

STORIES FROM "PIPA BILL"

*THE CALLANAN ELECTION
FOR STUDENT COUNCIL PRESIDENT*

In the Spring of 1940, Greenwood School's softball team beat Grant School. In the Fall, the opposing pitchers, Bill Peverill (Greenwood) and Bob Ray (Grant), were to find themselves in the same homeroom (Miss Kern's) at Callanan Junior High School. There the winning pitcher was the homeroom President for the next three years. But the important "face-off" came in the Fall of 1942 when Bob Ray won the election for Student Council President, receiving 12 more votes than Peverill.

Bob Ray would later become the most successful (elected five times) Governor in modern Iowa history! At one time, he was a viable U.S. Presidential prospect (*PEOPLE MAGAZINE*, January 1979), but even more seriously, a possible running mate for Gerald Ford (Some believe, and I concur, that Ford would have won had Ray been his V.P. choice).

Although the Callanan election was most memorable to me, there are others who also remember. Marvin Pomerantz (later and still a power and king-maker in Iowa Republican politics) was in seventh grade at the time of the 1942 election. He recalls: "Even in seventh grade I remember being amazed at his political skills. We had a pretty heated race for class president that year, and Bob prevailed. It was really a miniature campaign, with banners and posters and speeches. It was well run." (Bowermaster, Governor p.5) *PEOPLE MAGAZINE* (January 1976) was slightly more accurate: "The son of a Des Moines accountant, Ray was born in 1928 and grew up during the Depression. He was so shy in first grade that his teacher assumed he had

a speech defect, but by the time he reached junior high school he was running a hard-sell campaign for student council president ('full of hoopla, banners and noise,' recalls a friend.)"

John Rehmann was my campaign manager, and some, even in later years, would like to blame him for the loss. (Ironically, Rehmann would figure very significantly in Ray's initial and early campaigns.) But, the explanation lay elsewhere.

There were two ninth grade English teachers, Margaret Kern and Dorothy Hall, and there was a rivalry between them that was made manifest in this election. I was Miss Kern's favorite. Bob Ray was Miss Hall's candidate; she later said: "I first had him as a student at Callanan in ninth grade, and I expected good things out of him. He was capability itself, always had everything right at hand. He was always doing the right thing, but he wasn't a sissy. You could depend on him. Learning came easy for him, though, and very often it's those kids that don't crack their books as often as they might." (Bowermaster, Governor) (Judging from the attached letters, spelling and grammar were not given high priorities in Miss Hall's English classes.)

The candidates were called upon to give speeches before an all-school assembly. Ray gave a prepared (some said by his sister) speech. My presentation was more spontaneous, and I just got up and talked. Miss Hall told her group of impressionable ninth grade students that my speech was the lesser of the two because it was not from a prepared text. I lost the ninth grade vote and (even though I carried both the seventh and eighth grades) the election by 12 votes. Kenton Klein, my friend and running mate, was not located on Miss Hall's "cross-hairs" and was elected vice-president.

I can remember feeling hurt. I looked and searched, trying to detect who - even among my friends - had voted for Ray and cost me the election. (Even Christ had only one defector; why must I tolerate the whole dozen?) I soon forgave my "detractors.

But I will never forgive Dorothy Hall, even after fifty years. She had no business participating in a student election!

After Callanan, Ray would win other modest elections (e.g. college fraternity president, student body president), not too unlike my own experience. He held some important Iowa Republican Party offices. But until he was elected Governor, he would not win an election for public office.

I spent almost twenty years following my Callanan days in other states, yet in the end, my Callanan "apples" fell surprisingly close to the "tree." Frank Bondurant was Callanan Student Council President the year before Bob Ray. Frank (a West Point graduate) and I were classmates at Harvard Business School where -- *deja vu* -- he was President of the Student Council! Bob Ray's group of "confidants" who met regularly on the 33rd floor of the Ruan Building were: Jack Pester, Marvin Pomerantz, Mary Louise Smith, Tom Stoner, John McDonald, David Belin, Wythe Willey, Dick Gilbert and David Oman. (Bowermaster, Governor, p.188) Some of these are good friends of mine. Some are insurance clients. My daughter Ellen was a bridesmaid (as was Bob Ray's daughter, Vicki) in Mary Louise Smith's granddaughter's wedding; Tom Stoner will be included in another of my "Stories From 'Pipa Bill.'" "

I cannot end this story and omit the following. I have the greatest respect and liking for Bob Ray. Moreover, his political views coincide with my own. If he ran today, I would vote for him. As moderate Republicans, we are an endangered species.

If I had won the election, would I have become Governor? Well, at least this story might have become even more interesting.

Bibliography:

Bowermaster, Jon, Governor (Iowa State Univ. Press/Ames, 1987)
PEOPLE MAGAZINE, January 29, 1979

ROBERT D. RAY

Hqtrs: Hotel Savery
Des Moines, Iowa

Candidate For Governor

June 28, 1968

Mr. William J. Peverill
Computer Papers Incorporated
118 - 4th Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50309

Dear Bill,

If being elected Callanan Student Council President was the beginning of a political career that lead to running for Governor, I sometimes wonder if it wouldn't have been much better if you had been elected.

On the other hand, we are in the midst of the campaign, having a good time and presently leading the polls. Indeed we do need money to run an effective campaign and your contribution is most welcome. I do appreciate it, Bill.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

RDR/jv

4-5-95

Dear Bill,
Thank for sharing your
story about our experience at
Callanan with me. The truth of
the matter of the Student Council
election is that I think I voted for
you. It's a real idea that you
are sharing some of your life's
experience with your grandchildren.
I'm pleased I got included. B.A.



Robert D. Ray
President and
Chief Executive Officer