

Michigan Political History Society NEWS

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Russell Kirk, PhD

Doctor Russell Kirk was one of Michigan's most prominent philosophical and political thinkers. The following eulogy was delivered by Gleaves Whitney on behalf of Governor John Engler at Doctor Kirk's funeral in Grand Rapids on May 3, 1994. Doctor Kirk's autobiography will be published later this year.

Russell Kirk once wrote: "Men are put into this world...to struggle, to suffer, to contend against the evil that is in the neighbors and in themselves, and to aspire toward the triumph of Love. They are put into this world to live like men and to die like men."

By his own measure, Russell Kirk lived a robust and manly life, and he died a noble and manly death.

Let it be said at the outset - without hesitation and without qualification - Russell Kirk was a great man. His work will stand as one of the most significant intellectual achievements of our time. That is because he understood our time. Before his most famous book, *The Conservative Mind*, was accepted for publication, Russell Kirk wrote a letter to a friend in which he said: "This work is 'my contribution to our endeavor to conserve the spiritual and intellectual and political tradition of our civilization; and if we are to rescue the modern mind we must do it very soon...the struggle will be decided in the minds of the rising generation.'"

There can be no doubt that Russell Kirk reached many minds and touched many hearts over the last four decades. His words coursed over the continents and across the generations. He touched us not just because of what he said, but how he said it. This "Bohemian Tory," this "canny Scot" possessed an excellent ear for the language and his readers felt all the force of his personality in his prose.

And then there were the many personal qualities that endeared Russell Kirk to us. He was a wise mentor, a loyal friend, and a faithful correspondent. Who could for-

get his keen wit, those fantastic ghost stories, and that mischievous twinkle in his eyes? He was devoted to his family - a wonderful family so many of us have come to know: his lovely wife Annette, their four beautiful daughters, his sons-in-law, and the larger family. For years they have opened their arms to us, as today we open our arms to them.

Russell Kirk had an uncommonly generous spirit - a spirit that never flagged, but gave tirelessly. It is evident in his letters and lectures, his books and conversation. Weakened though he was toward the end of his life, Dr. Kirk's last public gesture was to sign books from his bed, because he knew how much that would mean to his readers and friends. The last book he signed, just over a week ago, was to Governor John Engler.

Russell Kirk was very much a Michigan man - one of us. We can imagine him as a young boy, reading historical adventures by the train yards in Plymouth where his father worked. We can think of him as a gifted teacher at his alma mater, Michigan State. We can see him walking out of that drafty old library at Piety Hill and turning down the road which leads to the woods.

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He loved Michigan. Soon his heart will make its final journey back to the "stump country" that he called his ancestral home, to return to the land that shaped him. But his spirit now knows its true and eternal home. And the wisdom in his writings will remain to help those of us still on this earthly pilgrimage. Indeed, for generations to come, his words will find a resting place wherever there is right reason, and wherever there is a heart in search of the Permanent Things.

Today we mourn. We have lost a friend. Michigan has lost its pre-eminent man of letters. America has lost one of the men who understood her best.

We mourn, but Russell would not want us to become too melancholy this day. In the Epilogue of his memoirs, which he recently composed and which will be published next year, Russell Kirk tells us that he lived a good life. He says at the age of 75 he had come to understand that what he sought in life came down to three things.

First, he sought to defend the Permanent Things - truth, justice, freedom, a tolerable moral order - and in so

doing he was more successful that he thought would be possible at the outset of his career.

Second, he sought to lead a life of decent independence, living much as his ancestors had lived, on their land, in circumstances that would enable him to utter the truth and make his voice heard; a life uncluttered and unpolluted, not devoted to getting and spending. This, he tells us, he had achieved as a man of letters at Piety Hill.

Third, he had sought to marry for love and to rear children who would come to know that the service of God is perfect freedom. Words cannot express how full of gratitude he was for Annette and his children, who were endowed with the unbought grace of life. In this, too, he had been wonderfully blessed.

To Russell Kirk, the three goals of his life had been reached, and he was grateful. And we who are here today can be grateful that we knew him, and that he walked a little distance with us, in our journey to our eternal home.

First MPHS Event of 1995 Explores Incomparable Career of Frank Murphy

Over 90 MPHS members and their guests learned about the career of Frank Murphy, who held more public offices than any Michigan citizen in history, at the first MPHS event of 1995 on February 9 at the Country Club of Lansing. Senator John J.H. Schwarz moderated the presentation by one of Michigan's most prominent political historians, Professor Sidney Fine of the University of Michigan.

Frank Murphy was born in Sand Beach (now Harbor Beach), Michigan in 1890 and educated in Michigan. He was successively first assistant United States attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan (1919-22), judge on the Detroit Recorder's Court (1924-30), mayor of Detroit during the Great Depression (1930-33), last governor-general of the Phil-

ippine Islands and the first American high commissioner to the Philippine Commonwealth (1933-36), first Catholic governor of Michigan (1937-38), attorney general of the United States (1939-40), and justice of the United States Supreme Court (1940-49). Although he did not fulfill his ambition of becoming the first Catholic President of the United States, Frank Murphy's term as governor of Michigan and as mayor of Detroit will be remembered for many social and administrative reforms. He died in 1949.

After receiving his doctorate from the University of Michigan, Professor Sidney Fine enjoyed a distinguished career of teaching and writing. Doctor Fine is the author of numerous books and articles on the labor movement and the automobile

industry, and his writings on Frank Murphy include three books and over one dozen articles. His work in these areas was recognized through several University of Michigan Press Awards and an Award of Merit from the Association of States and Local History. He was recognized as the Henry Russel Lecturer - the University of Michigan's highest faculty honor - for 1984-85. Several former students of Professor Fine's - including Senator Schwarz - attended the February 9 session.

In exploring Murphy's career in public office, Professor Fine gave particular attention to Murphy's service on the Detroit Recorder's Court and to his handling of Flint auto workers' sit down strike against General Motors.

OFFICERS' CORNER

Sharman A. Moore, President

Anne Mervenne, Vice-President

Kevin A. Kelly, Secretary-Treasurer

Civility

Civility as Major Goal

A major goal of the Michigan Political History Society is to encourage and promote civility and respect in Michigan politics.

According to the dictionary, 'Civility' is generally associated with behavior characterized by manners, courtesy, respect and propriety. Throughout history, state and national leaders have elaborated on that definition, providing thought provoking ideas on civility in politics.

The ultimate definition of civility was provided by Congressman Robert H. Michel (IL) when he spoke at the funeral of Congressman Paul Henry in August 1993. The first Michigan Political History Society newsletter shared Congressman Michel's words; in fact, they inspired the inclusion of civility as a goal of the society:

- ◇ Civility means knowing that raising the level of your voice doesn't raise the level of the discussion.
- ◇ It means recognizing that listening is a very good way of communicating.
- ◇ Civility means realizing that peaks of uncommon progress can be reached by paths of common courtesy.
- ◇ Civility means being tough without being mean and being principled without being fanatic.
- ◇ Civility means believing in the power of reason to influence public debate and the power of the spirit to transform private lives.
- ◇ Civility is the public embodiment of the Golden Rule: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.'

Other thoughts regarding civility include:

"...To establish a climate of decency and civility, in which each person respects the feelings and the dignity and the God-given rights of his neighbor..." (President Richard M. Nixon in an address to the nation on April 30, 1973.)

"Have we the humility to accept that our ideas are not the only ideas and that civility and thoughtful dialogue accomplish more than voices raised in anger" (William G. Milliken, May 12, 1994 Michigan House Republican Dinner, Dearborn, Michigan.)

Origin of the 'Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior.'

"The (110) Rules of Civility were composed originally, or compiled, and published in France, by the Jesuits, about 1595; they were translated into English by Francis Hawkins about 1640, and passed through no fewer than eleven editions down to 1672....One copy came into the hands of George Washington, who from it wrote out the manuscript that is among Washington's Papers purchased from the family by Congress in 1834 and 1849, and held in the Department of State until 1903, when they were transferred to the Library of Congress...(George Washington compiled his version of the 110 Rules before he reached the age of 16 years)...These maxims were so fully exemplified in George Washington's life that biographers have regarded them as formative influences in the development of his character" (George Washington's Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour, Charles Moore 1926).

Some of the more profound Rules applicable to civility in today's political arena include:

- 1 Every action done in Company, ought to be with Some Sign of Respect, to those that are Present.
- 2 Let your conversation be without Malice or Envy...
- 3 Never express anything unbecoming...
- 4 Speak not injurious Words neither in Jest nor Earnest Scoff at non although they give Occasion
- 5 In Disputes, be not So Desirous to Overcome as not to give Liberty to each one to deliver his opinion...

Don't these make you think?

Civility in Leadership

Elected officials (and those who seek to be) are representatives of the people of Michigan who are to lead this State into the future and determine the rules by which we live. As such, it seems that it is the responsibility of our politicians to assume the role of leadership and set

Continued on next page

the standards of behavior in the pursuit of elected office and public policy; thereby, giving the citizens of this great State a renewed belief in the political process.

Through exploration of events and people that have shaped our state's history, Michigan Political History Society members have learned more about the best and the worst moments in that history. We were impressed with the obvious respect and collegiaty among delegates of both parties to the 1963 Constitutional Convention, when they shared their recollections with MPHS members at an

October 12, 1994 gathering. We were intrigued with the allegations and investigation leading to the murder of Senator Warren Hooper in 1945. We have shared moving words of eulogy for political and thought leaders whose careers will be remembered for the civility and respect they inspired.

We look forward to future opportunities to learn more about those who have promoted civility and respect through their careers in public service and welcome comments from members on how we can promote civility.

Annual Meeting

The annual membership meeting of the Michigan Political History Society is scheduled for Saturday, March 18, 1995 at 9:00 a.m. at the Michigan State Medical Society, 120 West Saginaw, East Lansing. Please return the reservation form included in this newsletter and plan to join us to share the good news of our growth and future plans.

Annual Meeting Agenda

1. Call meeting to order
2. Approval of 1994 Annual Meeting Minutes
3. Approval of Agenda
4. President's Report - Sharman A. Moore
 - ◇ Welcome
 - ◇ Moment of Silence for Governor John Swainson
 - ◇ Overview of 1994
5. Vice-President's Report - Anne Mervenne
6. Secretary/Treasurer's Report - Kevin A. Kelly
7. Nominating Committee's Report - Kevin A. Kelly
 - Election of Board Members
 - ◇ Nominations
 - ◇ Expiration of 1-year terms
 - ◇ Board Vacancy
8. Proposed Changes to Bylaws
 - ◇ A change will be proposed to Article XI of the bylaws to include a two year term of office for the president, vice-president and secretary-treasurer.
9. Election of Officers
10. Committee Chair Reports 1994-95
 - ◇ Membership and Development Committee - Kevin A. Kelly
 - ◇ Newsletter Committee - Mary Anne Ford
 - ◇ Archives Committee - Dennis Cawthorne
 - ◇ Events and Functions Committee - Sharon Reid
11. Old Business
 - ◇ Attorney's Report - Tom Downs
12. New Business

Michigan Political History Society Annual Meeting Reservation Form

I plan to attend the March 18, 1995 annual meeting of the Michigan Political History Society.

Name: _____

Please return this form to MPHS, P.O. Box 4684, East Lansing, MI 48826-4684, if you plan to attend the meeting.

Future 1995 Events to Examine Women's Suffrage and Women in Michigan Politics

The Michigan Political History Society will cosponsor a picnic in celebration of the anniversary of women's suffrage at the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame. All proceeds for the June 7 picnic will benefit the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame.

Women in Michigan politics will be explored at a dinner planned for October 1, 1995 at the Michigan Athletic Club. Mark your calendars and watch the newsletter and mailings for more information on both events.

1995 Membership Statements

Current members of the Michigan Political History Society will receive statements for 1995 dues. 1995 dues will continue to be \$20.00 for regular memberships; \$10.00 for students; and \$150.00 for life memberships. A membership application is included in the newsletter. We encourage all members to share this newsletter and other information about MPHS - a nonprofit organization - with a friend or colleague.

Welcome, New Members

Membership in the Michigan Political History Society continues to grow. The Michigan Political History Society welcomes the following new members, who joined prior to January 26, 1995:

Barbara A. K. Adams
Laura Baird
Don Binkowski
Lleopold P. Borrello
Robert L. Brackenridge
John B. Bruff
Diane Byrum
Richard Cole
Paul Conn
Mark H. Cousins
Donald DeCook
C. Ronald Dufina
M. McCourt-Dufina
Vern Ehlers
David Faverman
Kenneth Fletcher
Phillip Frangos
Russell B. Frazen
Susan Garcia
R. Robert Geake
Margaret C. Halava
Beverly Hammerstrom
Kenneth Heininger
Maureen Herstek
Paul Hillegonds
David Honigman
Mitch Irwin

Jack R. Jelsema
J. Richard Johnson
Douglas C. Kelley
Mary Lou Kendrigan
William King
James Lincoln
John H. Logie
Patrick McCollough
Larry Meyer
Robert Morris
Kirk Profit
David H. Sawyer
Eric Schertzing
Nancy Schertzing
Theodore W. Seitz
Tom Shawver
Kimbal Smith
L'Mell Smith
Gregory Starks
Robert W. Swanson
John Thodis
Robert Vandermark
Harold J. Voorhees
George Weeks
Sherry Wilson
James Edward Wyszynski

The Michigan Political History Society extends best wishes to Lieutenant Governor Binsfeld and wishes her a speedy recovery and future years of good health.

We extend our sympathy to the families and friends of State Senators William Faust and Jerome Hart and State Representative Dominic Jacobetti.

This Month in Michigan Political History...

January 11 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the slaying of Senator Warren Hooper. The 1945 incident occurred three days before Hooper was to testify before a grand jury that was investigating corruption in the Michigan legislature. The event was recalled in the book "Three Bullets Sealed His Lips," and was the subject of the Michigan Political History Society's inaugural event in 1993.

The Stewards of the State

On September 18, 1994, the Michigan Political History Society hosted another event bringing our Michigan history alive as we invited author George Weeks to describe his book "The Stewards of the State" - a book describing the lineage of governors from Governor Stevens T. Mason to Governor John Engler. In our efforts to learn more about the history and time of our governors, George Weeks described several items he learned along the way in researching Michigan's governors and we were treated to a historical movie describing Michigan's Stewards of the State narrated by Charlton Heston.

In bringing to life Michigan's "Stewards of the State" George Weeks described the fact that Governor G. Mennen Williams felt that each and every one of us stands on the shoulders of our predecessors as he described the cycle of governors in Michigan.

◇ Stevens T. Mason was the youngest governor of the state and nation history as he became Michigan's first elected governor at age 25. Louis Cass was Michigan's first territorial governor in 1824. Stevens T. Mason brought Michigan into statehood in 1837 and left office in controversy after some financial setbacks including a development plan to build canals across the state of Michigan.

◇ Governor William Greenly served the shortest tenure of any Michigan governor - 10 months - in 1847. Governor Frank Fitzgerald served only two months of his term before dying in 1939, but had served a full term in 1935-1936.

◇ Epaphroditus Ransom was the first politician in Michigan to head both the executive and judicial branches

of state government. He served from 1948 to 1850 as governor and as chief justice of the Michigan Supreme Court in 1843-1847.

◇ Whose statue is out in front of the State Capitol...why Governor Austin Blair, of course...the "Civil War Governor" who served from 1861 to 1864.

◇ Governor M. Croswell was the governor at the time of our State's Capitol dedication in 1979.

◇ Michigan's first foreign born governor, Fred M. Warner, was born in Nottinghamshire, England and came to the United States when he was three years old.

◇ Governor William Comstock, elected in 1933, ordered the state's banks closed for eight days within six weeks after taking office.

◇ Former Governor Chase Osborn (Republican), endorsed Frank Murphy (Democrat) for governor in 1938. Murphy was defeated by Governor Frank D. Fitzgerald in 1938 who Governor Murphy defeated in 1936.

◇ Governor Kim Sigler was a prosecuting attorney investigating the murder of Senator Warren Hooper prior to his 1946 race for governor.

And George Weeks described many, many more bits of information about our Michigan governors. The history of our governors is the history of our state, and the Michigan Political History Society highly recommends reading George Weeks' "Stewards of the State; The Governor's of Michigan."

We thank George Weeks for a delightful evening and for sharing his film "Stewards of the State" which was produced by the Milliken Foundation. To secure a copy of the video, "Stewards of the State", please contact George Weeks at the *Detroit News*.

Several Organizations and Individuals Contribute to Success of MPHS Events

The Michigan Political History Society is grateful for the support of many individuals and organizations for their invaluable contributions to past and planned events:

- ◇ TCI Cablevision of Mid-Michigan for videotaping Stewards of the State and Constitutional Convention events.
- ◇ Barbara Hamblett of the Michigan Historical Museum for use of the cases in which constitutional memorabilia was displayed at the October 12 Constitutional Convention event.
- ◇ The Michigan Retailers Association for their sponsorship of the Constitutional Convention event.
- ◇ Senator John J.H. Schwarz for his efforts in securing Professor Sidney Fine to speak at the February 9, 1995 event examining the career of Michigan's Frank Murphy.
- ◇ Michigan State University for use of the Con Con Room at the International Center.

Michigan Political History
Society

1995

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Business Phone _____ Fax _____

Enclosed is my check for membership in the amount of:

_____ \$10.00 Student Membership—Annual

_____ \$150.00 Lifetime Membership

_____ \$20.00 Regular Membership—Annual

_____ Other Contribution

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

Michigan Political History Society

MAIL TO:

Michigan Political History Society
P.O. Box 4684
East Lansing, MI 48826-4684

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East Lansing, MI 48826-4684

