

Editor's Perspective

SOME RANDOM MUSINGS inspired by this issue of the *Annals*. First, eventual U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall must have been an extraordinarily busy man prior to his appointment to the high court. I'm amazed at how often his name crops up in civil rights stories. In Bruce Fehn's article in this issue of the *Annals*, we learn that in addition to corresponding with activists in Sioux City about a rape case involving an African American male and a white woman, he actually came to Sioux City and consulted with leaders there. Recent scholarship, including Fehn's article and other articles in the *Annals* in recent years, has shown the great extent to which the civil rights movement was a local, grass-roots movement, but Marshall's reach on behalf of the NAACP indicates that local movements were linked into the national network that the NAACP developed and promoted.

Equally as busy as Marshall on behalf of the NAACP, alas, was J. Edgar Hoover on behalf of the FBI. The FBI kept large files on Iowans Edna Griffin and Charles Howard, who also figure in the story Fehn tells in this issue. Fehn showed me a portion of Griffin's FBI file, and it is truly astonishing how closely the FBI watched this person who drew attention because of her active commitment to justice for all people—and because she was suspected of being a member of the Communist Party.

In both of the articles in this issue, authors Fehn and Shelley Lucas closely analyze the way language was used in particular contexts. In so doing they are able to tease out meaning that was implicit rather than explicit. This sort of "deconstruction" of language has been used across a number of disciplines, including history, for quite a few years now, and it is often ridiculed, sometimes because those who employ the method are guilty of using heavy-handed jargon that does more to obscure their subjects than shed light on them. When it is used more sensitively, however, as both of these authors do, the method has the potential to inform and illuminate. It is a potential that

could be tapped more often in the study of state and local history topics.

It is not news to editors, of course, that the way we use language has serious consequences. These kinds of analyses reaffirm my commitment to insisting that authors use gender-inclusive language when writing for the *Annals of Iowa*. It may well be that "everyone knows" when *man* is used to include all humans, male and female alike, but it is also undoubtedly true that using gender-specific language for more inclusive purposes has social consequences that are beyond the intent of the writer.

Finally, a note on language in a footnote in Shelley Lucas's article in this issue. She comments on her experiences playing "biddy" basketball while growing up in Iowa. One reader of a draft of the article, knowing the use of *biddy* only in the sense of *old biddy*, inquired whether it shouldn't be "bitty" basketball. The author, remembering it as "biddy," nonetheless did additional research. Not finding any references in her sources from the period, she did a Web search and found references to both "biddy" and "bitty" basketball, so suggested that we stick with her memory. Whereupon, I did what a good editor should have done long before and looked up *biddy* in the dictionary. There I found that one meaning for *biddy* is a young chicken. To those who organized second-grade girls to play basketball in Iowa, it must have seemed appropriate to refer to the players metaphorically as young chickens.

What editors can't learn in the process of editing a journal!

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