbing of his family — particularly the whole potato thing — but his memories of Washington are largely gauzy and pleasant.

Since his father, who served as vice president under President George Bush, exited the scene in 1993, the younger Mr. Quayle's life has been clearly apolitical — he hasn't even voted in local elections since he registered here in 1997. But now he is getting into his father's old game.

"It was time for me to stop yelling at the TV," said Mr. Quayle, 33, in an interview at a cafe here, "and throw my hat in the ring."

Who hasn't? The Republican primary contest in the Third Congressional District in this largely wealthy swath of northern Phoenix captures both the fluky quality of primary races in Arizona — in which independents can vote — as well as the everybody-in-the-pool nature of politics this year, with a procession of candidates caught up in a populist backlash.

The delicious chance to sup on a rare open Congressional seat emerged in January, when Representative John Shadegg, an eight-term Republican, made a surprise announcement that he would not seek re-election. So far there are eight Republicans in that party's primary; on the Democratic side there is one candidate. The district has a heavy Republican majority and a history of electing Republicans; in 2008, Mr. Shadegg defeated his Democratic opponent by 12 percentage points.

Mr. Quayle has the most famous name, at least among voters of a certain age. But he faces other candidates with notable biographies, including Vernon Parker, who grew up in poverty in California, rose to become the first black mayor of his almost all-white town and has the endorsement of the tough-on-illegal-immigrants Sheriff Joe Arpaio. Mr. Parker would be the only black Republican congressman if elected.

Many of the candidates seem to know each other. "Vernon has been a good friend," said one of them, Jim Waring, a term-limited state lawmaker, about Mr. Parker. "We've socialized. Sometimes in primaries you run against people you really like."

Mr. Quayle is the exception. "I can tell you I never heard of him," said Pamela Gorman, a conservative state lawmaker who recently quit to run for the seat. "I wasn't



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Ben Quayle, left, got an early introduction to politics. In 1988, his family was photographed with Vice President George Bush, who was running for president, at the vice-presidential residence. Dan Quayle, third from left, was Mr. Bush's running mate.



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Mr. Quayle, now 33, is running for the House. Among his primary opponents is Vernon Parker, below. In all, there are eight Republicans seeking the nomination for the open seat.



entirely sure he even lived in Arizona. All we could look up was his public records. So now we know his first name is Ben and he passed the bar a year or so ago and he hasn't voted."

If his first name is not one on lips of his competitors, Mr.

Quayle said, it is because he has been busy with his business, a small investment firm. They will hear more from him soon, he said. "I think people realize that I have to go out and prove myself," he said.

"I think a lot of people can see

In Arizona, a second-generation Quayle seeks office.

themselves in me," he added, "having gone through a period in their lives when they were focused on building their careers and were not as involved as they should be."

But his interest in the job, he said, is real — and possibly even congenial. "The honor of public service was instilled in me at a young age," he said. A childhood in Washington was all he really knew. "It was my life," he said, "it was difficult at the center of attention but all in all it was a great experience." So he toyed, he mullied, he decided to take the leap.

Still, it was his father who took it upon himself to announce his son's intentions during an interview with Fox News a few weeks ago, something the younger Mr. Quayle learned about only when his phone began to vibrate madly during a meeting. "I know he was just being a proud father," Mr. Quayle said. "But he did go off message."

Mr. Quayle said his politics were very similar to those of his father, though he said he was "even more free market" than the former vice president was.

Mr. Parker's road to the primary was very different. The mayor of Paradise Valley, a suburb of Phoenix, Mr. Parker, 50, was born in Houston to a poor mother who turned him over to his grandmother, who was herself living in an impoverished area of Long Beach, Calif.

After graduating from college and buying a small home, he sold it and used the proceeds — and money from his grandmother, who cleaned homes — to go to Georgetown Law School. "I bought a one-way ticket to Washington," Mr. Parker said. "Because failure was not an option." He met his wife, an Arizonan, there.

A childhood lived among drug users and multigenerational public housing residents formed his vision, and a chance meeting with Lee Atwater, who was a Republican strategist, his politics. "I know people who've been so dependent on the government that they still find themselves in a trap — and that is the trust fund they have handed down to their children," said Mr. Parker, whose he-can't-be-50 face smiles warmly.

It is all something Mr. Parker's family has had trouble abiding. "I'm not sure any of them would vote for me," he said. He was advised against running for mayor in 2003 in Paradise Valley, which is nearly all white, because, he said one person told him euphemistically, he was "tall." He won with 67 percent of the vote.

The interesting crosscurrents in the contest are seemingly endless. Mr. Parker appears to enjoy support from the same people getting behind former Representative J. D. Hayworth, who is challenging Senator John McCain in the Republican primary with a hard right elbow to the ribs.

"I love J. D. and Vernon," said Barbara Espinosa, who was attending a recent rally for Mr. Hayworth here. "He's calm, he's collected and he's conservative. I know Vernon Parker. I don't know Ben Quayle."