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A Viewer's Guide to the John W Sweezy Archives

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A Viewer's Guide to the John W Sweezy Archives

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Welcome the JWS Archives. You are about to meet over a hundred politically active Indianapolis residents who shared a common experience: a friendship with John W Sweezy (JWS). John, best remembered for his twenty seven years of service as chairman of the Marion County Republican Central Committee (MCRCC), was a friend, mentor, and leader who shaped our lives as we together shaped Indianapolis from the 1960's through the 2000's.

The recordings that make up this archive were created mainly in the years between 2016 and 2019 by a volunteer group chaired by Tom Krudy and Bruce Melchert. The general format of each interview was to invite an individual who had enjoyed the opportunity to interact with JWS, and to talk about that interviewee's experiences and opinions. Because each interviewee played a distinct role in the affairs of the county, state, and party, an attempt was always made to allow open ended answers and to encourage personal recollections. You will quickly note that the interviewers used some obvious, common questions to encourage responses and discussion. Each interviewee has given permission for you to view and quote, in context, from their remarks.

We are very fortunate to have the partnership and support of the University of Indianapolis. Staff and students of the institution have long shown an interest in the history of the Unigov era, and the University offers other important resources including the mayoral archives of Richard Lugar and William Hudnut. The time, resources, and creativity that students, faculty, and staff have brought to this project were essential to its success.

We are also very grateful to the individuals who contributed financially to the project. A list of their names is attached with our grateful thanks. In seeking their support we stressed our intention to review John's political career, looking particularly at his remarkable management skills and the ways he applied them to politics and government.

Our context. As a reader/viewer you are, of course, free to bring your own memories and insights to our archive. If you are wondering what memories and insights influenced our views, here are some suggestions to keep in mind:

- 1) A viable Republican organization. Most campaigns in the 21st century are candidate oriented. Candidates, of course, run on party labels, normally Democrat or Republican. But most candidates today strive to build a strong personal element into their campaigns, treating the party organization as at most an adjunct to their own campaign plan. The Sweezy years represent an alternative approach in which a strong GOP organization, which existed independent of any single candidate, supported a ticket of candidates from the most to the least visible offices. To accomplish this required a team of participants, primarily volunteers, that worked together to accomplish the varied responsibilities of each campaign. JWS was the manager of that team.

- 2) A strong community focus. Candidates and office holders come and go. The Marion County community is enduring. While it was perfectly possible to build an individual career within the organization, there was a strong sense among participants that they were building a community that would endure after them. Good streets, good public buildings, good neighborhoods, good economic climate, and other such desirable features were much in the minds of organization members. They wanted Indianapolis to be a Silver Buckle on the Rust Best.
- 3) A spirit of party competition. It was a period of political realignment. Some important traditional constituencies left both parties, while other new supporters joined them. At many levels, from basic bread and butter issues to academically complex philosophical positions, both parties debated within themselves and against one another. The desire to build a winning combination, in both primary and general elections, assured that this was an ongoing process. While we did not always like what commentators said about us in the media, we were fortunate to have an active Indianapolis media market in which we vigorously participated. Many of our interviewees will also appear in the indexes of local newspapers and electronic outlets.
- 4) A multitude of jurisdictions. Local government in Indiana has been two centuries in the makings. We began in 1816 by establishing two major units: counties and townships. The former were responsible for law, public health and tax collection, and were supervised by such officers as sheriff, coroner, treasurer, surveyor, and clerk. The latter were charged with duties of education and poor relief, and supervising trustees and assessors were added. The growth of cities such as Indianapolis as centers of economic activity and population in the 19th century added urban mayor/council governments. The "old city", divided into numbered wards, eventually encompassed nearly all of Center Township, and portions of the adjoining townships. Eventually Beech Grove, Lawrence, Speedway, and Southport obtained city governments. The creation of Unigov after 1966 created a new municipal structure that replaced the old city government and extended its boundaries to the county line. Separate school corporations roughly overlapped the old civil cities, and due to issues of desegregation were under Federal Court supervision. Congressmen were elected in congressional districts. There was normally one such district wholly within Marion County and portions of another during most of JWS's tenure. The state legislature was responsible for drawing U S district and state legislative boundaries.
- 5) Frequency of elections and large numbers of elective offices. Any office subject to legislative apportionment could see its boundaries change in response to new census data, and a particular precinct might find itself voting for specific individuals different from its neighbors. Understanding "ballot combinations" became a matter of great clerical care, as it was not uncommon to see over a hundred such combinations

(township, city, district and so forth) in one year. Our printer, Jim Bredensteiner, became a frequent visitor to headquarters each year as we prepared sample ballots and supply distributions.

- 6) Although much of their work was informal, the GOP relied heavily upon several key individuals in the city and county offices who worked to recognize and resolve issues where jurisdictions were unclear or where overlap required cooperation. All of us were grateful for the Mayor's Action Center and its longtime head, Lynn Druding, who served as a very effective clearing house and referral system. We were fortunate that the Mayor's Office maintained an internship program, which served as the launching pad for the political careers of a number of our interviewees.
- 7) John's remarkable management skills. The years of his chairmanship were, more so than many, years of profound change in political practices. Whether your focus is party finance, computer improvements, public perception and opinion, social media, or legal requirements, the differences between 1972 (when JWS became party chair) and 1999 (when he passed the torch) are immense. The change from party to candidate as a focus of political interests is dramatic. Time and again those changes required the GOP to adapt, innovate, grow, and change. John's mastery of the dynamics of politics and his ability to maintain winning ways in the face of these often hostile challenges deserves attention and respect.

Suggested reading: If you would like to explore this area, there is a very good scholarly introduction, Governing Metropolitan Indianapolis, The Politics of Unigov by C. James Owen and York Wilbern (University of California Press, 1985). The authors, both at Indiana University, built the study upon the complexities of crafting the legislative act that created a partial merger of city and county government. They offer a good look at the pre-Unigov old city, the complexity of local jurisdictions, and the various levels of public involvement. They explore the operation of the new mayor-council system, and provide very useful maps and charts.

Community Context. It is a very good idea to keep in mind the old adage that "You are where you were when you were there". Each person interviewed on our tapes was asked to identify when and where they encountered the MCRCC. You will find that a number of different paths brought participants to the party. Some were pursuing government careers, others were seeking volunteer opportunities. All shared a desire to live, and pursue their careers in Indianapolis.

You should not overlook the contexts of their lives.

- Many were veterans, often with service in World War Two or Korea. Some had seen combat, all had seen the administrative and command structures of the armed forces. Many transferred their skills in administration, finance, leadership, or technical areas to their peacetime work. They knew the stark choices offered by the dictatorships of

Japan, Germany, and the Soviet Union , and were often very attentive to assure that their actions reflected the American alternatives of the time.

- All were voters who had been called upon to evaluate the choices offered by the two major parties. Names such as Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy were familiar. Our participants had watched the performance of elected officials in crisis situations and made judgments, often very good or very harsh, about what they saw. As one example, a substantial number served during or after the Korean War, and had feelings about the conduct of that war as strong as later generations had about Vietnam or the Middle East.
- Many were college educated, and all had experienced the debates over political ideals and philosophies that were a common feature of electoral politics. Terms such as “liberal” and “conservative” had serious meaning. And this meaning was in the context of the newspaper and academic debates of midcentury America. Many of our interviewees would have styled themselves as being somewhere on the right of the political spectrum of that era. All had read Sen Barry Goldwater’s “Conscience of a Conservative” and saw it as one of the starting points of political discourse. Many had themselves written and spoken extensively on issues of party program and philosophy. They had great respect for thoughtful individuals such as Richard Lugar who addressed the meaning of conservatism in an urban context.
- Most were young adults when they made their political decisions, and they were facing the concerns that young adults always face. Marriage, family, schools for children, and the start of careers all imposed demands upon scarce resources such as money and time. Today one of the favorite interpretive tools we use is to categorize people by date of birth into generations. Most of our interviewees are from the Greatest Generation, the Silent Generation, or the Baby Boom Generation. You may judge from their remarks to what extent they reflect the generalizations often put forth about these categories.
- The respondents are a mix of lifelong Indianapolis residents and newer arrivals who moved to the city to build families and careers. The lifelong residents had personal memories of the pre-Unigov political world, the newer arrivals heard many tales and stories from the old settlers. Central to those stories were two main tales. The first was the history of the party in the 1950s and early 1960s under its long-time leader, H. Dale Brown. The second was the story of the political transformation effected by the Republican Action Committee which contained a number of strong, interesting personalities and was led by L Keith Bulen.
- The Marion County connection also is a reminder that a number of the organization’s members were from long established local families. Faye Mowery, for example , was a niece of Lewis Shank, Mayor in the 1920s who actively battled the KKK. Other showed

their background in that particular form of questioning humor that is often called “Hoosier skeptical”. Read Rex Early’s delightful memoirs if you’d like to see a sample. Still others manifested their connections by support for local historical and social associations. The Lilly family’s quest for an Acropolitan Center (a cultural node along White River) was carried on for some time by the Lilly Endowment. To step into the party in the 1960s was thus to step into both the past and the future.

- Many of the interviews you are viewing are highly anecdotal. Our participants retain vivid memories of people, images, events or defining moments that entertain, inform, and/or embody defining moments of their involvement in the political process. They thus remind us that the process owed much to individual initiative, personality, and conviction – and often was intensely local and personal. JWS was found of saying the “votes are put on the back of the machine one at a time.”
- Be sure to consider the organization activities of our participants. Part of the success of the Marion County GOP lay in its ability to recruit volunteers for a host of duties: precinct election boards, precinct committeemen, ward chairmen, township club officers and members, and the like. As a skilled manager, JWS accorded special status to individuals at the top of the pyramid, such as township and financial chairmen. Their skills stand out in many interviews.
- Remember, too, that MCRCC was active in supporting campaigns for nearly a hundred elective offices ranging from highly visible names at the top of the ticket, down to far less visible posts such as township advisory boards. Most of our interviewees ran for, held, or served on a campaign committee for these candidates. All were regularly asked to contribute financially to the GOP team.
- And don’t forget to consider the questions of electoral behavior. Marion County voters always showed a mix of loyalty and independence that made every campaign interesting and left the results in doubt until the votes were counted on election night. You will find many interesting tales of the ways we studied the electorate (including door to door canvassing, focus groups, opinion polling, and interest group input); the ways we contacted them (through earned and paid media); and ways we mobilized our voters (which we often called GOTV, or get-out-the-vote). The computer made its first appearance in the middle 1980s, the internet a decade later; and we tried to be responsive to both. But it was still an age when mail delivered by USPS and news delivered by local radio and television stations was important. It was an initiation rite for every new headquarters worker to send them to the Bulk Mail Acceptance Unit (BMAU) at the central post office with a tray of mail.

A personal take on the story.

It is a common paradigm of midwestern analysis to begin with some variation upon the “rust belt.” This posited that the middle western states were an essentially industrial economy that was striving to survive in a post-industrial world. Among the features you would highlight would be such things as:

- The struggle to maintain the automobile. Your focus would include such subheadings as foreign competition, interstate highways, labor, safety, and new technologies. Your urban models would include Detroit and Flint.
- The death of steel. Your focus would include trucks replacing railroads, the problems of Amtrack and Conrail, the challenges of sulfur emissions, and the great sucking sound as the population and investments moved south. Your urban models would include Youngstown and Gary.
- The decline of the Great Lakes. Your focus would include the rise and fall of the St. Lawrence Seaway, the pollution in all its forms in the lakes, and our cross-border problems such as the enforcement of NAFTA. Your urban models would include Buffalo and Escanaba.
- The central city as a central problem. Your focus would be upon issues of race, crime, white flight, educational quality, housing, immigration, and quality of life in general. Your urban models would include East St. Louis and Cleveland.
- The “demography is destiny” theme. Your focus would be upon issues documented in the Federal Census, including rural depopulation, Sun Belt migration by the elderly and the educated, changing immigration patterns and loss of Congressional clout after every reapportionment.
- The inevitable “blame game” especially at election time as party and interest group leaders sought to shift blame for any loss upon someone else. Your urban models would surely include Chicago, and one writer that you would inevitably quote would be Mike Royko. His book, Boss, was probably the most widely read of any midwestern account, and was a favorite topic of party discussions for many years.

But appealing and popular as these approaches are, they do not work terribly well in central Indiana. You can, of course, find evidence of “rust belt” problems. Topics such as the disappearance of our automobile supply plants, the problems of the Indianapolis Public Schools, and the local appeal of the Rev. Jim Jones were all well covered in the media. But if you want to make sense of Indianapolis you would better apply a “creative response” paradigm. In many areas civic leaders spent considerable energy and resources, and enjoyed considerable success in developing and implementing workable urban answers. You do not have to go to the extreme of some local boosters, who called the city a “silver buckle on the rust belt” to identify and admire stories of urban achievement. Here are some areas to keep your eye on:

- Remarkable strides in higher education. A group of Univov leaders in the 1960s became convinced that a major city required a major public university. While both Purdue and IU maintained extension programs in Indianapolis, only some underfunded private colleges were based here. Beginning in 1966 the creation and growth of IUPUI provided

growing numbers of local residents with college opportunities. We owe a great debt to the university of Indianapolis for its activities including the mayoral archives and this project.

- A revitalized downtown. Every local booster begins his story with an article written by John Gunther in 1947 where he described a visit to Indy's Union Station where he saw a drab, depopulating, trash-strewn city; many local residents recall the days when fumes from local factories dominated the environment. (See Rob Schneider's excellent article "Unflattering appraisal galvanized Circle City to clean up its image" in the Star, December 25, 1999.) The people you will encounter on these tapes, and the community leaders they supported, made revitalization a high priority. New high rise buildings created a new skyline, new professional sports facilities (and a new football team) helped energize evening hours, and new cultural institutions were soon breeding a host of alternatives.
- Neighborhood revitalizations. Starting with yard parks initiative in the 1950s, Indianapolis has seen remarkable revitalization of its housing stock. The Unigov leaders put strong emphasis upon a number of initiatives including historic districts, community policing, and sewer/storm water renewal. The Mayor's Action Center became a center for gaining community assistance when needed, as well as allowing every Republican organization member to know that he had a way of responding to his neighborhood's problems.
- Improved infrastructure. Many of the achievements of the Unigov years were things you did not see, or just assumed would be there. Actually they often took a lot of work. Many visible achievements, such as suburban construction, were only possible because new sewers (such as the West 38th Street connector) or paved streets (replacing over a hundred miles of crushed stone roads) were provided (to developing areas in all of the "outside" townships).
- Public/private partnerships. Government money was often very scarce, subject to funding formulas created by the state legislature and dependent upon a local demographic base . You could talk about new professional sports teams or a new airport, but you needed to be sure you sufficient people willing to fill stadiums or airplanes. It was often necessary to seek innovative means to involve private investment. The negotiations were often complex and required active involvement of party members.
- Tourism and heritage investment. Convention centers and sports venues often target the traveler, and tourist attractions from the Speedway to the historic districts required responses to issues as varied as building codes and Sunday llquor sales. A number of city commissions played a hand in this.

One note that you will often hear repeated on the tapes is the sense of many interviewees that they were part of a dramatic transformation that set Indianapolis apart from its competing cities. This, of course, requires that we think about what the proper points of comparison are.

One possibility is to put the city on a list of state capitals. It was a common 19th century practice to place the state capital not in the largest city but rather close to the center of

the state's rural population. Thus, Harrisburg and not Philadelphia, Columbus and not Cincinnati or Cleveland, Springfield and not Chicago, and Jefferson City rather than St Louis. Indiana has no larger city, but our center of the state placement would surely qualify us. Another possibility is to put us in competition with the industrial, railroad cities that boomed after the Civil War. When our Chamber of Commerce was formed in 1890 it declared that it wanted to bring "Chicago snap" to the White River. A third possibility is to put us in competition with sports rivals. By looking at the divisions in which the Colts, the Pacers, or the baseball Indians play you can gain a sense of regional audience base. What all have in common is a sense that participants saw themselves in competition to become a leading city. The Unigov movement certainly falls within this discourse.

The Wall Street Journal did a very revealing piece on this subject in their July 14, 1982 issue in a front page article, "Star of the Snow Belt." The article nicely summarized the successes of the Unigov leadership. The author, Frederick C. Klein, also explored the distinctively Hoosier features of the system, including its response to the literary roots and mindset of the old elites of the city.

The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis (1993) contained entries on Indianapolis Politics and the local Republican Party. In these I sought to summarize my views on local party history. I called attention to the differing bases of support that the GOP had developed, upon the important leaders who have articulated the party's defining issues, and upon the sources of the periodic reorganizations that have taken place. I was influenced by the concept of political realignment which was coming much in vogue. I was particularly alert to the diversity of the party's support base, and to the insistence that GOP voters have consistently shown in expecting effective and responsible government. I sought to identify important leaders who had led the party, and the particular skills they showed in seeking to build winning coalitions. And I gave recognition to JWS for his skill in managing those very diverse elements.

Students of political history have long been troubled by the problem of where to locate the great changes of politics: at the top, or at the bottom. The former view draws our attention to leadership, and leadership decisions (or the lack of them). The latter invites us to consider the behavior of our mass electorate and to observe the often powerful constraints they impose upon leaders and their options.

Looked at from the bottom up, for example, Marion County showed a number of changes after 1966 that have gradually made themselves in the GOP. Many of these changes are easily documented from data in each decennial Census, and most have affected the GOP.

The most obvious, or at least the most commonly mentioned, has been the suburban migration that is so often and so inaccurately called "white flight." The eight outlying townships of Marion County, and the immediate surrounding counties have indeed experienced substantial shifts in population as residents who were once content to live in or near Center Township have voted with their feet for the farther suburbs. Carmel and

Greenwood, Fishers and Zionsville and others have become metaphors for the outward migration.

No one factor offers a full explanation of this migration, but several factors clearly deserve mention – if only because of their effect upon the GOP. One factor, obviously, is the simple fact of aging in Marion County’s housing stock, and the resulting desire (eagerly fueled by suburban developers and realtors) for state-of-the-art housing. Another, undoubtedly, is the complex of attitudes that accompany African American in-migration – from crime to schools. A third is the changing economic character of Marion County as it wrestles with problems of the “frost” or the “rust” belts.

JWS himself: some introductory biographies.

Many biographers begin with the subject’s obituary. Here is what was said in John’s:

John William Sweezy passed away on November 21st 2017 at the age of 85. He was considered to be the greatest County Chairman to have graced the position, serving as Marion County Chairman for more than 28 years beginning in 1972. Except for 1974 during the Nixon debacle, under his direction the Republican Party never lost an election in Marion county during the time, a feat that will probably never be duplicated. He was born to William (Bill) and Zuma Sweezy on November 14th, 1932, the third child out of three with older brother Byron and oldest sister Evelyn. He graduated from Franklin Central H. S. in 1950. He joined the Army and was on his way to Korea when the war ended returning home and finishing his service in 1953. He decided to go to Purdue University and earned a degree in Mechanical Engineering. It was during this time that he met the love of his life, Carole Harman. After he graduated from Purdue in 1956, they were married and moved to Bloomington, Indiana, where he enrolled at Indiana University and earned an MBA. During this time they started their family John Jr and Brad. He was involved heavily in the Young Republican organizations at both IU and Purdue, becoming regional chairman during his college years. After college they moved to Indianapolis where he became active in politics serving as precinct committeeman, ward chairman, township chairman, district chairman, and eventually County chairman. He was a delegate to every state convention from 1956 until his retirement in 2000. He was chairman of the Warren Township GOP club, Warren Screening committee and the first chairman of the National Association of Urban Republican County Chairmen. Along the way he first worked at Allison transmission as a design engineer, then at Indianapolis Power and Light as an engineer until becoming the first director of Public Works under Richard Lugar and Unigov. He was a life member of Mensa, Board of Directors of the Humane Society, 32nd degree Mason Scottish Rite, York Rite, and the Royal Arch.

William (Bill) Mercuri, served as a highly respected municipal court judge, and was very active in GOP activities. He prepared a very thoughtful history of the Sweezy years (a copy of which

will be placed in the U of I Archives). In his unpublished manuscript he, offered this introduction:

John Sweezy was both on November 14th, 1932 in Indianapolis. With the exception of service in the U. S. Army and while seeking his education, he has been a resident of the city every since.

John is the son of a man who knew the value of hard work and dedication – something John has taken as a part of his own life. Sweezy received his education by working at available opportunity, attending night classes at Indiana Central College and Butler University in Indianapolis and at the University of Georgia, Columbus, Georgia while in the Army. He received his Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering from Purdue University in 1956, and a Master of Business Administration from Indiana University in 1958. As an example of how well John was and is held by his peers in this profession, he was elected to membership in the Honor Society of Sigma Iota Epsilon: the highest honor available in the Management Profession.

While in college, he was also active in the Student Senate, the International Association, DeMolay Club, and the College Young Republicans. John excelled at his Republican work even then, rising to become Region 5 Young Republican Collegiate Chairman in 1956 while at Purdue University. John Sweezy has earned the admiration and respect of the leadership of the Marion County Republican Organization, through his endless hours of service. He is best known for being an expert in the nuts-and-bolts nitty-gritty of winning organizational politics. He is first, last, and always an “organization man”. To John Sweezy the word “Patronage” means good government; it means qualified Republicans in positions of respect and authority wherever possible. The present Marion County Republican Organization began to get off the ground in 1966, and John Sweezy was active then as one of the founder-organizers. In those days the small but efficient organization was known as the Republican Action Committee. John took an active part in the Primary of that year in several areas. To refresh memories, the RAC swept the Primary elections that year, and in May elected L. Keith Bulen to his first term as County Chairman.

The Fall of 1966 saw John Sweezy serving as a Ward Chairman. Under his leadership the Warren Township Republican Club became more active, and began making itself a force within the community. John also actively participated in the new Security Program that year. The work paid off in an almost perfect sweep in the Fall Elections. In 1967 he served on the Screening Committee which picked as their choice to carry the banner into the Mayoralty Election, Richard Green Lugar. The result of that election is history. History never just happens, people move other people, and great things are accomplished. John concentrated most of his efforts that year as Township Chairman, in the 18th and 28th wards, which turned out a fantastic vote for Dick Lugar in the ‘67 Primary and Fall Elections.

John was proving that he had the capability for greater things. One of the most significant factors which contributed to the Lugar victory in the fall was made by Neighborhood Issues Committee. Under John Sweezy’s guidance and careful attention to detail, well over 100,000 letters were written to residents of Indianapolis, pointing out specific problems within their

neighborhoods. Attention to detail was right up Sweezy's alley – a trait he has repeatedly demonstrated since. Observes and those who point to one specific turning point within the Lugar campaign that year, almost to a man point to the Neighborhood letters as the turning point. It was a tactic which had never before been put to such a test – everyone know that it had potential , but it took Sweezy and his dedicated volunteers to make it succeed. Again, the importance of nuts-and-bolts to winning a campaign.

In 1968 John was elected 11th District Vice Chairman, and also served on the Executive Committee of the County Organization. His talents in the organization and campaigns were becoming recognized, and more and more in demand.

In 1970 John served on the Marion County Executive Committee, where he contributed to the overall planning and executed his organizational level work with his is usual high degree of competence.

1971 saw John serving on the Lugar Campaign Executive Committee; serving in many capacities he undertook the follow-up on the 1967 promises, heading several committees, co-ordinating letter writing, mailings, trouble-shooting,, assisting the various departments of city government in the follow-up on Priority Action Requirements.

John Sweezy as an assistant county chairman has been a frequent advisor to the County Chairman and indeed the State Central Committee. He is a man held in high esteem by his political peers. He has repeatedly proven that he had what takes to orchestrate a winning campaign == and that after-all is the first objective. Without the win you have nothing --- no chance to serve, no opportunity to work toward good government. No patronage.

Shortly after assuming the Chairmanship of the local republican organization, Sweezy resigned his position as Director of Public Works with the City of Indianapolis and became a full time county chairman. Party headquarters at the time was located at 144 No. Delaware, where Bulen had established it early in 1967. Sweezy took over a staff of about ten people, there were full time employees but a number were volunteers and not paid. From Bulen's time through Sweezys tenure Marion County Republican headquarters was always a full time, open-door, business operation with party workers, employees, and volunteers dedicated to winn9ng elections.

When John Sweezy moved into Republican headquarters in the spring of 1972 the had a certain number of changes in mind that he was going to make. It was his desire that there be a more delineated "chain of command" concept established, started with himself and own through the Vice-Chairman, (new) Area Coordinators, ward Chairmen, and Precinct Committeemen. Bulen's was a neat organization and fine headquarters staff but he had become engrossed in all phases of his operation and taken on so much responsibility in making all decisions, that Sweezy observed the work load was too heavy on Bulen or anyone who would follow him, and therefor was determined to spread the load o f work as well as the responsibilities. Seweezy, who had worked many months, days and nights at headquarters first determined that h wanted his new

Vice-Co. Chairman, Marge O'Laughlin to be a full-time salaried employee who would assume important functions at headquarters. In anyone's memory this would be the first time a vice-chairman would be there at headquarters working full time on party affairs and have a real functional responsibility. As City Clerk for the City-County Council for nearly six years, O'Laughlin was used to working with a room full of people, as would be expected similarly in working with the mass of party workers who would be flowing in and out of republican headquarters. Marge was given the role of Office Manager and Patronage Chairman. Along with John's successive Vice-Chairmen and Secretary's through the years, the efficiency of running headquarters improved more in the manner that Sweezy envisioned. There are always large numbers of party officials and workers who need to communicate every day with headquarters. Too many workers believe that only the county chairman can solve their problems, but he cannot address himself to each of them. As a result, Sweezy's Vice Co Chairman, his secretary and his staff serve as a buffer to help those with problems as well as to help with the necessary work to win elections. The new office concept introduced by John has given him some time to think, organize policy and make long range planning for each primary and general election.

Organization-wise also, one of Sweezy's first steps was to end the practice of Ward Chairmen being elected by their respective precinct committeemen. Under John's tenure he would appoint the Ward Chairmen. Bulen had begun the practice of having precinct committeemen elect the Ward Chairmen starting in 1966 or 1967. Prior to Bulen, Ward Chairmen in Marion County had most always been appointed, though there may have been a brief period under H. Dale Broen that they were elected. Sweezy had counseled with Bulen on a number of occasions about returning to the old system of appointments but Bulen felt he couldn't break the promise to committeemen he had made when elected, that they could elect their Ward Chairmen. Immediately after becoming Chairman, Sweezy announced his intentions to appoint Ward Chairmen to the organization. Six years had convinced Sweezy (and Bulen) that a change was needed. Basically Sweezy believed and still does, that of ten, Ward Chairmen were elected by many precinct committeemen who simply were friendly with their ward chairman and not by the precinct committee who did most of the work: and too he equated such election of Ward Chairmen to that asking employees of a company to elect their own foreman. "It doesn't work," says John. The employer and management should determine and appoint who the foreman would be. Sweezy did not immediately remove all Ward Chairmen, however, with a number of months he had replaced those he was convinced were not productive enough. Ever since Sweezy has continued to appoint the Ward Chairmen.

Another change Sweezy made in the two years of his Chairmanship was to create another link in his chain of command theory. By appointing Area (Coordinators) Chairmen. Basically they were the coordinators in the Township (of Area) to whom the Ward Chairmen are expected to confer with, report to and bring their problems concerning party activity. If the questions or problems could not be solved with the help of the Area Coordinator, then he has the responsibility to confer with headquarters and Sweezy for a solution. It is not only for the solving of problems that the area chairmen is available, he is the liaison with headquarters on any matters that arise for the good of the party, from their particular area of the county. There were

and are just too many Ward Chairmen, party works, and precinct people who need guidance from headquarters. This new concept instituted by Sweezy diffusing the duties worked very successfully. Sweezy, as well, periodically during each met with all of his Ward Chairmen. The Ara Coordinators, more or less, replaced the concept of Assistant to the County Chairmen that Bulen had used during his tenure. Keith had a small number of very close confidants and trusted friends to whom he designated as his assistants. These assistants would often fill in for Keith at Headquarters when he was out of town and generally carried out his functions in his absence

Unless one works daily in Marion County Republican headquarters, he or she cannot realize the continuing mass of detailed work that goes on in generating an active, effective political organization. The candidates and office holders who stop by frequently get some idea of the work entailed on their behalf, but they too see only the surface work. During this period of time in Indiana, there were elections three out of every four years. The fourth non-election year, right after three consecutive elections, Marion County Used to catch up on all the work that was delayed during the election years. As each year passed with Sweezy at the helm, the work load increased as in any successful business. There are dozens of tasks to attend to, in organizing strategy, policy, and putting campaigns together.; putting together a "ticket" of good candidates, organizing screening and slating committees throughout the county, township, and districts to help select candidates; preparation ;by headquarters of supplies and distribution of same each primary and general election to over 735 precincts; organizing and paying fund-raising dinners and other fund-raising activities; pacifying candidates; registering voters every year; polling house to house in every precinct every year; preparing individualized mailings for candidates or groups of candidates; holding seminars and instructional sessions every election year for candidates to attend; examining, compiling data and rearranging of precinct boundaries where required by law; keeping abreast of public opinions by conducting surveys and opinion polls, or ordering such conducted; seeking out, and assisting in the patronage employment/process for party workers who need jobs and the follow through entailed therein. These are some of the important functions a party needs to do to win consistently, and with these during there is a constant flow of paper, phone calls, messages, errands, etc., which must be attend to and completed.

There were many dimensions to this remarkable man. Here are a few more to keep in mind:

John was very devoted to his family. He was married to Carol Harmar Sweezy, and they had two sons, John, Jr., and Bradley. Carol predeceased John. While getting established in Indianapolis, John was employed for eleven years by Indianapolis Power and Light Company. His years at DPW saw the construction of Market Square Arena, and important step on the road to a revitalized downtown. Some of John's favorite management stories described the challenges involved in opening the facility on time for its first scheduled events.

John had a love of nature and of nature's creatures. A visit to his home on German Church Road was a visit to a beautiful, carefully tended, natural setting. A small woodlot, the remains of an old farm outbuilding, and a small creek provided a setting for a host of birds and flowers. John extended this interest into active support for the Humane Society. He served as a

member of their board beginning in 1982, played a major role in funding the expansion of their headquarters on Michigan Road, and made his views clearly known on issues related to hunting in the state legislature. There was never a busier time than the week that a bill to allow expanded dove hunting came before the General Assembly. The hunters in our leadership group rarely spoke about their hobby, although John never extended his concerns at such a personal level. John also made some of the key phone calls to local funding sources such as Lilly Endowment when the Humane Society successfully conducted a capital campaign to create their new facilities on Lafayette Road.

John was a strong supporter of the Indianapolis/Marion County Library. He believed that a strong library was an essential feature of a strong city such as Indianapolis. He paid careful attention to the membership of the Library Board, working to assure the appointment of members friendly to the library interest, he met with library directors and staff over issues such as staffing, and he spoke knowledgeably with GOP staff and supporters who made use of the Library. The Business areas of the Library, with their extensive Census Bureau data bases were a place he knew and appreciated.

Transformative leadership. Forget anything you may have heard about the GOP being a party of the “status quo.” The years that this study covers were a period of profound change. JWS never spoke of holding the line. His interest was in transforming the community.

John was a lifelong learner. He enjoyed talking about books and television programs that explored the minds and lives of decision makers. It was not uncommon to hear him mention Derek Jacoby’s performance as the Emperor Claudius on PBS, Mike Royko’s take on Richard Daley, or a management decision by one of his former employers to illustrate a point about decision making. The people he most admired were active decisionmakers, who were careful to think about context and implementation as they planned their desired outcomes. He was a member of MENSA, and enjoyed using their newsletter as a springboard for lunch time discussion.

John paid great attention to the differing styles of management available to him. He often spoke of managers, good and not-so-good that he had seen in the past. Whenever his Army experience were discussed, he liked to recall the assignment sergeant he encountered who boasted that he could make or break any soldier’s career by where he assigned, or mis-assigned, him. When his years at IPALCO came up, he recalled that even a non-for-profit had to be attentive to the needs of its customer base – and he spoke with affectionate memory of some of the special demands that wealthy homeowners would make, and how he would quietly strive to satisfy them

Knowing the success of the Marion County GOP depended upon its precinct leaders, John was careful to build a management team that possessed prior precinct experience. Knowing the

numbers of wards, he further created a further management level, called “area” chairs in the 1970s and “township” chairs after a reorganization in 1978-1980. Knowing the importance of state elections, he served actively as a member of the Republican State Committee. As chairman of its Rules Committee, he sought the same careful organization and attention to local and county races throughout the state that he pursued in Marion County.

John liked creative and imaginative approaches that would entertain, amuse, and educate the electorate. In 1986, when he lacked a major statewide office to tie our local races to, he set in motion a clever campaign for the county races that that used the services of Steve Goldsmith and Bill Hudnut in a series of television ads that mimicked an advertising campaign for a popular wine, Bartles and James, to allow our advertisers to promote Faye Mowery for County Clerk.

Other Suggested reading:

The Bulen Years: JWS succeeded L. Keith Bulen as County Chairman. Keith was an energetic, decisive, and innovative party leader who went on to play a significant role in the Presidential campaigns of Ronald Reagan. In 1999 Gordon Durnil edited a very insightful inside look at Keith’s tenure titled Throwing Chairs and Raising Hell. The book captures very well the vigor, optimism, and competitive spirit of Keith’s tenure.

Gordon’s book was produced in conjunction with the inaugural meeting of a project undertaken in partnership with IUPUI, The Bulen Symposium on American Politics. Held on the Indianapolis campus, the Symposium served as a vehicle to recognize Keith’s contributions by exploring the complexity of working politics in America. Unlike many academic endeavors, which talk about how politicians and voters *should* behave, the Symposium explored how they *do* behave. We appreciate IUPUI’s partnership.

Lawrence Borst, long time chair of the powerful Indiana State Senate finance committee prepared a thoughtful and revealing discussion of the interaction of state and local politics and administration in his book, Gentlemen It’s Been My Pleasure, Four Decades in the Indiana Legislature.

John Mutz, with Edward Frantz, contributed a very interesting study focused upon John’s years dealing with state governance in An Examined Life: the John Mutz Story.

PE McAllister book, who graciously proved his studio for the taping of most of our interviews, did a delightful edition of many of his opinion pieces in (titled)

A clever 1966 paperback published by H. Dale Brown, titled Democrat Election Fraud in Indiana, 1960-1966 which looked at ruined buildings in Lake County that magically produced voters each

election day. We all recall with amusement the way John would on occasion withhold final returns from Marion County until he saw the totals that Lake County was claiming.

In June, 1980, John introduced “**Notes From The Chairman**” as a mailing to all organization members. That summer and fall we sent it weekly, and included the “buzz” in the party. It made clear from the start that we felt the election had a lot of variables that made it uncertain. One example was at the Presidential level, where an incumbent Jimmy Carter faced a challenger Ronald Reagan. But just to complicate matters, Republican Congressman John Anderson had mounted a third party challenge that required responses. Another example was the voter registration rolls. Anybody who thought that our electoral base was a stable homeowner bloc needed to be reminded that three out of every four voters who had been on the voter rolls in 1972 was no longer residing at his 1972 address. It made polling and registration a major feature of the election, outreach to young voters a priority, and the deadlines for submitting completed registration forms an essential act.

Market to Market (University Press of America, 2001) Sheila Seuss Kennedy was a long time activist in the Marion County organization who parted company with us over party direction in the 1990s. Her book, co-edited with Ingra Ritchie, evaluates the economic and political consequences of Mayor Steve Goldsmith’s programs. We include it here because George Geib contributed the book’s chapter on the Unigov context. In the chapter he offered several analytic approaches that can be used to explain party success and direction between 1960 and 2000. The chapter offers insights regarding the city’s historic elite communities, the issues of political patronage, and the importance of a large volunteer base in explaining the party’s success. It also addresses some of our responses to the most common Democratic complaints about Unigov.

Making Sense of the Marion County Political Map

A Politician’s map of Marion County might not make much sense to a member of the general public. But such a map, if only mental, is a useful starting point for discovering what made the GOP tick in the Unigov era. Authorized each election by the county election board, and printed for many years by Jim Bredensteiner’s firm, the precinct map of Indianapolis was a multicolored organizational char.

The map began by reminding the viewer that, Unigov notwithstanding, all Marion County was divided into two parts. One, commonly called the “old city”, was the pre-1969 area of Indianapolis. The other, often called the “outside areas”, was the remainder of the county.

It was in the old city that you found visual recognition of a key organizational level: the ward. There were thirty-two of these “numbered wards”: twenty in Center Township, one each in Lawrence, Perry, and Pike, two in Warren, three in Wayne, and four in Washington. They varied somewhat in land area, but far more significantly in population. The 15th ward, in the industrial southwest, required only two precincts to serve its people; the 21st in the residential north required ten times as many. Established in most cases early in the 20th century, numbered ward boundaries were unchanging after Unigov was enacted in 1969. Precinct boundaries proved more flexible. Although set legally by the City-County Council, they were frequently changed in practice upon the recommendation of GOP headquarters. On occasion, such lines were drawn to suit party management needs. Several long, thin precincts running from north to south in the 20th and 22nd wards, for example, were drawn to annex areas of GOP strength to Democratic areas along 38th Street. More commonly, however, the boundaries reflected a desire to make the precincts manageable for party committeemen.

Party practice was to favor precincts of about 600 voters: large enough to create a pool of potential volunteers, small enough to allow a door to door canvass (which was usually called a “poll”). Highly competitive areas, such as Wayne Township, tended to be smaller; single party areas (whether GOP or Demo) tended to be larger.

Interstate highway demolitions in the 1960s, new construction in the suburbs, and high levels of personal mobility among renters all produced demographic changes that helped to drive precinct boundary change. Portions of the old city (such as the 12th ward around the growing IUPUI campus) were virtually depopulated, while suburban growth (most dramatically in Pike Township) went on apace. The former could produce turnouts of a few dozen voters; the latter, (especially if a new apartment complex opened) could yield over 1200 registered voters.

As a rule, the GOP was quicker to create new suburban precincts (where Republican voters might be served). In theory old precincts might be abolished. But complexities of redistricting for electoral offices (the courts frowning upon electoral boundaries that divided individual precincts) and the reluctance of Democratic leaders to surrender old inner city fiefdoms assured the survival of older precincts. The resulting growth in numbers of precincts was great, from the 300s in the 1960s to the 600s in the 1980s to nearly 1000 by 1999.

Indiana law and party rules made these precincts the building blocks of the party. Primary election voters in even numbered years elected their precinct committeeman (PC), PCs appointed a vice committeeman (VPC) of the opposite sex, and the PCs and VPCs constituted the county convention that elected the County Chairman. JWS, the subject of our study was elected by this constituency from 1972 until his retirement in 1999.

JWS was fond of making the point that these precinct leaders were his core constituency, and he worked hard to retain their loyalty and support. When funds permitted, small expense checks (of \$25 or \$15), helped deferred precinct expenses. Birthday cards, regular communications and headquarters services were emphasized, social events and rallies (often linked to township level GOP clubs) were commonplace, involvement was recognized.

In return each PC and VPC was asked to support three basic party activities: a summer canvass (“polling”), a targeted registration drive, and election day get-out-vote (GOTV) drives. Beyond the three major activities, it is common to see the PCs asked for help in obtaining a contract for the voting location and recruiting members o the precinct voting place election board.

The large and growing number of precincts led the county to rely upon an intermediate level of party the management, the ward. In the old city, the GOP normally used the legal boundaries, in the outside the party simply drew its own boundaries. In a few very large number wards (such as 21, 27,28,and 29)the GOP created subdivisions. The total number of wards continued to rise with the growth of numbers of precincts, eventually surpassing eighty. Each and was led by a ward chairman (WC, supported by a vice (WVC).

As chairman, JWS placed much emphasis at this level. A manager by training and experience himself, he showed a preference for ward headers who practiced good political management. He rarely appointed WCs who had not served as PCs; he asked each WC to take an active role in recruiting, training, supervising, and motivating, their precinct leaders. Wards were conduits for communication, upward and downward in what every came to call “the organization”.

A Year In The Life – Making Sense of The Political Calendar

Three years out of four, MCRCC went through the election process. In even numbered years our elections were part of the larger state and national contests. In odd numbered years starting with 1975, JWS also led us through the process of a Mayoral, Unigov local election year.

Any political calendar started with the inescapable deadlines imposed by election law. The primary was always the first Tuesday after the first Monday in May, the general the same in November. Many other deadline dates, including the close of voter registration, followed inescapably from this. If a precinct, ward, or township leader came in after the registration deadline they created a big mess. [In most years the Democrats had similar problems. The solution we normally used was to trade equal numbers of late registrations and hope that nobody would challenge an action that did permit, rather than prevent, voting.

The legal calendar also established filing dates for candidates. [Indiana is not a state that looks kindly upon write-in votes; we assume that if you are a serious candidate you will ascertain and obey election law.] Planning backward from that date, serious candidates would

begin the sensible steps of campaigning. Township club meetings and phone lines became very busy. Nervous energy started to build.

And, a word about that nervous energy. Looking back on any campaign it is easy to see who won and lost, and to provide with retrospective certainty an explanation of what occurred. To be there was to experience the uncertainty of what might occur in the future, and to read both hopes and fears into that process. Several campaigns, such as the 1974 Sheriff race and the 1999 Mayoral race, fell into this trap. Public reactions could vary from sudden outbursts of temper to long-term grudges, and to private responses could include a whole range of nervous behaviors such as smoking, or drinking. Recognizing these behaviors for what they were, most participants adopted a stance that excused such behavior as long as it did not affect the course of the campaign.

Thoughts About Screening and Slating

Much of the success that JWS enjoyed could be traced to good candidate recruitment and selection procedures that encouraged participation, and aroused loyalty. Two words need to be kept in mind: screening and slating. The former was the process by which the county part reviewed and endorsed prospective candidates for office prior to the primary election; the latter was the process by which we recommended our endorsed candidates, as a slate, to our primary voters.

Each year we would schedule meetings, often on Saturdays, where prospective candidates (including incumbents) could present themselves before a selection committee. For less visible offices (we always tried to avoid the phrase "minor office") this was often the PCs and VPCs; for more visible offices (such as county wide positions) we would usually name a central screening committee whose members included individuals elected by the PCs and VPCs). The choices of those slating meetings would become our primary slate, for whom we would work actively. Members of the slate were asked for a slating fee equal to 10% of one year's salary to cover such expenses as printing our primary election handouts and managing the campaigns of any slated candidates who were challenged in the primary. The system worked well for us. It encouraged serious candidates, discouraged token filers without denying them a place on the ballot, and provided the opportunity to make the primary a "dry run" for the general election in every precinct.

The slating process could produce surprises. Our PCs and VPCs generally supported incumbents over challengers, and active campaigners over passive challengers. But if there were choices to be made for a vacant office, a strong campaign and a clear and effective presentation could often turn the trick. JWS was always waiting at headquarters to learn of the slating decision. More than once he expressed surprise but rarely disappointment.

Bill Mercuri had this to say about John's many slating successes:

Under Sweezy's leadership the Marion County carried all its slated candidates to victory in the primaries and there were very few non-party endorsed winners. Usually if the party lost to a non-slated candidate it was to a person well-known and an active Republican who was able to mount existing support grounds for his or her particular race while the organization concentrated on the entire "ticket." Sweezy always acknowledged that they beat him "fair and square."

JWS's emphasis upon, and attitudes toward, slating help explain its prominence in each primary year. As he repeatedly stressed to the organization, all primaries are subject to influence. The key question was who among us should determine the party's fall ticket. Since the party organization had much at stake, it was reasonable to keep a party selection process as a central feature of each late winter. Less often stated, but also of much importance was the fact that slating had served to keep primary infighting (and post-primary grudges) to a minimum. Slating also allowed us to more carefully target our limited resources upon a single endorsed slate. Given the recurrent inability of the GOP in Indiana to patch up primary election grudges, slating proved to be a key element in JWS's accommodating style of leadership.

Wagon Books and Party Challengers

In modern times most people walk or drive to the polls, unlike Lincoln's time when many people were driven there – and often in wagons. The horse disappeared from our streets over a century ago, but the name of the list of voters we wanted to turn out did not. A well managed precinct ideally had a volunteer asking the name of each voter who entered the voting place (and the authority of a party challenger to ask the question); a well managed ward had a calling center that would phone any desired GOP voter starting around three o'clock in the afternoon. The slate, in the spring, and the ticket, in the fall, often prevailed because those few extra people turned out – and the organization gained volunteers through those recruits.

Poll cards, and the dreaded KT: No mention of headquarters would be complete without mention of longtime party secretary Sherry Gardiner. Apart from the duties you normally associate with the office, she was the manager of the summer door to door poll (our term for a canvass). Her desk was always surrounded by boxes of the cards we asked each committeeman and their volunteers to complete, providing us with a view of the residents of the county and their political preferences. Done properly a neighborhood poll would identify people who needed to be registered, provided a ride to the polls, or offered an opportunity to volunteer. Getting the cards out, making sure that our middle managers in the wards and townships were in touch with each precinct leader, and tabulating the results was a herculean task that Sherry performed with skill. Heaven help the lazy volunteer who simply sat at a kitchen table and filled in old information to earn the dreaded letters KT next to their precinct.

The County Judges

There were several elective judicial offices in Marion County. At the township level, for instance, each township had a small claims court. Under the state Constitution, every Indiana county has a Judge of the Circuit Court. And in Marion County, due to its large population, there was a separate county court with multiple judges. All were elected to their terms by popular vote on a partisan ballot.

The voting pattern for judges was one of more interesting features of county voting. In most of the county a judicial candidate could expect to run with their party ticket unless they had done something out of the ordinary to get their name in the newspaper. But if you drew a line up Meridian Street to the Hamilton County line, and another along 86th Street at the northern edge of the county across Washington Township, you would find a group of precincts where several thousand voters would cast their ballots only for the female candidates. We were fortunate to have strong judges such as Patricia Gifford on our ticket. We also drew clear lessons about the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) and other such issues.

When JWS became county chairman the county court was so arranged that one party could capture most or all of these positions. But after the 1974 Nixon disaster, our state legislators helped to work out a deal by which each party could nominate an even number of candidates for a court whose total membership was one less than the total number of candidates (thus each might eight for a court of fifteen).

Randall Shepherd was one of the best Chief Justices the Indiana Supreme Court has seen. He worked hard to improve its procedures, its personnel, and its image. He was also one of the best friends historic preservation had in Marion County. But the record must show that he and JWS did differ on one important matter: slating fees for judges. Simply put, Randy thought it looked bad for a judge to pay a political party to get elected. And he cared enough about it to make it an issue during the latter years of John's term. John's answer was that he was open to other ideas, but that as long as judges were elected on a partisan ballot, people would make an effort to elect individuals favorable to their causes – and that the party's track record showed that we sent people of judicial temperament to the bench.

Urban Counties.

One of John's most interesting initiatives was the creation of the National Association of Urban Republican County Chairmen. While attending our party's national conventions, he had the opportunity to meet a number of party leaders. Among these were a small, very interesting, set of individuals: the leaders of other populous, urbanized counties. Almost everywhere in America a large portion of the responsibilities of local government rests with officers chosen at the county level. And almost everywhere political parties have organized at the county level to nominate and support candidates. A few states,

mainly in the West where Nebraska is probably the best example, have reflected the Progressive reform impulses of a century ago by making local government non-partisan.

Most counties in most states, however, use a partisan ballot to elect their local officers. And John recognized that such counties faced many challenges to those that he knew well from Marion County. In 1990 he accordingly obtained a national list of chairmen in counties of over half a million people, and invited them to Indianapolis to talk about common interests and concerns. Soon we were in touch with such communities as Maricopa County, AZ, (Phoenix), Shelby County, TN (Memphis), and Nassau County, NY, (suburban NYC). The first session in Indianapolis led to periodic meetings around the country in conference centers in Houston, St. Louis, and Miami.. Even more important, the RNC extended formal recognition to the NAURCC (National Association of Urban Republican County Chairmen) as one of its official affiliate committees.

John's remarks to the 1996 National Convention in support of Bob Dole highlighted his achievement. He had initially offered his place as a delegate to another party loyalist, and was planning to watch the proceedings on television. But then he received a call inviting him to speak to the convention on behalf of the chairs of the populous counties. He was offered two minutes, and his remarks were written to highlight the contributions of all levels of party workers from precinct upward to the GOP. Upon arrival, as everyone had predicted, the conventions staff asked to see his text — and promptly asked him to lay his stress on support for the ticket. Everyone at headquarters watched as he spoke on national television and carefully included mention of organization members. A photo of his appearance graced the bookcase in his office for the rest of his tenure in the party.

A Busy Ballot

“There are no minor offices, there are only less visible ones.”

Many political accounts focus upon the visible, often well-funded, offices at the top of the ticket. But every campaign by MCRCC was required to devote attention to the many less visible offices that are chosen by popular vote in Indiana. Unlike many states, especially in the trans-Mississippi West, which favored short or non-partisan ballots, Indiana subjected a large number of offices to election on a partisan ballot. State legislators, county judges, township officials, and city councilors joined mayors, U. S. Senators and Congressmen, and seven high ranking state officers in electoral competition. Varying term lengths, including two years for state and federal representatives, and six years for U. S. Senators, assured that no ballot was identical to the one before it. Three state officers were always chosen in non-Presidential years, while four ran with the President. Four “excluded” towns and cities (Speedway, Beech Grove, Lawrence, and Southport), as well as Indianapolis, were held in odd-numbered “off” years. One year in four was a “breather”.

The large number of elected officials made themselves felt in a variety of ways. They required, for example, a number of “combinations” on the ballots. It was very likely that the handout provided to each committeeman for distribution to voters at the polls would not list the same individuals as that at a neighboring precinct, even if two or more precincts shared a common voting place. By the 1990s, when the number of precincts in the county exceeded 800, there were 106 possible combinations. Accurate printing and proofreading became a weeks-long headquarters concern.

John sometimes grumbled about the amount of staff and resources all of this took to execute, but he consistently resisted any discussion of reducing the numbers of candidates. His reasoning, often expressed, was that every candidate could be a valuable addition to the party’s electoral base. John saw every candidate as a source of their personal energy, as a path to the voter and volunteer support of their friends and associates, and as financial supporters through slating fees and personal donations.

Most elective offices in Marion County were winnable. But here as elsewhere John usually articulated the view that we “could” win if we did the basics of polling, registration, and GOTV. Any candidate could count upon a pile of palm cards accompanied by the earnest instruction to see that “none are left in the trunk of your car” on election night. Piles of cards left by less diligent individuals on tables at township club meetings had a strange way of finding a path back to the candidate.

John also took special pains to see that every office on a ballot was contested, even in the most heavily Democratic of districts. For all its strengths, the GOP did lose about a sixth of the races in the county. John occasionally pointed out that every now and then a Democratic candidate would make a serious personal or political mistake that offended his voting base. But John regularly argued that giving a Democratic candidate a “free pass” made it much easier for that person to shift his or her energy and resources to another spot on the ballot where the GOP had a chance of victory. The presence of a GOP challenger was always an incentive to the Democrat to stay in his district and not cause outside troubles.

As you listen to the tapes in our archive you will meet a number of individuals who ran for, and served in, those less visible offices. They will attest to the excitement that they felt while running for the position, and, if successful, to the experience and confidence they gained. Far from being “minor” offices, the less visible positions on the ballot were a major contributor to the successes of the Sweezy years.

The Top of the Ticket

Each year’s campaign opened with several key agenda items. One of the most important was to determine who would be emphasized as the party’s ticket leading

candidate. In some cases this was easy. If we were in a mayoral year, and we had a Republican incumbent, obviously he was the point person in the campaign. In Federal election years we had some range of choice since Governor was always chosen at the same time as President, and in two elections out of three there would be a U S Senate candidate on the ballot.

How to look at the Numbers

If you are interested in reviewing the election returns, here are some tips to help you make sense of them in the JWS era:

- Two different party campaign approaches. The GOP, as you have seen, was at its heart a vertical party with a good deal of direction from the top. The Democrats, in that era, were a horizontal party dependent upon mobilization by interest groups such as labor. We built teams where they built coalitions.
- The need for a ticket leader. We always ran as a team, but in almost every election we sought to build around a central figure of high visibility who embodied the issues that our public opinion surveys (conducted by Market Opinion Research) showed us were important in the minds of our voters. In Presidential years it was common for us to place emphasis upon our Presidential ticket, an approach that worked especially well in the Ronald Reagan years. In off year elections we sought to find an articulate local candidate who could embody the party message as we did when Steve Goldsmith ran for Prosecutor in 1978. Mayors were elected in a separate year, and it was our obvious practice to stress our ticket leader as we did four times for Bill Hudnut and twice for Steve Goldsmith.
- Special local considerations. A special circumstance can make a big difference. We discovered that particular candidates could win support that might not otherwise be there, and we sought to respond. You will meet City County Council member Stan Strader because he showed he could carry an inner city district that the other party had taken for granted.

'A Perfect Storm'

John's tenure as chairman looked very good in his first months. Elected at our summer county convention in 1972 he inherited an organization ably led by his predecessor, L. Keith Bulen. Gordon Durnil has done an excellent job reporting The Bulen Years, and his book is required reading for all who are interested in that era. Richard Nixon, as yet untainted by Watergate, headed a ticket strong in state and county leaders. And John who had already assumed many of Keith's leadership role own the county party, brought knowledge and confidence to a campaign that resulted in a big Republican win.

To sense the depth of the victory, simply note that 1972 was the one election when the party was able to defeat Andy Jacobs, Jr., for the US House seat. He had held the seat, previously his father's, since 1964 — and would later hold until his retirement in 2002. But in 1972 he joined a long list of unsuccessful Democrats.

The following year, 1973, was one of those one in four years when no elections were held. No votes were cast, although a number of candidates busily visited the township club meetings and other venues where they could make their case for 1974.

And 1974 looked like a winner. In addition to a fine organizational base, several races important to the county would be on the ballot. Statewide Richard G. Lugar intended to build upon his successes in the mayor's office by seeking the U. S. Senate seat held by Birch Bayh. County wide several candidates put themselves forward for the Sheriff's office.

The Sheriff's office held attractions for both individual candidates and the party. An unusual set of state laws, written in the days of small counties, when fees rather than salaries were the basis of a sheriff's income, made the post the highest paying local office in Indiana's largest county. And the existing set of personnel practices made the civilian positions in the office subject to political consideration and the two percent contribution practice. It was thus both a winnable and a remarkably lucrative office.

But then, a crucial national problem intruded. A politically motivated and badly executed burglary attempt by GOP operatives at the Democratic headquarters in the Watergate building in Washington seized and held headlines for week after week. Evidence mounted that President Nixon was improperly involved. And the public mood turned ugly. Nixon ultimately resigned.

A significant of Marion County Republican voters were clearly offended by the Watergate events as they were reported, and chose to express their displeasure by voting against the GOP. In the primary this resulted in the defeat of our slated candidate for Sheriff, and in the general it resulted in a reduced voter turnout that reelected Bayh, returned Jacobs to Congress, and saw the defeat of our county ticket of officers.

In our tapes (which we have neither edited or erased) you will hear several of our contributors as they speak of the ways they endured the losses, and the lessons they drew.

1996

Richard Lugar was a fine Senator, and he would have been a fine President. In 1996 our organization was enthused by his candidacy, and wished him every success. But, sadly, it was not to be. We provided a fine crowd over at Market Square on the day he made his announcement, only to watch in horror as the TV filled with news of the cowardly Oklahoma City bombing. We watched the party leadership shift its interest to another fine US Senator, Bob Dole, who ultimately became our unsuccessful nominee. And we learned, as the Lugar campaign learned, that it is a very costly venture to run for President. The Lugar campaign had to return, repeatedly and aggressively, to our donor base. The Senator stayed in the race through the Vermont primary, where he posted decent numbers, but then withdrew. For the remainder of year, whenever our candidates went to our normal donor base, the response was the same: "Lugar tapped me out."

Worse still, we were faced with a Governor's race in which two qualified Marion County candidates chose to duke it out. Steve Goldsmith came with his credentials as Prosecutor and Mayor, and a "reinventing government" approach that was attracting national attention (and would later shape much of his career at Harvard and New York). Rex Early's credentials included his long time leadership in our Center Township organization, and a well-regarded term as state GOP chairman. Each had fund raising skills and a strong organization, and each believed that (with the Governor's chair open), it was their best chance to run. Each wanted, and expected, the county organization to slate. And each expected they could win slating.

It was not to be. JWS saw it was a no-win fight that would, and did, leave hard feelings (and consume any resources the Lugar Presidential bid had not already spent). Steve won the ensuing primary but lost the Governorship to Frank O'Bannon. Neither Steve nor Rex had much good to say about MCRCC at the time. Both subsequently reconciled with JWS, as can be seen in our interviews. But it was the end of an era.

Party Finance.

It all cost money. A downtown headquarters, staff, printing, phone banks, election handouts, typewriters and computers, postage, consultants, and a hundred other expenses in a county with half a million eligible voters required a serious finance base.

We were, for the record, careful to maintain very detailed records, file complete required reports, and express our thanks to Vi Wiles for her many years of precise bookkeeping.

JWS felt it was important to avoid becoming dependent upon one or two financial source who might then place their interests ahead of the larger organization's interests. He also recognized that donors were also voters, and were individuals outside election day who possessed influential voices in the community. In John's mind, a large and varied donor base was thus much more important than just a source of campaign funds.

Many of those donor activities involved meetings. Those gatherings, from the annual dinner and the summer picnic to the quarterly neighborhood roundtables, allowed us to showcase our candidates and to help assure that the messages we wanted to be heard were familiar to our team members. Our Roundtables were a series of donor clubs created on a township basis to allow small donors to meet, on a quarterly basis, with our candidates and office holders. Dues were low to encourage participation, meetings were normally breakfasts at local restaurants and venues, and briefings on issues of current concern were the usual topic. The Roundtables assured a high level of contact between party and political office workers, and were often highly entertaining. The tapes include several of our best speakers and document the quality of our presentations.

We also tried to involve our precincts leaders in a program of door to door solicitation under the rubric of "neighborhood finance". This involved recruiting a chairman in each precinct who could go door to door to Republican and Republican-leaning households and ask for small contributions. A person who had invested financially, however small the amount, was more likely to turn and vote for our ticket. And a volunteer who was willing to go door to door was a potential recruit, when needed, for PC or VPC.

We also wrote a handbook for our Urban Counties organization where we described the good practices we sought to follow. You will find discussions of dinners, donors' clubs, direct mail, and special events such as golf tournaments.

Some of our financial sources bear definition because they are not commonly seen today:

One is "slating fees". Each candidate slated by the organization was asked to contribute a sum equal to ten percent of one year's salary to support the expenses of the primary election. Because we did like to see a name on the ballot for every office, the fees were waived for the overwhelmingly Democratic positions down in Center Township. And because we wanted happy candidates we were careful to check spellings and ballot locations on every slate.

Another is the "two percent club". This was the request we made of each patronage appointee that they contribute two percent of their income to the party war chest. These funds were a big help in the fall. But they did not support the same kind of visibility that

slating did. Should we lose a race, which we occasionally did, we would make an effort to find other government employment for our “two percenters’. But it was not uncommon to hear a two percenter argue that their other services in the organization should be counted.

Any attention to party finance requires special recognition of Buert SerVaas. Buert was a successful entrepreneur who attracted national attention with some of his creative business activities. He was also for many years our MCRCC Treasurer. His staff assured that our records were always accurate, our filings were always on time, and our money was spent where we said we spent it. He kept a low profile, and provided a responsible financial presence.

Violent Days. Many participants in the Unigov era have written or spoken about their involvement. You should read, and respect, what they are saying. But you should be aware that it is an Indiana political tradition that such recollections could be written in one of the distinctive Hoosier literary styles that range from self-serving recollections to skeptical humor. Such works may talk about personal and family associations, campaign experiences (favorite speeches, colorful moments, and dramatic confrontations are all fair game), or other recollections and reflections that capture the imperfect worlds of public service. A number of our interviewees are familiar with this style, and practice it well in their contribution to this archive. It would be well to remember, however, that there were darker moments in the Sweezy years, and those dark events often served to test loyalties and shape both public and private responses. John did not speak about the fact that he always carried a mattock handle under the front seat of his car, or that he was sometimes accompanied at public events by a bodyguard. Secret service agents who accompanied national leaders visiting our events often met with staff before hand and compiled a list of people whose aberrant, abusive, or threatening behavior had attracted our attention—and we could always provide, in confidence, such a list.

The License Branch Question.

There is no way around it: one of the most controversial features of the Sweezy years was a question of party finance that can be traced almost entirely to a long-time feature of Indiana politics and government: the license branch system. The practice long predated John and reflected the importance of party organization in both major parties. It provided that the sale of license plates, and other documents related to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) would be conducted on a county basis (there are 92 of them in Indiana, Marion County alphabetically is 49 on the list). The management of the branch system was placed by the elected Governor under the control of the county chairmen of his party. It was a valuable source of patronage, but also a producer of headaches.

The patronage was quite open and visible: you saw it in the hiring practices of the BMV, and in the ability of the party to assign low number license plates to friends and supporters (and, yes, that included donors). It produced its share of headaches as all government offices produce. Licenses carry taxes and fees with them, and can be invalidated or suspended for offenses such as speeding tickets. A customer with a poor driving record or no documentation could take a lot of time and was not always a happy camper when he left.

Politically the license branch system was troubling to those, in and out of the media, who held suspicions or grudges about political parties or who believed that it was a civil service function outside political purview. It is easier to judge today, when party-directed politics has been largely replaced by candidate-directed politics, and you can compare and contrast the success and failures of the two systems. Within that area of discussion, one possibility was obviously the possibility of abuse by the party. JWS was the subject of a very serious investigation by the FBI of these charges, and we took pride that no legal action ever resulted from that investigation.

Political Terms and Names You'll Encounter on the Tapes:

MCRCC	Marion County Republican Central Committee
PC	Precinct Committeeman
VPC	Vice Precinct Committeeman
Headquarters	The MCRCC office downtown, first at 47 East Washington Street, moved in 1980 to 14 North Delaware
GIRFCO	The Greater Indianapolis Republican Finance Committee, fund raising arm normally housed at Headquarters
VR	The Marion County Voter Registration Board located in the CCB , or, informally, the act of voter registration
CCB	The City County Building
25th Floor	Mayor's office location in the CCB
JWS	John W Sweezy, our MCRCC chairman
Keith	L Keith Bulen, John's predecessor as MCRCC chair
Dale	H Dale Brown, Keith's predecessor as MCRCC chair
Action Committee	The Republican Action Committee was the vehicle through which

Keith and his allies took control of MCRCC in 1966

Poll, Polling	Door to door survey of residents conducted every election summer by volunteers; a canvass taken on Poll Cards
PC, VPC	Precinct Committeemen and Vice Committeemen
Registration	a voter must complete a short form to be placed on the voter rolls
Poll Book	List of registered voters provided by VR to MCRCC each summer
Poll List	List of registered voters provided by VR to election boards each election
Sissy	The IBM System Six used for many years by Irene Black and her volunteers to maintain party records at Headquarters
IRSC, State	The Indiana Republican State Committee of which JWS always a member, and usually chairman of its Rules Committee
Lincoln Day	A GOP event such as a picnic, rally, fund raiser (or all of the above); held in every Indiana county. In Marion County it often took the form of a picnic at a location such as southside German Park.
GOP	Grand Old Party
Townships	The nine sections into which Marion County is divided (Pike, Washington, Lawrence, Wayne, Center, Warren, Decatur, Perry, and Franklin). Elected township officers are responsible for poor relief and small court claims. MCRCC used them as an important organization basis. A party "Township Chair" was a significant organization player.
Precincts	The local divisions within which voters resided and voted. The responsibility of the the PC and VPC.
Wards	The larger divisions within which precincts are placed. The responsibility of the WC and WVC.
WC and WVC	The ward chairman and ward vice chairman named by JWS.
Unigov	The consolidation of many city and county government services under Mayor Lugar.
Numbered Wards	The pre-Unifgov "old city" was divided into wards number 1 thru 32.

Outside Wards	Groups of precincts in the remainder of Marion County were placed here They made up the "Outside Townships"
GOTV	Get Out the Vote. The objective of every township, ward, and precinct worker on election day.
Wagon Book	A list of identified GOP voters provided to each PC for GOTV
fast precinct	A precinct suspected of voting irregularities
security program	Individuals used to deal with fast precincts
Inspector	Supervisory member of a precinct election board.
Precinct Election Board	A Clerk, Judge, and Sheriff named by each party, and an Inspector named by the party that had won the county vote for Secretary of State in the last off-year election
Off Year	An even numbered year in which the Presidency was not on the ballot.
WINS	Woman in Neighborhood Service; an important source of volunteers
Roundtables	A Girfco fund raising activity in the townships, usually featured breakfasts.
newsies	usually affectionate term for the local reporters who worked our political beat such as: Gerry LaFollette Art Harris Ed Zeigner
STAR	the morning paper
NEWS	the evening paper
MOR	Market Opinion Research, our polling firm
phone bank	telephones, often in the basement of MCRCC, where we conducted much GOTV
Legal Beagle	lunch spot next door to the Delaware Street Headquarters
two percent	portion of salary asked of each patronage position in government as a financial contribution to MCRCC

state convention held in the summer of each even numbered year, GOP delegates from every county chosen in the primary selected candidates for several state offices

screening organization process that reviewed prospective candidates pre-primary

slating organization selection of endorsed candidates each primary, producing the slate our ticket in each primary

MCLB Marion County License Branch, administered by MCRCC until late 1980s

NAURCC National Association of Urban Republican County Chairmen, founded as an RNC affiliate by JWS

RNC Republican National Committee

License Branch Each elected Governor until the 1990s named the chairs of the their county organizations to run the branch offices that dealt with auto registrations, driver's licenses and such . It was a useful extension of patronage.

Vanity Plates Low numbered license plates

BMAU The Bulk Mail Acceptance Unit on the roof of the central Post Office

Draft 11/9/21

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where he is enjoying retirement and would welcome your thoughts about the Sweezy years