

Michigan Political History Society NEWS

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Fall 2007

Blanchard Event Sets Record, Creates Living Library of Political History

By Phyllis Washburn

The Michigan Political History Society sponsored the largest event in its history on Friday, Oct. 5 at the Lansing Country Club—a tribute in honor of James J. Blanchard in celebration of the 25th anniversary of his election as Governor

The overflow crowd—which included hundreds of Governor Blanchard’s friends, family members, current and former colleagues, former staffers, judicial appointees, well-wishers, former party chairs, retired legislators, and even a few old foes—packed the Lansing Country Club to celebrate the triumphs of one of Michigan’s most distinguished political figures.

The celebration was about more than celebrating Governor Blanchard’s past; it also centered on creating a legacy for the future. The proceeds from the celebration will fund the Governor James J. Blanchard Living Library of Michigan Political History. The Blanchard Library will consist of dozens of interviews with individuals who have played a prominent role in shaping our state’s political history.

Reception and Tribute Highlights

The crowd began arriving at 5:30 reception. The scene was one of jubilation; some attendees had not seen each other for several years. While the majority of attendees were from the Lansing or Detroit areas, a good number had traveled from out of state. They ranged in age from ten to ninety-seven years old. Some had known Governor



Governor James J. Blanchard

Blanchard from his very early years, while others came to meet him for the first time.

The tribute began at 7:00 with a short introduction by Michigan Political History Society President David Murley. Dave welcomed the crowd and explained the goals of MPHS, which include using history to effectuate better public policy, promoting bipartisanism, and preserving Michigan’s political history. Elaborating on that last point, Dave described the importance of the Blanchard Library and thanked the crowd, the sponsors, and especially Governor and Janet Blanchard for creating such a wonderful legacy for our state.

The tribute was co-hosted by Mike

Hodge, Blanchard’s legal advisor, and Carolyn ‘Sparky’ Hutting, Blanchard’s senior executive assistant. Mike and Sparky not only co-hosted the Tribute; they had spent the last several months—and an incalculable number of hours—leading the planning committee that made the Tribute such a success.

The evening was emceed by former Treasurer Bob Bowman who, should he ever run short of funds, might be able to earn a few dollars as a stand-up comedian. Bob kept the audience laughing as he introduced each speaker.

A glimpse into Governor Blanchard’s personal life was provided by members of Blanchard’s own family, including sister Suzanne Brook, who was the first speaker of the evening, and son, Jay, who would introduce his father later in the evening. And, while not speaking, mother Rosalie had a front-row seat at the Tribute.

Suzanne described the life and ambition in her brother, who, even as a young boy expressed his two life goals— to be in Congress or to play for the Detroit Tigers.

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Blanchard Event

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Fortunately for Michigan, Blanchard was urged by his coaches to pursue a career in politics. So he focused on his other goal, and, with the help of a dedicated group of friends and financial assistance from his immediate family, unseated an incumbent Congressman in 1974. Blanchard was only 32 years old.

On a personal note, Brook called Blanchard a wonderful role model and a good friend who focuses on the positive and works to avoid the negative. "We had a lot of great role models," Brooks said. "They instilled in us a responsibility to solve social problems and promote justice."

Perhaps it was that drive to solve problems and promote justice that attracted the next round of speakers to Blanchard. Bill Liebold, Greg Morris, and Ron Thayer all worked for Blanchard in his capacity as a Congressman and as Governor. The three described their memories of the 1974 campaign and their time on his staff. They commented how Blanchard, in Congress and as Governor, ran a clean and open administration. Further, they are still amazed at his seemingly unique ability to remember names and faces.

Elizabeth 'Betty' Howe, who hails from the Upper Peninsula but made her name in Oakland County politics, talked about her experiences as a political press secretary for Blanchard, a position she agreed to take under two conditions: one, that Blanchard use what would be her salary to purchase radio advertisements; and two, that Blanchard attend her daughter's wedding. When the wedding day finally arrived, Blanchard had been scheduled for a trip overseas but cut it short to keep his promise.

She praised the concept of the Blanchard library, quoting author George Santayana "Those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it: those who celebrate the successes of the past may learn from them."

Michael Murphy would later make a name for himself as a reverend and as a state representative. But in the early 1980's, Murphy served as a young policy assistant to Governor Blanchard. He praised Blanchard's warm relationship with the Capitol city. "He was committed to revitalize the city of Lansing," Murphy said. "It was the first of its kind good neighbor policy statement."

Shelby Solomon, initially hired as a Michigan State University intern, played a major role in arranging the Chrysler loan guarantee and, later, serving as Michigan's Director of Management and Budget. Solomon shared the story of how Blanchard, when running for Congress, worked the Jewish areas of the district. He worked so hard, and was so good at connecting with the people, that Solomon's grandfather thought he was a member of the chosen people. "Blanchard," remarked Solomon's grandfather. "That's a funny Jewish name." The attribute highlighted by Solomon was that Blanchard was not only a good politician, but someone who served his constituents and got things done.

Mayor Dennis Archer remembered meeting Blanchard in 1968, shortly after both had passed the Michigan Bar examination. Less than two decades later, Blanchard appointed Archer to the Supreme Court. "My lasting impression of Blanchard was how much he cared, his integrity, honesty, character and reaching out for one's fellow man,"

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Emcee, Bob Bowman



Event Hosts
Mike Hodge and Sparky Hutting



Governor Blanchard greets old friend Bruce Timmons, whom he has known since second grade, and tries to win the vote of Bruce's son, Charles, age 10



Governor Blanchard and MPHS members, Richard McLellan and Kelly Rossman-McKinney



Governor Blanchard and Frank Kelley

Blanchard Event

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Archer said. "He supported diversity long before the word captured the meaning." The audience then turned its attention to a short movie outlining Blanchard's many accomplishments, including the Chrysler Loan Guarantee Act of 1980 while a Congressman, the creation of the Michigan Education Trust as Governor, and his appointment and accomplishments as ambassador to Canada.

Jay Blanchard then took the microphone and spoke of his father's "honesty, ambition, intelligence, judgment, persistence, friendship, successes and failures (though they don't occur often)." He then introduced the star attraction of the evening, his father.

Blanchard was met with a standing ovation, as he addressed the crowd initially with "I love it," calling this one of the special moments in his life.

In the shortest address of the night, Blanchard discussed money, religion, the Legislature, the press and Republicans. But his warmest remarks were reserved for his team that had helped build a better Michigan.

"There is nothing I'd rather have happen than to see all of you here," Blanchard said of the 25th reunion. "This truly is a night to enjoy. I did everything that I wanted to do – and then some. We really had fun," Blanchard said. "The goal was to take Michigan to the mountain, and we enjoyed the ride all the way."

He concluded his remarks with a prediction about the state he loves:

"The state is too great to be kept down," Blanchard said. "Look at our people, infrastructure and natural resources. The state of Michigan will rise again. It's only a matter of time." ★

From the MPHS President

Dave Murley

I am afraid that I have some good news to share with you.

MPHS is in great shape, and our future is looking very bright. I make this claim for several reasons:

- 1) Our membership has grown considerably. We now have 388 Members (265 annual and 123 lifetime members)—which is approximately double our number from two years ago.
- 2) In order to put MPHS on solid, long-term financial ground, we have created the MPHS endowment. Currently, we have \$24,000 in the endowment, but plan to increase that amount over the next several years. MPHS will use only the interest, rather than the principal, to fund operations.
- 3) MPHS continues to hold events that promote bipartisanship and preserve Michigan's political history. In the last two years, we have held several great MPHS events, including a celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Michigan Catholic Conference; a salute to former Michigan Governor William Milliken (co-sponsored with the Michigan Environmental Council); a discussion of former Governor G. Mennen Williams (by Thomas Noer, author of the acclaimed biography "Soapy"); a presentation by Joe Schwarz and Eastern Michigan Professor Ed Sidlow, who chronicled Schwarz's time in Congress in the book "Freshman Orientation"; a salute to former House Speaker Paul Hillegonds; and a post-November 2006 election wrap-up (co-sponsored with the Michigan Political Leadership Program).
- 4) MPHS recently held the largest event in its history—the Celebration in Honor of the 25th Anniversary of the Election of Governor James J. Blanchard. Not only was that event a

tremendous success, but the proceeds from the event allowed us to create the Governor James J. Blanchard Living Library of Michigan Political History.

Of course, we are not content to rest on our laurels. I have identified several goals that I think MPHS can achieve in the next year. These include:

- 1) Increasing our membership by another hundred people by the end of 2008. We will conduct a membership drive early next year. We will be calling on members to give us the names of individuals whom they think might be interested in MPHS. With good member participation, we can achieve this goal.
- 2) Grow our endowment by 25%, to \$30,000. In order to help achieve that objective, we have re-introduced the MPHS life membership. Now, every time a person purchases a life membership (\$300), or makes a donation earmarked for the endowment, the entire sum will be deposited in the endowment.
- 3) Begin work on the Governor James J. Blanchard Living Library of Michigan Political History. We would like to have six histories completed by the end of 2008.

Well, those are only a few of our goals. I believe that with the continued hard work from our other officers (Kendra Howard and Mary Mertz-Smith), board members, and growing membership, we can accomplish these and other goals, and continue to build a successful MPHS.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any comments or suggestions.

Dave Murley
President



Who Should Represent Michigan in Statuary Hall?

When the Michigan Legislature debates political history, are they practicing the art of politics, or discussing history? Sometimes it is not so easy to separate the past from contemporary political issues. The Michigan Senate provided an example of that intersection this summer, when it considered a resolution (already passed by the Michigan House) regarding who would represent Michigan in Statuary Hall.

Statuary Hall is located in the United States Capitol Building, just south of the Capitol Rotunda. In 1864, Congress permitted each state to erect two statues in or around Statuary Hall honoring two individuals "illustrious for their historic renown or for their distinguished civic or military service." Michigan erected a statue to Lewis Cass in 1889 and Zachariah Chandler in 1913.

The Michigan Legislature is currently considering replacing the Chandler statue with a statue honoring Gerald R. Ford. The Gerald R. Ford Foundation has agreed to pay all costs associated with creating a Gerald R. Ford statue and placing it in the Capitol Building. They have also agreed to pay all costs associated with moving the Chandler statue to the Detroit Historical Museum.

The Michigan Political History Society does not take a position on this question. However, the issue is a fascinating one and raises many interesting questions. To give our readers a brief summary of the debate, we have two Michigan Senators (Tom George and Bill Hardiman) to respond to the question: Who should represent Michigan in Statuary Hall--Gerald R. Ford or Zachariah Chandler? ★

Keep Zachariah Chandler

President Ford's place in history is secure and tributes to him already exist in the Capitol, whereas removing Chandler's statue would erase an important part of Michigan's history.

In the US Capitol statuary hall collection, each state is allowed two statues depicting citizens of renown. The eclectic collection contains political figures, scientists, military leaders, social reformers, inventors, native leaders, and at least one entertainer (Will Rogers). Because Presidents are memorialized in so many other ways, most states have used their slots to focus on other aspects of their history. Hence, only four Presidents are depicted in the collection. Recent changes in Federal law now give states the latitude to change their statuary hall representation. Kansas is the only state to have made a change to date, though resolutions proposing exchanges have been introduced in a handful of other states.

In 1848, Zachariah Chandler, a businessman and Mayor of Detroit became a hero of the anti-slavery movement when he paid a Federal court fine levied against several citizens of Marshall, Michigan for aiding fugitive slaves. The Marshall residents had jailed Kentucky slave catchers who were attempting to recapture an escaped slave, Adam Crosswhite and his family. The Crosswhites subsequently escaped to Canada, but the Kentuckians pursued their claim in court and were awarded a hefty judgment for the loss of their "property." Chandler, a member of the Whig party, gained statewide notoriety and was chosen as the Whig's gubernatorial nominee in 1852.

In 1854, the debate over slavery intensified when the US House and Senate passed, and President Franklin Pierce

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Honor President Ford

The National Statuary Hall Collection is comprised of statues donated by individual states to honor persons notable in their history. I strongly feel that Michigan's only President, Gerald R. Ford should receive this honor. President Ford is probably the most recognizable figure in Michigan's political history. In recognition of his long and distinguished record, there would be no greater honor than having his statue in the United States Capitol Rotunda as a tribute from and to the State of Michigan.

Gerald R. Ford was raised in Grand Rapids and received his undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan. After receiving his law degree from Yale, he returned to Grand Rapids to establish a successful law practice. Following his military service, President Ford chose to continue serving others by running for Congress. Michigan voters of the Fifth Congressional District elected him to 13 terms as a member of the House of Representatives. During his 25 active years in Congress, he earned the respect of his peers on both sides of the aisle for his hard work and integrity and quickly ascended to leadership, to serving as the House Minority Leader. A former colleague, Michigan Democrat Martha Griffiths, perhaps best captured his integrity when she stated: "In all the years I sat in the House, I never knew Mr. Ford to make a dishonest statement nor a statement part-true or part false. He never attempted to shade a statement, and I never heard him utter an unkind word." Ford's history of public service and his outstanding character that, led to his appointment as Vice President of the United States and eventually to his becoming the 38th President of the United States.

When Ford assumed the Presidency, our country was involved in the worst crisis since the Civil War. There was widespread public disillusionment in the wake of Watergate and the Vietnam War. President Ford resolved that his time in office, however long or short, would be a time of healing. In the words of the Speaker of the House, Tip O'Neill: "God has

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Chandler

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signed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, allowing new states to choose whether they would be slave or free. This idea of "popular sovereignty" had long been championed by Michigan's senior US Senator, Lewis Cass, who saw it as a peaceable and fair way to resolve the slavery issue.

The reaction in Michigan was swift and dramatic, with Chandler and other anti-slavery leaders pointing out that the adoption of the Kansas-Nebraska Act opened the door for slavery to potentially spread northward. Chandler called for anti-slavery forces to work together in opposing the plan. Thus, the fusion movement involving anti-slavery Democrats, anti-slavery Whigs, and members of the Free Soil Party was born. The anti-slavery Whigs, led by Chandler, formed the largest contingent. The group met on July 6, 1854 in Jackson where they adopted a party platform, selected a slate of candidates for that fall's elections, and chose the name "Republican."

By 1856, the movement had spread to Illinois, where Abraham Lincoln reprised Chandler's role by bringing Illinois' Whigs into the new party. By 1857, Republicans had captured the Michigan legislature and elected Chandler to replace Cass in the US Senate. Chandler represented Michigan in the US Senate throughout the Civil War and later served as President Grant's Secretary of the Interior 1875-1877. He died in 1879 and rests in Elmwood Cemetery in Detroit.



Zachariah Chandler

Chandler played a pivotal role in determining the nation's future by helping to create the template by which Northern states would respond to the popular sovereignty movement. In crafting a new political party, Michigan's anti-slavery activists unified disparate forces and unleashed a series of events which would lead to the election of Lincoln as President and the succession of the South. Without Zachariah Chandler, there might never have been a Republican Party, or a President Ford.

Michigan was thoughtful and generous in its selection of

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Ford

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been good to America, especially during difficult times. At the time of the Civil War, he gave us Abraham Lincoln. And at the time of Watergate, he gave us Gerald Ford--The right man at the right time who was able to put the Nation back together." President Ford was not only successful in the healing process, he was successful in dealing with significant national and international issues during his relatively short time in office. His actions during mounting tensions in the world restored equilibrium to America and confidence in its international role and began the end of the Cold War. Domestically, he dealt with a devastating recession and stabilized the United States economy. In resolving these and numerous other issues, he utilized the courage of his convictions placing the national interest above all else, including politics.



President
Gerald R. Ford

With extraordinary public service to his state and country, it is only fitting that President Ford's statue be placed in the United States Capitol, a building he called "his home away from home." In commenting on the honor and expressing her gratitude for the consideration being given by the Michigan legislature and Governor to place President Ford's statue in the United States Capitol, Betty Ford shared: "The Capitol Building was my husband's home away from home when he served Michigan as a member of Congress for 25 years. It is uplifting to know that in this tribute, President Ford will reside in the Rotunda in the Capitol. As our nation's President, his image in the Rotunda would serve to remind visitors of Michigan's contributions to leadership at home and around the world."

There is precedent for replacing statues in the collection. In 2003, Kansas replaced the statue of former Governor George Washington Glick with one of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and California is in the process of replacing one of its statues with one of President Ronald Reagan. If approved by the Legislature and Governor, the Ford statue would have a permanent home in the Capitol Rotunda in recognition of his service as a President of the United States. Currently, there are only two open spaces available in the Rotunda for statues. If Michigan acts in a timely manner, not only can we give our President the recognition he rightly deserves, we can also have one of Michigan's statues placed in arguably the most traveled section of the Capitol

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Trials of a Freshman Lawmaker

By Phyllis Washburn

Political history buffs and Michigan Political History Society members were treated to an entertaining evening filled with anecdotes regarding the complicated and tumultuous environment freshmen lawmakers endure in Washington, D.C.

Congressman Joe Schwarz, who served in Congress from 2005-2006 joined Eastern Michigan University Professor Edward Sidlow, author of the book *Freshman Orientation: House Style and Home Style*, at the Michigan Chamber of Commerce on July 18, to discuss the trials and tribulations rookie lawmakers face in Washington. Centered on the challenges Michigan's own Congressman Schwarz faced as he embarked on his journey to D.C., the book provides an insider's perspective of the often understated transition between running an election and becoming an elected official.

Schwarz, a Republican from Battle Creek, who has served Michigan in many capacities, including terms as both a Michigan State Senator and a United States Congressman, was an ideal subject for Sidlow's book.

During the event, Sidlow spoke of the difficulty faced by freshmen congressman, Schwarz included, who do not have prior Washington experience yet are immediately expected to learn the complexities of the House while also setting up a functioning congressional office. Sidlow discussed the critical and overwhelming questions he witnessed Schwarz make, and that other freshmen lawmakers must make, as well, including: How do I find and hire a competent staff? How then do I divide office responsibilities? How do I meet the right people and get the committee assignments that will encompass what I want to get done for my district? How do I know what to do in order to succeed in D.C.?

Freshmen legislators are given just seven short weeks, from their election in November until taking office in January, to figure out the Washington political environment. Sidlow compares this political adventure to that of starting a small business: a task even the most successful business entrepreneur may deem nearly impossible.

"Freshmen members of Congress are required to hire a staff of at least a dozen, equip offices and learn the rules of the game – all in seven short weeks," Sidlow, a longtime political admirer, said. "You are in a new city, with a new job, with new rules and new people. No matter how experienced you are in politics, you have to learn, and learn quickly, all the nuances of the House."

Sidlow noted that while the task was large, Schwarz did well for himself. "[Congressman Schwarz] got three of his four requested committee assignments – not a small feat for a freshman."

Sidlow said his interest in national politics – real politics, not the CNN view of Congress, he is quick to clarify – inspired him to write *Freshman Orientation*. A Michigan native, Sidlow was a

constituent of Schwarz's who has also authored the American Government textbook, *America at Odds*, and *Challenging the Incumbent: An Underdog's Undertaking*.

To gain such a thorough and extensive knowledge of Schwarz's freshman tribulations, Sidlow traveled frequently to our nation's capitol and was in regular contact with the congressman and his staff.

"We had a good time with [Sidlow]," Schwarz said. "He was given free access to my office, my staff and myself, and he was a joy to come down and deal with."

Sidlow and Schwarz explored the details of what elected officials actually accomplish. Sidlow noted that while working with Schwarz, he observed that the bulk of the workload for Schwarz and his staff concerned constituent casework, not lofty policy arguments. This led Sidlow to question the role of a congressman.

But it was not just the tension between mundane constituent case matters and policy making that grabbed Sidlow's attention. Other factors distort the policy making process. Sidlow suggests, "[T]he intersection between public policy and politics is a dangerous one and can be very troubling." After



Congressman Joe Schwarz and Author Edward Sidlow, *Freshman Orientation*



Mary Mertz-Smith, Vice President MPHS, Edward Sidlow, Author of *Freshman Orientation* and Dave Murley, President MPHS

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Freshman Lawmaker

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all, the pure model of representation, according to Sidlow, is one where the representative considers what the district wants him to do, what the best approach is for his district, and then uses this consideration to decide what he/she will do and how he/she will vote on any particular topic. Oftentimes the role of an elected official is tainted by the threat of an upcoming election, pressure from leadership, or a twenty-four hour news cycle.

Schwarz commented on the differences between serving in the state legislature and the Congress, a transition he remembers clearly. In Lansing, legislators can travel home to sleep, work and enjoy their district. He called the culture in D.C. dysfunctional in the sense that most representatives are not independently wealthy and cannot afford a second home in D.C. This keeps them from their spouses and children for several weeks out of the year.

Schwarz also discussed the change brought about in Washington due to the ease of travel. "Members don't socialize or get to know each other," Schwarz said. "This creates an atmosphere that is different from earlier years. The rush to the airport on Thursdays is responsible in part

for D.C.'s 'hyper-partisanship,' the inability to know and like fellow representatives, and the lack of collegiality."

The common and often unseen threat that unites all new lawmakers is the struggle to get their bearings in their new roles and transition into an effective lawmaker and representative.

Following the discussion, both Schwarz and Sidlow took questions from the audience.

A practicing doctor, Joseph Schwarz earned a B.A from the University of Michigan, and his M.D. from Wayne State University. After serving as a combat surgeon in the U.S. Navy, Schwarz worked as a Central Intelligence Agency operative in Southeast Asia. He returned to Battle Creek in 1974, and has been a practicing physician in Battle Creek since, though he gave up his practice after his election to Congress in 2004.

Edward Sidlow teaches American Politics and Congress and The Presidency at Eastern Michigan University. He has taught at Miami of Ohio, Northwestern University and is a former administrator at Loyola University. ★

Chandler

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Chandler for the statuary hall collection. In 1911, thirty four years after his death, the legislature appropriated \$15,000 to commission and erect his statue. In contrast, the Ford proposal comes just a few months after his passing, and though the offer of private funding from the Ford Foundation for the statue is generous, it does not convey the sense of public support the Chandler statue merited.

Gerald Ford's place in history and in the Capitol is secure and would be unchanged by the addition of another statue. As a former vice-president, Gerald Ford's bust already resides in the Capitol. He is memorialized by a presidential library, museum, foundation, federal building, airport, aircraft carrier, highway, Boy Scout Council, schools of public policy, etc. As part of a presidential series, his image will appear on a dollar coin, and in a few years he will be eligible to appear on an US stamp. Gerald Ford will not be forgotten. Chandler, should Michigan act to replace his statue, soon will.

State Senator Tom George ★

Ford

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building. However, if Michigan does not act now, that space will be taken by another state. President Reagan's statue would take one of those spots and President Ford's statue would assume the second location.

In giving President Ford the honor of a place in the Statuary Hall Collection, we would receive a permanent location in the Capitol Rotunda, which will significantly increase Michigan's presence in the collection at our nation's Capitol. One predicament with the National Statuary Hall Collection is each statue only has the individual's name, but does not expound on their historical importance to each state, so even though Chandler is in the current collection many visitors of the Capitol Building are unaware of his accomplishments. Bringing the Chandler statue back to the Detroit Historical Museum would give a new generation of Michigan citizens the ability to learn about Chandler's accomplishments as an abolitionist, Mayor of Detroit, United States Senator and leader of the Republican Party. I wholeheartedly feel that bringing the Chandler statue to a prominent place in Michigan while putting President Ford's statue in a prestigious position in the Capitol Rotunda would be a two fold victory for the State of Michigan.

Senator Bill Hardiman ★

George Romney's Summer of 1967

By Charles Harmon

A 10-week period in mid-1967 witnessed three major developments that would have a far-reaching impact on Michigan, on Detroit, and on the state's leading citizen of that time. The rebirth of the MPHS newsletter has provided an opportunity for some observations about the events of 40 years ago, with a few personal observations tossed in.

Tax Reform

In the early part of 1967, Governor Romney was enmeshed in at least two major undertakings. First he had launched an unofficial drive for the 1968 Republican presidential nomination. A trip west in the spring prompted press criticism of so-called "fuzziness" on the issue of Vietnam. His front runner position in various polls at the end of 1966 had diminished, with Richard Nixon passing him in some, albeit slightly.

Meanwhile the Michigan fiscal situation had deteriorated for the first time in his four-plus year tenure. He had made tax reform a key goal early in his administration. A drive for the legislative action failed in March, as six Republicans joined with 17 Democrats to defeat his income tax plan in the Senate. The result was an increasing national undercurrent suggesting his inability to lead at home.

Romney gave a major speech on Vietnam on April 7 in Hartford, Conn., then canceled a trip to South America and returned to Lansing to intensify his tax reform efforts. A budget surplus estimated at \$167 million in mid-1966 was disappearing and by mid-June a fiscal crisis was becoming more likely.

Romney worked over lawmakers one at a time over the final days of the fiscal year (Michigan then had a July-through-June fiscal year). On June 29 both the Senate and the House approved a slightly reworked program creating, for the first time, the personal and corporate income tax. The new taxes were projected to raise some \$270 million in state revenues.

The Detroit News said Romney had gained "another dramatic home-front political victory in his drive for the Republican presidential nomination."

Detroit Riot

There is often little time given to smell the roses. Three weeks after Romney's tax triumph the worst civil disorder in Michigan's history exploded in Detroit.

This article will not thoroughly describe and/or interpret that riot. Many others have done so in great detail over the years. But for the benefit of those not alive then or not versed in what happened, this is simply intended as a summary, and admittedly a biased one.



George Romney

A police raid on a "blind pig" in the heart of the African-American neighborhoods in the hot early Sunday morning hours of July 23 led to a skirmish with locals which grew rapidly. By mid-afternoon that hot Sunday a riot was in full force across the city and would continue for most of the remainder of the week.

Romney's legal aide, Robert Danhof (a fellow MPHS member) had been alerted by the State Police just before 8 a.m. on Sunday morning. He in turn alerted the Governor, who began frequent conversations with Detroit Mayor Jerry Cavanagh and other officials. At first their assessments of the situation were low keyed and suggested the situation could be controlled locally. But by mid-afternoon the Governor released the State Police to assist Detroit and shortly afterwards mobilized the National Guard, encamped many miles away at Camp Grayling.

News of the growing riot had been blacked out in the media. As a result I was enjoying a summer neighborhood

party in Meridian Township when the Governor reached me. A short time later I met Danhof at State Police headquarters on Harrison Road and we were flown by helicopter to downtown Detroit. We truly could not believe what awaited us. It reminded us of movies of the London blitz. Detroit was ablaze. We landed on the Cobo Hall parking garage and Detroit police drove us to the headquarters.

The next five days were almost surreal. It was like going into battle without training or preparation. Arson, looting, and sniping ruled the city. We worked around the clock out of the police headquarters. A special office was set up for the Governor a few steps from that of Police Commissioner Ray Girardin, where strategy meetings were ongoing. A press room was nearby and briefings were frequent. When I could, I caught naps on a cot in Girardin's dressing room.

Periodically we would go to the headquarters roof to see the growing conflagration that was burning down the inner city. We would also listen to the police and fire radios describing the street battles between snipers and officers. The jail across the street from the headquarters quickly overflowed and city buses containing prisoners jammed the streets. By riot's end there would be some 6,500 arrests, and we eventually turned the state fairgrounds into a holding camp.

We were obviously also dealing with a media surge arriving steadily from across the country. And smaller versions of the riot had popped up in eight other southern Michigan cities.

By early Monday morning, July 24, it was clear we needed help. The Governor and the Mayor agreed to ask the federal government for troops. The rest of the day was a political hell as President Lyndon Johnson and his aides, led by Attorney General Ramsay Clark, ran the Governor and Cavanagh through many hoops before sending the troops. One of the major holdups was Clark's demand that Romney indicate an insurrection existed. Romney had been advised by Danhof that the use of that term would

Summer of 1967

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void most fire insurance policies. So Romney refused.

Airborne troops finally began to arrive at Selfridge AFB late Monday afternoon but were held back from the streets for another 12 hours. At midnight Johnson was on nationwide television, announcing the decision to use the paratroopers because, in his opinion, Romney and local officials could not control the situation. Romney was visibly angered by LBJ's blatant politics (Romney was still considered Johnson's likely opponent in 1968). Many years later, biographies of Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas, a close Johnson confidante, indicated he was at Johnson's elbow during the peak of the riot and negotiations, advising him politically and legally. At no time did LBJ communicate directly with Romney.

By Wednesday, Detroit and the other cities had begun to quiet down. I was able to return home for awhile on Friday, returning Saturday to help prepare a statewide television address to the people aired on Sunday evening. That same day the New York Times carried an article obviously planted by the White House in which major blame was placed on Romney's shoulders, charging him with vacillating at key moments. There had been no effort to obtain Romney's comments before publication.

The next day Romney held a press conference at Cobo Hall to rebut the article and attempt to set the record straight. He was asked whether he felt troops were kept out of Detroit at first for political reasons. "I think the President of the United States played politics in a period of tragedy and riot," he responded.

The real toll of the week was essentially this: 43 dead, several hundred injured, over a thousand fires, property damage totaling \$500 million, and a major volume of arrests and prosecutions.

The political toll was more difficult to assess. National polls indicated that LBJ had gotten the worse of the public's opinions about the week's dispute.

Romney climbed back up in the same polls, albeit briefly, and spent the next month attending in part to the immediate aftermath of the riot and other state business.

"Brainwash"

By the end of August Romney was ready to return to the national battleground. On August 31 he recorded an interview program, "Hot Seat", with well-known Detroit interrogator Lou Gordon on Channel 50.

When Gordon got around to asking Romney about Vietnam, the following exchange occurred:

Gordon: Isn't your position a bit inconsistent with what it was? And what do you propose we do now?

Romney: Well, you know, when I came back from Vietnam (in 1965), I had just had the greatest brainwashing that anybody can get. When you—

Gordon: By the generals?

Romney: Not only by the generals but also by the diplomatic corps over there. They do a very thorough job. Since returning from Vietnam, I've gone into the history of Vietnam, all the way back into World War II and before. And, as a result, I have changed my mind....

Gordon didn't understand what he had just heard, and he went on to other subjects. In fact, he still didn't grasp the scope of the exchange when he put out a press release that Labor Day weekend drumbeating the program. Reflecting another interchange in which Romney said he would not be a vice presidential candidate (no presidential candidate ever says he will be), Gordon head-lined the press release, "Michigan Governor Say No To Vice Presidential Post." I was at a Labor Day get-together at Port Huron at the home of Jack McIntosh, another Romney advisor, and we heard the Gordon release on radio news. After yawning a bit, we went on with our party.

Back to work on Tuesday, there still had been no pinpointing of the volatile statement, even by the national PR aide who accompanied Romney to the taping. Then the lid blew off.

Two reporters, one with Associated Press and the other with the New York Times, had read the transcript of the program, picked up on the "brainwash"

statement, and called for comment. I stalled long enough to get the transcript. We made efforts to convince the governor to move immediately to control the damage, but he was adamant about the correctness of his statement.

History would support his position, but at that time it was, conservatively speaking, a public relations disaster. Foes and friends alike attacked the statement. It opened Romney to ridicule in the media across the country. It became an example of the fact that one word can destroy months of image building, rightly or wrongly.

I was recently re-reading William Safire's 1993 "New Political Dictionary." He defines "brainwash" and then uses the Romney statement as an example of the damage that can occur. If he had said he had been misled, or if he had pointed to the administration's credibility gap, as he did in a fine speech later in Oregon...but Romney said "brainwash," a politically-charged word that left his ability to lead in foreign policy in question in too many minds.

In the following weeks Romney's poll numbers plummeted dramatically, going from the 30's to the teens. He continued to speak across the country and provided detailed testimony before the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, commonly known as the Kerner Commission on September 12.

Romney formally announced for the presidency on November 18, but withdrew some three and half months later as the handwriting in the first major primary, in New Hampshire, was blatantly clear. His presidential hopes were over.

A month later, on March 31, Lyndon Johnson also withdrew.

But that's another year, and another story.

Note: The author, Charles Harmon, was George Romney's press secretary, in 1964-69. After retirement from other duties in 1994, he began the writing of political history, and has published a dozen magazine articles and a book. A former editor of this newsletter, he is a life member of MPHS. He and his wife, Bobbie, reside in Green Valley, Arizona 35 miles north of Mexico and some 200 miles from George Romney's birthplace in Chihuahua. ★

The Governor James J. Blanchard Living Library of Michigan Political History

The Governor James J. Blanchard Living Library of Michigan Political History will consist of a series of recorded interviews with those individuals who have shaped, chronicled, and observed Michigan's political history. These interviews will be recorded on DVD and distributed to Michigan Government Television (MGTV), local cable stations, and other interested broadcast outlets. Further, copies of the interviews will be sent to the libraries of the University of Michigan, Wayne State, and Michigan State, as well as to the Michigan Historical Library. MPHS will also make copies available to interested members of the public.

Our goals behind the Governor James J. Blanchard Living Library of Michigan Political History are two-fold. The first is to record the stories, experiences, and observations of these political figures. It is important for historical purposes that we have information concerning the rise of the conservative wing of the GOP, or Gov. Milliken's special relationship with Coleman Young, or what really happened at the Michigan Constitutional Convention. Every time one of Michigan's political giants passes away—whether it was George Romney a dozen years ago or Guy VanderJagt earlier this year—I hear regrets that MPHS

missed its opportunity to interview these individuals. With the Governor James J. Blanchard Living Library of Michigan Political History in place, we will have the resources to conduct these important interviews.

The second goal behind the Library is to broadcast and disseminate these video interviews as widely as possible. While it is important to conduct and record these interviews, it is also important that people see them. Thus, we will make them available to any outlet that wishes to show them or any person who wishes to view them. Part of our strategy for achieving this goal is to design these interviews in a consistent and attractive manner so that members of the public will know what to expect and will want to watch future interviews.

We at MPHS are extremely excited to have the opportunity to compile these oral histories for the state of Michigan. It is because of the efforts and generosity of Governor and Janet Blanchard—and their many friends—that we will have the opportunity to create this library. If you get an opportunity, please thank the Blanchards for their generous legacy to Michigan's civic culture. ★

Life Members

Would like to thank the following people for becoming life members of MPHS:

Jim Barrett
Ron and Sara Basso (*In honor of Libero Angeli*)
Lynette Brown (*In honor of Donald Brown*)
Robert Campau
William Cilluffo
Tom Farrell
Peter Fletcher (*In honor of William G. Milliken*)
Winifred Fraser
Gary Heidel
Frederick Hoffman and James Stokes
Judge Harold Hood
Olivia Maynard (*In honor of Lynn Jondahl*)
Dennis and Deborah Muchmore
David Murley and Sarah Hubbard
Peter Ruddell
Dan Stump
Steve Webster

Life Memberships can be made in your name or in honor of another person/ persons. All proceeds from MPHS life memberships go to the MPHS Endowment. If you are interested in becoming a MPHS life member, please contact Linda Cleary at (517) 333-7996 or linda.cleary@sbcglobal.net.



Mackinac Island Historical Weekend

MPHS Life Member and Grand Hotel owner Dan Musser Sr. treated MPHS members to a special weekend on Mackinac Island over August 24-26, 2007.

The Musser family provided a complementary reception for MPHS members early Friday evening. The next morning, Mr. Musser took MPHS members on a “political history” tour of the Grand Hotel. The tour started with visits to the major meeting rooms of the hotel, such as The Theatre and Brighton Pavilion, each of which had a political story associated with it. The tour then progressed downstairs, where Mr. Musser led the MPHS group through the Garden Terrace and its massive collection of political pictures. Here, one’s jaw could drop at the pictures of the major political events, such as various National Governors Conferences, Republican Leadership Conferences, and Detroit Regional Chamber Conferences hosted by the Grand.



MPHS members

Musser, who began working at the Grand Hotel in 1951 and became President in 1960, also captivated MPHS members with his stories of the nationally-renown political figures who have visited or stayed at the Grand—Bill Clinton, George Bush, Harry Truman, John F. Kennedy—and his relationship with those Michigan politicians who have had a special relationship with Mackinac, such as Gerald Ford, Frank Kelley, Jim Blanchard, and “Soapy” Williams.



Curtis Hertel Sr. and Peter Eckstein

The afternoon concluded with the story of the Mackinac Bridge, delivered by Kim Nowack, Chief Engineer of the Mackinac Bridge Authority.

The Political History Weekend was a “Grand” treat for all MPHS members lucky enough to attend. Our thanks to the Musser family for their wonderful hospitality. ★



MPHS visits Grand Hotel
and Mackinac Island

Tom Cleary, Dan Musser, Sarah Hubbard, Dave Murley

Bully! The Roosevelt Centennial Celebration

On May 31st, 1907, Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt addressed the Michigan Legislature. The immensely popular president Roosevelt had come to Lansing to speak at the Michigan Agricultural College (now MSU) commencement. Roosevelt was the only sitting president to visit the Capitol until Bill Clinton’s visit in 1997.

The President Roosevelt Centennial Committee, which included co-chairs Senators Cameron Brown, Tom George, and Liz Brater, as well as MPHS Vice President Mary-Mertz-Smith—celebrated the centennial in grand fashion. The celebration began on May 30 with a reception and lecture at the Michigan Historical Center by Dr. H.W. Brands—author of *TR: The Last Romantic*—spoke.

On May 31st, TR (actually noted Roosevelt impersonator Keith McGough) arrived at the Capitol in a 1905 R.E.O. (see photo) driven by Gregory Olds Stephens, great great grandson of Ransom E. Olds. The 1907 TR then entered the Senate Chamber and delivered the very speech that Roosevelt delivered in 1907. The speech was as well received in 2007 as it was in 1907. After the speech, Roosevelt’s great grandson, Tweed Roosevelt, vice-chair of the Theodore Roosevelt Association, offered remarks. MGTV recorded the speech a copy of which will be added to the MPHS library. ★



TR comes to town! “TR” (Keith McGough) on his way to the State Capitol Building in a 1905 R.E.O. driven by Gregory Olds Stephens, great great grandson of Ransom E. Olds, TR’s chauffeur in 1907. Greg and TR are accompanied by Greg’s father and owner of the vehicle, Peter (front seat), and committee member Jim Perkins (back seat) who was instrumental in arranging for the participation of the Stephens family.

For questions about MPHS, please contact Linda Cleary, Administrative Director at (517) 333-7996 or via email at linda.cleary@sbcglobal.net. Please also visit our website at: www.miphs.com for more information.

Michigan Political History
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