

Taking 'the pulse of democracy'



George Gallup, Iowa, and the Origin of the Gallup Poll

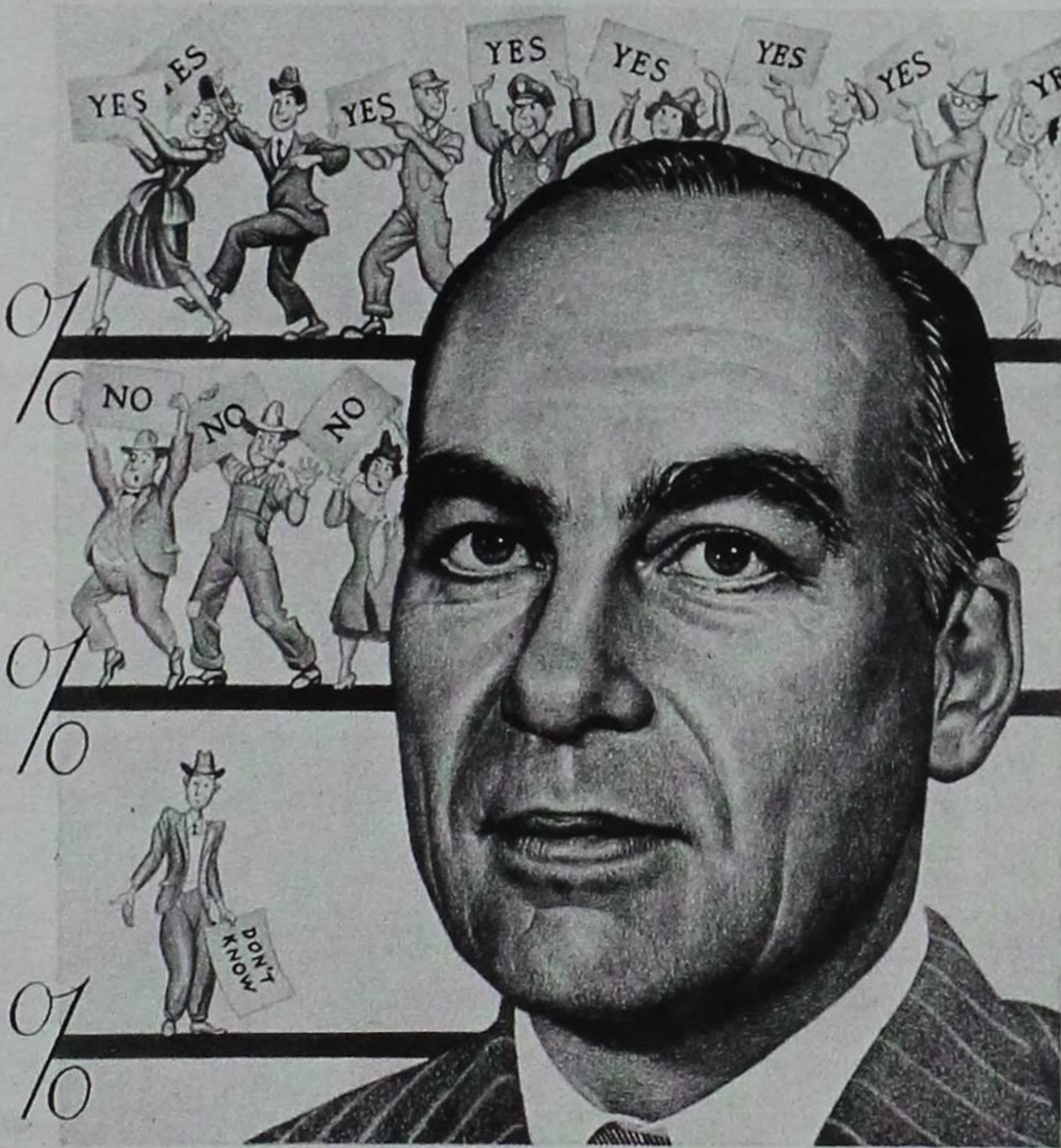
by Becky Wilson Hawbaker

DURING THE WEEK OF September 10, 1935, all across the country, men and women of all economic classes, races, occupations, and religions, were asked their opinion on New Deal economics and President Roosevelt. The first question read, "Do you think expenditures by the Government for relief and recovery are too little, too great, or just about right?" Sixty percent replied "too great," and the results ran October 20 in about forty newspapers that had

Left: High school basketball player George Gallup in 1916. Right: Gallup on *Time* cover (May 3, 1948).

TIME

THE WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE



Artzybasheff

GEORGE GALLUP

For an election year, a political slide rule.



This octagon house in Gallup's hometown of Jefferson was built by his eccentric father, who taught his son to question the status quo. Gallup's questioning nature later gave impetus for founding the Gallup Poll.

purchased rights to the syndicated feature.

This was not the first public opinion poll in United States history, but it was the first poll conducted by the American Institute of Public Opinion. Better known as the Gallup Poll, it was named after the Iowan who created it, George H. Gallup. The Gallup Poll was one of several polls that pioneered scientific methodology in polling practices. The Gallup Poll would become the best known and respected poll not only nationally, but internationally. In fact, in several languages, "gallup" is a verb that means "to poll." George Gallup instituted such familiar polling subjects as presidential approval ratings and identifying the "most vital issue before the American people today." In doing so, he changed the face of politics in the United States—and for the better, Gallup believed. As he later explained, "We have taken political decisions out of the smoke-filled rooms of yesteryear. We've opened up the

process. People now have a chance to have their views known." Gallup's polls are also a valuable source for historians and other social scientists.

Gallup was an Iowa native, and it was in Iowa that his poll and his attitudes germinated and were nurtured. Before he struggled to find a way to finance his poll, he was finding a way to finance his high school football team. Before he questioned the conventional wisdom of the straw pollsters, he was questioning the status quo in controversial editorials in the University of Iowa's student paper, the *Daily Iowan*. Before he shook up the nation with sometimes surprising poll results, he was shaking up the *Des Moines Register* and *Tribune* editors with the results of reader surveys the *Register* had commissioned. And before he asked Americans which candidate they supported for president, he was asking Iowans whom they planned to vote for as Iowa's secretary of state.

GALLUP WAS BORN on November 18, 1901, in Jefferson, Iowa. Jefferson is described by historian Thomas Morain as a "typical Iowa community . . . by default in that it lacks the unique. It has no foreign ethnic flavor and no unusual industries. . . . In short, a salesman . . . would have discovered little in the town that he had not encountered in the dozens of similar communities he had already passed." A *New Yorker* article later hypothesized that it was this "accident of birth" in "utterly normal Iowa" that made it possible for Gallup to see "nothing odd in the idea that one man might represent, statistically, ten thousand or more of his own kind."

Gallup grew up at the edge of Jefferson in an octagon house that his rather eccentric, real estate agent father had built, as Gallup recalled in a 1962 oral history interview, to "improve heating and lighting." Gallup described his father in the same interview as "almost the only genuine scholar I've ever known in my life." He kept a library in their home of over a thousand volumes and devised his own system of logic. Gallup credited George, Sr. with teaching him by example "a profound questioning of the status quo." Gallup recalled that his father "resisted strenuously doing things the way they had always been done."

Gallup must have also learned a great deal about independence from his father, who believed that children should make their own decisions at a very early age. When Gallup was nine, his father bought him and his brother John six milk cows to manage—trusting them to take care of the cows, milk them, solicit milk customers, and deliver the milk. The children were to use the profits to buy their own clothing and other supplies. This arrangement continued into Gallup's high school years.

Although classes were held in the opera house his freshman year because the school building was condemned, Gallup later called the local public schools "remarkably good," thanks to the high-quality teachers. He explained that he liked going to a small school because "every single boy in that high school who wanted to be on the football team could be on the football team."

If that assertion was true, it was due in no small part to Gallup himself, who used his milk route profits to finance the football team his junior year when the coach was drafted for World War I and the school decided to drop the sport. Gallup bought uniforms, paid for traveling expenses, arranged the games, and was repaid from the gate receipts. That year the Jefferson High yearbook described Gallup,



GEORGE H. GALLUP

"Ted"

Class President '19

Business Manager, Krazy Kazett

Football Captain '19

Basket Ball Captain '19

"Leave the women alone, work hard
and enjoy life is my motto!"

Gallup was senior class president and managing editor of the Jefferson High School newspaper in 1919. Years later, he told Max McElwain, who was interviewing him for the University of Iowa School of Journalism and Mass Communication Hall of Fame, "My early background had everything to do with my life later on."



Gallup (standing, far left) instructs a class in the University of Iowa School of Journalism in 1924. This class might be a non-credit typewriting class, or one of several editing or writing courses Gallup taught.

who played defensive end, as "a nery little fighter . . . we predict great things for him." On the other hand, that same year the principal characterized him as a candidate for class clown.

Gallup, who according to his sister Gladys was "always reading and asking questions," did

well in school, finishing third in his class and serving as senior class president and managing editor of the school paper. The caption under his senior yearbook picture reads, "Leave the women alone, work hard, and enjoy life is my motto!"



THE "NERVY LITTLE FIGHTER" entered the University of Iowa in 1919, and appears to have followed that motto. He was a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity, which may have consumed his freshman year. In his sophomore year he pursued his interest in journalism, first sparked by the Jefferson High *Krazy Kazett*, by taking a reporting class. That spring the ques-

tion of whether to publish the university newspaper, the *Daily Iowan*, during the summer came up.

As Gallup later explained it, "In years before, the paper had been run on a 'make or break' basis. By this I mean that the editor and business manager agreed to make up all losses on the one hand and to take all of the profit on the other from the operation of the paper. A call went out for candidates for editorship. As I recall, only two of us showed up . . . mostly because no one wanted to take the risk. Largely for this reason I was handed the job."

The paper limped along that summer, and Gallup was having trouble making ends meet until he wrote a nasty editorial entitled "UNATTRACTIVE WOMEN." Gallup wrote it as if it was an overheard conversation, and perhaps it was. In it, two young men agree that the reason the female students in summer school were so unattractive was "because most of them are schoolteachers. . . . [who] have never been taught that it is . . . their duty to . . . make themselves as attractive as they can." The two young men concluded this should be "one of the first requirements of a girl's education" because men want more than "a bone, a rag, and a hank of hair" in a wife.

Gallup later recalled, "This editorial stirred up the campus as nothing else in my experience ever had. All of the girls were angry and I was berated soundly by many professors." Gallup was put in his place by those who wrote letters to the editor criticizing his judgment and pointing out the sorry state of the male summer population, particularly the editor himself. (Perhaps he should have remembered his motto, "Leave the women alone. . . .") However, "From that day on, the paper was eagerly read," Gallup recalled. "By the end of the summer I had acquired enough money to spend the rest of the summer at Glacier Park."

In the meantime, financial disaster struck Gallup's father in his real estate speculations. To pay for school, the entrepreneurial Gallup started a towel service in the university gym and got the job of managing editor of the *Daily Iowan*. At the end of the year he applied for the position of editor-in-chief. "I had prepared an elaborate presentation which, among other things, called for a wire service, a section deal-

ing with city news, [and] other plans designed to change the *Daily Iowan* from a college paper to a full-fledged daily newspaper. It was a fairly ambitious plan . . . [that] dazzled the Board of Directors," he later recalled.

Gallup got the job. Under his direction, the *Daily Iowan* leased an hour of United Press service, which enabled him to make the *Daily Iowan* a city paper rather than solely a university paper. Gallup loved the job, calling it "the greatest thing that ever happened to me." He told a student who interviewed him in 1963 that "working on the [*Daily*] *Iowan* and having to turn out an editorial a day . . . was the toughest assignment I've had before or since."

READING THROUGH Gallup's editorials, one gets the distinct impression that he thoroughly enjoyed expressing his opinion and stirring things up. Lorenz Wolters, who edited the *Daily Iowan* the year after Gallup, said that many "knew [Gallup] as a campus non-conformist, ever ready to expose and ridicule pretentiousness and stuffiness."

Writing mostly on university topics, Gallup's favorite targets were student government ("the hot air league"); fraternities and sororities ("Students usually take their fraternities too seriously—they are just a minor thing when the whole scope of University life is considered"); and lazy students ("Students are self-complacent, phlegmatic, unenthusiastic . . . and social ignoramuses.").

Another recurring topic was defending the state of Iowa. Two such editorials were in response to an article in the national news magazine *The Nation*, which poked fun at "the pathetic pattering creatures known as retired Iowa farmers," and declared Iowa bereft of culture with "no interests beyond bread and butter." To this Gallup replied, "Perhaps Iowa folk . . . may be a bit homely in their ways, common in their interests and unimaginative as they go, still it is likely they retain those virtues upon which our democracy is founded." In another editorial, entitled "CORN FED AND

PROUD OF IT," Gallup reasoned, "Open places, where the corn does not shut out all the light, are still capable of producing broad-minded men. Why not admit frankly that we are children of the soil and perhaps a bit proud of it."

Gallup had other, more controversial topics to write about, but he was anxious that such topics might mean removal as editor. As he later explained, "I was not too sure that I would last the year out . . . [so] being a fairly cautious person, I took the extra safeguard of getting my degree in February . . . for the sole purpose of being able to say whatever I wanted to say during the last semester. I figured that if I got kicked out at that point not much harm would be done."

Several of these editorials foreshadowed controversial issues that the Gallup Poll would later tackle. One was the subject of sex education. In 1923, Gallup wrote in the *Daily Iowan*, "The mask of religion and mystery should be completely torn from the sex question. It is a legitimate field of knowledge and its facts should be widely disseminated. Ignorance more than any other factor has been instrumental in the increase of immorality and the spread of social diseases." He also believed that the schools were better suited than the home to dispense such knowledge.

Fourteen years later, Gallup demonstrated that he was not the only American who felt this way. In 1937, the Gallup Poll upset the taboo on discussing venereal disease by polling the public on the subject. Gallup found that 90 percent of those polled wanted a government bureau to distribute information on venereal diseases, and that 88 percent favored a system of clinics for treatment of such diseases.

PERHAPS GALLUP'S most interesting student editorials are those on politics, for once he began the Gallup Poll he fiercely protected the appearance of neutrality to avoid accusations of poll bias. He even stopped voting. As a student, however, Gallup seems quite radical, especially consider-

ing that during his stint as editor in 1922/23, the Red Scare of 1919/20 and the Sacco-Vanzetti trial of 1921 were still recent events.

A perusal of the editorial titles begins to paint a picture of a maverick Gallup: "STUDENT RADICALISM," "A DEFENSE OF SOCIALISM," "THE AMERICAN CASTE SYSTEM," and "NEEDED: A FEW RADICALS," in which he wrote that the university should hire more radicals to arouse the student body from its "state of coma." Another, entitled "CAPITALIST PROPAGANDA," condemned a publishing company for rejecting a chapter on socialism from an economic text written by an Iowan, and for instructing the author to rework the book to show the "necessity of capitalism."

His most colorful editorial—"BE RADICAL!"—sounds like it was written in the 1960s, not the 1920s: "Don't be afraid to be radical," Gallup advised. "Universities need radicals. We are all rock-ribbed, dyed-in-the-wool intellectual standpatters. Worst of all, we are proud of it. We need atheists, free-lovers, anarchists, free traders, communists, single taxers, internationalists, royalists, socialists, anti-Christians. . . . Doubt everything. Question everything. . . . Being a radical is a duty, like casting your first ballot or kissing your sister. Only a man of fifty has the right to be conservative. Don't be a cow. Think, question, doubt. Be radical!"

In the "Humor Section" of the *Hawkeye* yearbook for the academic year 1922/23, Gallup's propensity towards startling editorials was parodied in a short play that spoofed the *Daily Iowan* staff. In the play, "His Majesty, the Big Duke Theodore" (Gallup's nickname was Ted) starts a religious war with a neighboring kingdom with an editorial that ridiculed the pope.

About this time, Gallup started to formulate his poll ideas. The summer before his senior year he worked for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, who hired him and forty-nine other students to conduct a house-to-house survey to determine what people liked and didn't like about the newspaper. Gallup believed that the survey questions were too general and thus wouldn't elicit a true picture of what people really thought. He began to wonder about what sorts of questions and surveys could garner more honest results.

GALLUP BEGAN GRADUATE WORK in psychology at the University of Iowa in 1923. Because of his experience with the *Daily Iowan*, he was hired as an instructor for freshman English and several journalism classes in the newly authorized School of Journalism. He was also to oversee all student publications, including the *Daily Iowan*, the *Hawkeye* yearbook, and *Frivol*, a humor magazine. Sometime during that year, he met Ophelia Smith Miller, a 1920 Iowa graduate and a teaching assistant in a French class that met just down the hall from Gallup's office. They married in 1925, the same year that Gallup wrote his master's thesis in psychology. The thesis used a survey method to determine characteristics of successful salespeople at Killian's Department Store in Cedar Rapids. Such a study was typical of the kind of survey research that was already being done in the business world.

As a faculty member in the School of Journalism, Gallup founded a national honor society for high school journalists. Since that time, the Quill and Scroll Society has chartered 13,500 high school societies from all fifty states and forty-one foreign countries and continues to recognize and honor excellence in high school journalism through awards and ratings for yearbooks and school papers, writing and photo contests, scholarships, and research grants.

Gallup continued his applied research in his Ph.D. work. Beginning in 1925, his faculty duties increased to teaching three upper-level classes, one non-credit course in typewriting, and two discussion sections. (By 1927, he was teaching six upper-level classes and one correspondence class.) Because the School of Journalism was so new, Gallup explained, "We just carved out the courses . . . I decided I wanted to teach a course and then I would give it a title." One of these course descriptions points to the direction Gallup's thinking had taken: "A study of what interests people; psychological basis of news appeals; public opinion; . . . experimental work in evaluating news."

Gallup's dissertation, "An Objective Method for Determining Reader Interest in the Content of a Newspaper," was based on a survey of readers of the *Des Moines Register* and

Tribune. The methodology, which Gallup called "the 'Iowa' method" was Gallup's first foray into scientific polling. Gallup used a sample of one thousand *Register* and *Tribune* readers, male and female, rural and urban, from five socio-economic classes. Gallup or one of his volunteers interviewed each person, going through a newspaper column by column, marking everything the reader remembered reading, and, to double-check for accuracy, asking the reader to give the gist of the article. Gallup found that the method had good reliability and validity, making it more useful than the questions he had asked in St. Louis that hot summer years before.

Gallup's dissertation found that no one interviewed had read more than 50 percent of the paper, even those who initially claimed that they had read every word. The average amount read was less than 15 percent. Gallup found that the articles on the front page, usually national or international news that editors assumed was most important and most read by the people, were not as widely read overall as the "Ding" Darling front-page cartoon, or photos illustrating news articles. In fact, more people read one of the comic strips than the front-page headline story.

THE SAME YEAR that Gallup finished his dissertation, he met Gardner "Mike" Cowles, Jr., when Cowles was teaching a class at the University of Iowa called "Problems in Editorial Management." The Cowles family published the *Des Moines Register* and *Des Moines Tribune* and they were interested in persuading Gallup to come to Des Moines. They convinced him to accept the job as head of the department of journalism at Drake University by offering Gallup the opportunity to attend all *Register* and *Tribune* staff meetings, allowing Gallup to send his copyreading class to the *Register* and *Tribune* for practical experience, and perhaps

hinting of funding for further surveys, through which Gallup could perfect his methods.

Gallup took the Drake job and became head and sole faculty member of the department of journalism from 1929 to 1931. He taught seven classes in the fall sessions, nine in the spring sessions, and in the summers did reader surveys for the *Register* and *Tribune*, the *Chicago Daily News*, and *Liberty* magazine.

Gallup's research led to hot debates with *Register* managing editor Basil "Stuffy" Walters. Gallup found that a substantial percentage of readers didn't understand all of the words used in the *Register's* banner headlines. He also asserted that the lead story, usually national or international, was not well read, and that the people preferred state or local stories in more simple language. Walters and several other editors doubted these findings. The debate spilled across the street to Thompson's Restaurant, where they asked diners to define the words in the headlines. Walters and the other editors soon realized with astonishment that Gallup was correct.

According to journalist and Walters biographer Raymond Moscovitz, Gallup's research "helped revolutionize the techniques Walters used to edit the *Register* and *Tribune*." As Walters recalled, he instructed his reporters to "write their stories in the same way they would tell the story to a friend," using common language. The *Register* and *Tribune* also began running more photographs. So many, in fact, that in 1937 a survey showed that the *Tribune* ranked first among fifty-two major newspapers in the number of photos used.

In 1931, Gallup left Drake to become a professor of journalism at Northwestern University. There he carried on with his reader surveys and worked as a market research consultant. By this time, Gallup was an up-and-coming hot property in the market research field.

Market research for the business world is what Jean Converse, author of an acclaimed history of survey research in the United States, called "the most immediate ancestor of survey research." Many well-known public opinion pollsters came from a business tradition, including Gallup, Elmo Roper, Archibald Crossley, and Paul Cherington.

Market research, which was conducted

THE HEARST NEWSPAPERS 1932 PRESIDENTIAL POLL

Whom do you favor for President of the U.S.?
[Put (X) mark after your choice]

HOOVER, Republican

ROOSEVELT, Democrat

(If you favor a third party nominee, write name of
candidate and party above)

What party did you support in 1928?

Answer

What is your regular voting place?

Town

County

State

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS
AND MAIL PROMPTLY

**NO POSTAGE STAMP
REQUIRED ON THIS CARD**

A 1932 Hearst Newspapers postcard poll typified the straw polls used by late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century newspapers. Because of sampling bias, such polls were often in error.

beginning around 1910, expanded after World War I. Business leaders nationwide wanted to learn about brand preferences, buying habits, and consumers' interests. Opening a market research division became an important move for large businesses, even when they weren't completely sure what a market researcher should do.

By 1932, Gallup had several job offers from advertising firms, but accepted one from Young and Rubicam in New York because they offered him "complete freedom" in creating a research department. With ample funding he conducted surveys of radio show popularity and

advertising effectiveness for clients such as General Foods and General Electric.

Another important ancestor of the type of opinion research Gallup would specialize in was the kind of straw poll election forecasts made by numerous newspapers and magazines throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The measures were crude and often inaccurate, but popular with the public. Gallup would soon apply the empirical methods he used to discover what consumers thought about products and advertising to discover what voters thought of political issues and candidates. Iowa would again play a prominent role in this decision.

SOON AFTER GALLUP arrived in New York City, his mother-in-law, Ola Babcock Miller, was nominated by Iowa Democrats to be their candidate for secretary of state. She later became one of Iowa's most resoundingly re-elected and popular politicians, and widely respected for her creation of the Iowa Highway Patrol. Her nomination in 1932, however, was mostly a show of respect for her husband, Alex, a 1926 Democratic candidate for governor, who had recently died. She was surprised at the nomination and regarded it as "martyrdom for the cause."

Gallup recalled that because of his mother-in-law's candidacy, "I actually became interested in the whole possibilities of polling, and I did a few rather crude samples . . . of that particular election." The topics Gallup polled on included "what various and sundry groups of people thought, [and] whether they had heard of my mother-in-law."

To everyone's surprise, Miller won the election—by only .3 percent of the vote. Perhaps the Democratic Miller rode on the coattails of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Perhaps her record of service in the women's service organization P.E.O. and the suffrage movement was well known despite the fact that she made no campaign speeches or appearances. It could also have had something to do with the way she was listed on the ballot—"Mrs. Alex Miller"—either a show of respect for her husband, a

IS ROOSEVELT

Gaining or Losing?

Find out next Sunday
... only two weeks be-
fore election!

Last Sunday the national poll of public opinion by "AMERICA SPEAKS" showed F.D.R. on the upgrade . . . Landon definitely slipping. What are the results of the poll now being taken?

Don't just guess who's winning! Turn to "AMERICA SPEAKS" in The Des Moines Sunday Register next Sunday. Time is short before the people vote.

An October 1936 *Des Moines Register* alerts readers to the upcoming "America Speaks," Gallup's syndicated column of poll results. Opposite: The poll dominates the *Des Moines Register* front page on November 1, 1936. Calling the 1936 presidential race correctly was what made Gallup's reputation. He dethroned the giant *Literary Digest* poll by recognizing its methodological flaws, and by applying his own, more empirical methods.

social custom, or a good political strategy if one's name-recognition polls were low.

Gallup's experience with market research, his interest in surveying public opinion, his encounter with politics through Miller's candidacy, and his belief in democracy and the wisdom of the people, joined to form the idea for a weekly national poll on important issues. By 1932, "It was an absolutely natural and obvious thing . . . that a poll should emerge," Gallup observed, "[it was a] process of spontaneous combustion." As he was always careful to point out, however, "No one person should ever be credited with any invention. Inventions are the products of many minds, and I am the last one to lay claim to having started the whole idea of polling."

In 1933, Gallup began experimenting with postcard polls asking how people felt about issues of the day. His wife, Ophelia, addressed the thousands of cards sent out. Gallup remembered that she always asked, "What's all this about? What's going to come of this?" Gallup would answer that he didn't know himself but that it was "awfully interesting."

In 1934 Gallup used the congressional elections of that year to test the validity of his polling processes. Although he would later discover that he had been right for the wrong reasons, the results convinced him that his poll was ready for the big time.

He formed a partnership with Harry Anderson, a midwestern salesman of newspaper features, in 1935. Together they founded the American Institute of Public Opinion, based in Princeton, New Jersey. The partners syndicated their polling results as a newspaper column called "America Speaks." That year *Newsweek* called it the "most ambitious newspaper feature ever devised."

At that time, the best-known poll in the country was the *Literary Digest* straw poll. The *Digest* sent out mock ballots to millions of people, whose names it obtained from motor vehicle registrations and phone books. The *Digest* printed a running tally of votes in the following issues. Although the *Digest* had been fairly accurate in the past, Gallup knew from his studies and others' research that the *Digest's* method was seriously flawed.

While Gallup knew that the total number of

ELECTION ANYBODY'S RACE IN IOWA

America Speaks Poll Predicts F.R. to Win; Literary Digest Gives Majority to Landon

BOTH PARTIES ARE CLAIMING SLIM MARGINS

31 States Given To Roosevelt by America Speaks

Poll Sees Upswing At Last Minute For President.

By George Gallup. (Director, American Institute of Public Opinion.)

NEW YORK, N. Y.—The Institute of Public Opinion, on the basis of its final presidential poll, believes that Franklin D. Roosevelt will be re-elected president Tuesday.

In a last-minute upswing which indicates that as many voters change sides in the final weeks of a campaign as in the early weeks the president's lead has

Final Results of Two Polls Exactly Opposite.

(Taken on Page 5.) The Literary Digest and The American Institute of Public Opinion, the two largest takers of nationwide polls in this year's presidential election, followed completely different theories.

And they ended up with almost exactly opposite results. The Literary Digest figures show a popular vote majority for Governor Landon. The Institute's America Speaks poll a popular vote majority for President Roosevelt.

The Digest poll gives Governor Landon 57 per cent of the total vote (including all third party votes). America Speaks gives President Roosevelt 54 per cent of the major party vote.

The Digest poll gives Governor Landon 54 per cent of the total vote (including all third party votes). America Speaks gives President Roosevelt 54 per cent of the total vote.

So, in addition to selecting a president, Tuesday, the people will indirectly decide which of the two systems picked a winner. The Digest relied on the traditional mass-mailing method, depending upon a large number of straw votes. America Speaks tried the scientific sampling system, depending upon getting a proper cross-section of the voting population with a smaller number of ballots.

All four previous Literary Digest polls have correctly forecast the results of presidential elections since 1920.

Says the Literary Digest of its poll: "Landon receives 1,292,669 votes to Roosevelt's 972,897 and Lemke's 83,610 votes out of a grand total of 2,276,523 ballots (tabbed in the final returns of The Digest's poll)."

"The balance of the votes are divided 11,822 for Thomas, 9,485 for ..."

Continued on Page Five.

POLITICS ON AIR COSTS A PLENTY

Big Networks Alone Total 2 Million.

NEW YORK, N. Y. (AP) It costs a lot of money to do political broadcasting. Some figures put it at 50 to 75 cents a spoken word. That's based on the average speed of 140 words a minute, or 8,000 an hour. Also taken into consideration is the fact that such broadcasting goes via a network, the price range controlled by the size of the chain or whether more than one is used. For instance, approximately \$15,000 buys an hour on NBC and \$12,000 on CBS, full station groups.

Not Difficult. Thus, it's not difficult to estimate that the political bill of 1936, coast to coast networks alone, will total pretty close to a couple of million dollars.

This figure doesn't include the sums spent for individual stations and small network setups. That would add probably another million or so.

5 Hours a Day. As the campaign has been pushing its way toward the finale, the time on the air each day has been steadily on the increase. The average has grown to around 3 hours daily. Broadcasts excepted.

In comparison with the Roosevelt-Mooney fight of 1932, it would seem 1936 political broadcasting has shown about a 25 per cent increase.

Continued on Page Two.



With election day nearly here, Dorothy Welch (above), 1611 Forty-seventh st., like so many other voters, is having a hard time making up her mind just what candidate she prefers. Even the pictures don't seem to help very much.

Final Standings in America Speaks Nation Wide Poll

The table below shows how the American Institute of Public Opinion thinks the states will vote in the presidential election, according to the nation wide poll taken by the institute. This table considers only the vote of the persons belonging to the two major parties, and does not take into consideration any third party voters.

Table with columns: State, % of Major Party Vote, and Sure for Landon (3) / Sure for Roosevelt (31). Lists states from Maine to Nebraska.

Two Will Manage 1937 Tutor Ticklers of Ottawa. Proceeds from Tutor Ticklers are deposited in a student loan fund at the college. BRIDGE WORK STARTS. WASHINGTON, IA. Will Calhoun is planning a District State Teachers college which will be located in the city of Washington, D.C. SACRAMENTO CALIF. (AP) - Will Calhoun is planning a District State Teachers college which will be located in the city of Washington, D.C. TRAVELING TRAINING SCHOOL FOR POLICE. SACRAMENTO CALIF. (AP) - Will Calhoun is planning a District State Teachers college which will be located in the city of Washington, D.C. SPECIAL BALLOTS. Statewide vote on constitutional amendment to abolish decennial state census; in Des Moines \$200,000 airport improvement and extension bond issue; in other localities local referendums.

Clifton Sees Trend to Landon in Last 10 Days.

By C. C. Clifton.

One of the most exciting general election campaigns Iowa ever has passed through still was going strong Saturday with the outcome so uncertain that the battle for the state was being carried right up to the time the polls open Tuesday.

Conservative forecasters in both the Republican and Democratic parties had shaved their estimates of a majority on the presidency in Iowa to hair line margins of a few thousand votes out of the probable 1,100,000 or more expected to be cast.

Iowa is so uncertain, in the opinion of cool calculators, that it might go either for Governor Landon or President Roosevelt, by a narrow margin. A landslide is not impossible, but it is not expected.

The Issue.

The tide on the presidency has been running to Landon in Iowa during the last 10 days. Nothing has happened since the Roosevelt visit to Iowa to increase the president's strength. But there have been two eleventh hour issues which have caught on to the advantage of Landon.

The major one is the widespread interest in the social security taxes. It is doubtful whether the activity of private employers in advising their employees of the taxes to be deducted from their pay envelopes beginning next year has cut into the organized labor vote for Roosevelt. But it has had an effect beneficial to Landon among the unorganized white-collar employees.

Graft Charges.

There are vastly more private employees than there are WPA workers, relief clients, and organized laborers.

The other issue, which directly helps the Republican state ticket, is the graft charges being delineated against the Democratic state administration by Verne Marshall, editor of the Cedar Rapids Gazette.

For some reason, interest in the graft charges is just as fresh as the concern about the social security payroll taxes. The graft investigation was made long before the social security act was passed. But people seem not to have paid much attention to it, or to have forgotten it. Now it is a hot subject.

Outspoken Vote.

There is a noticeable increase in the outspoken vote for Landon, especially in the smaller towns where merchants and their farmer customers have been extremely reticent to talk politics until election day began to approach. There are many instances in which merchants and farmers, indicating in groups that they are for Roosevelt, say in private conversation they are for Landon. Not everybody wearing a sunflower is a Landon voter, either.

All of which gets down to the principal uncertain factor in the election—the silent vote. This vote, just about as large as it was four years ago, completely fooled the Republicans in 1932. The Democrats, who never dreamed of a Roosevelt landslide in 1932, are nervous about the silent vote. There is no telling how a man who refuses to tell his intentions will vote, but the silent vote frequently is against the party in office.

Two Districts.

The Republican state ticket generally is considered stronger than Landon in Iowa, and many Democrats privately feel that Roosevelt will have to carry Iowa by upward of 50,000 to carry the Democratic state ticket through.

The impression that the Republican state ticket is stronger than the Democratic state ticket grows largely out of the method of campaigning in the eighth and ninth congressional districts. In these two districts, which comprise 27 northwest Iowa counties, Roosevelt is so strong Republicans don't try to dissuade anybody who says he is for Roosevelt and the Republican state ticket from voting for Roosevelt.

Not an Incident.

These are the only districts in which this sort of campaigning is resorted to. In the other seven, the Iowa.

Continued on Page Five.

Digest, America Speaks Polls Disagree on Iowa

Magazine's Straws See Landon Winner In State.

In the final returns, America Speaks reversed the standings in Roosevelt 51 per cent, and Landon 49 per cent. If the Digest poll is correct, 1,000,000 votes in Iowa would give Landon a majority of 233,000 over Roosevelt, taking into consideration third party votes. If the Digest poll is correct, Roosevelt would carry Iowa by 20,000.

Speaks poll gives Roosevelt 51 per cent in Iowa to Landon's 49.

Landon's share of the Digest poll for Iowa forecasts a Landon majority reduced in 1932. Of voters who told the Digest how they voted in 1932, 85 per cent of those who said they voted for Roosevelt four years ago are voting for him now. Roosevelt got 12 per cent of the Republican vote, and Landon got 23 per cent of 59.33. In three weeks Landon lost two hundredths of a per cent.

Two weeks ago the American Institute of Public Opinion gave Landon 31 per cent and Roosevelt 49 per cent. Landon's share of the Digest poll for Iowa forecasts a Landon majority reduced in 1932. Of voters who told the Digest how they voted in 1932, 85 per cent of those who said they voted for Roosevelt four years ago are voting for him now. Roosevelt got 12 per cent of the Republican vote, and Landon got 23 per cent of 59.33. In three weeks Landon lost two hundredths of a per cent.

The number of Democrats voting in Iowa in the Digest poll Speaks poll gave Landon 31 per cent and Roosevelt 49 per cent. Landon's share of the Digest poll for Iowa forecasts a Landon majority reduced in 1932. Of voters who told the Digest how they voted in 1932, 85 per cent of those who said they voted for Roosevelt four years ago are voting for him now. Roosevelt got 12 per cent of the Republican vote, and Landon got 23 per cent of 59.33. In three weeks Landon lost two hundredths of a per cent.

Election in Brief

POLLS OPEN—From 7 a. m. to 8 p. m., in cities where registration is required; from 8 a. m. to 8 p. m. in all other precincts.

TO BE ELECTED—President of the United States; two United States senators from Iowa; nine congressmen from Iowa; 32 state senators; 108 state representatives; state, county and township officers. Senators, congressmen, state officers in many other states.

RIGHT TO VOTE—Every citizen 21 years old who has been a resident of the state six months, of the county 60 days, and the precinct 10 days, provided qualified voters are properly registered in cities of 10,000 population where registration is required or in cities under optional permanent registration.

SPECIAL BALLOTS—Statewide vote on constitutional amendment to abolish decennial state census; in Des Moines \$200,000 airport improvement and extension bond issue; in other localities local referendums.

people polled was one factor affecting poll accuracy, of far more importance was that the people polled were a representative sample of the population at large. While the *Literary Digest* polled a whopping twenty million people, its sample was biased for two reasons. First of all, motor vehicle registrations and telephone books overrepresented wealthier people in the 1920s, and second, these same people were even further overrepresented by using a mailing survey only, which those of higher incomes return more often.

The *Digest* was certainly not alone in using something close to this methodology. Many other newspapers and magazines tried the same thing. In Iowa, for example, in 1924, *Iowa Magazine* and the *Des Moines Tribune* conducted presidential straw polls—the *Tribune* erred by an astonishing 24 percent, but *Iowa Magazine* predicted the outcome within 2 percent. In 1928, the *Atlantic News-Telegraph* in Cass County attempted the same thing, with an error rate of 7 percent.

On July 12, 1936, the *New York Herald Tribune* ran an article by Gallup that challenged the *Literary Digest's* methods. Weeks before the *Digest* even sent out its ballots, Gallup predicted that its poll would choose the wrong candidate (Kansas Republican Alf Landon over Roosevelt). Gallup also predicted the margin of victory that the *Digest* would give Landon (Gallup was off by only 1 percent in the latter prediction).

The *Digest* ridiculed Gallup, but the election

results vindicated him, and this episode garnered respect and publicity for Gallup and his poll. Of course, Gallup had not been the only pollster who correctly called the election—he wasn't even very accurate (7 percent error). Elmo Roper, who did the polling for *Fortune* magazine, called the election with only a 1.2 percent error, but the Roper results were not printed until after the election, purportedly because *Fortune's* editors had been sure Landon would win.

ROPER WAS ANOTHER pollster from the market research tradition, surveying people about their opinions on products or advertisements to improve sales. Ironically, he also had an Iowa connection. He became interested in market research when he was a jeweler, struggling to stay in business in Creston, Iowa. He eventually gave up the jewelry business, reportedly because he did not want to sell the kind of jewelry that he discovered Iowa farmers liked.

Although Gallup and other pollsters became best known for their election forecasts, they felt that they had more important duties. As Gallup explained, "All of us in the field of public opinion research regard election forecasting as one of our least important contributions. It has always seemed much more worthwhile to

PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN; FROM *BUSINESS WEEK* (JUNE 19, 1948)



Florence Kindig of New Jersey worked as a Gallup Poll interviewer in 1948. The job demanded three to five hours weekly; she was paid 85 cents an hour. All interviewers were required to wear "The Gallup Poll" button to make them easily identifiable and to inspire trust.

Pollster (on left) interviews a subject in Plainfield, New Jersey, one of the Gallup Poll's sampling areas in 1948. Before 1950, Gallup Poll interviewers chose respondents based on age, sex, and socio-economic quotas, with latitude as to whom, when, and where to interview.



PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN; FROM BUSINESS WEEK (JUNE 19, 1948)

report public opinion on the political, social, and economic issues of the day." Through the years, Gallup polled on just about every conceivable topic, from serious questions—on abortion or the declaration of war—to lighter issues—the most popular pet and what Americans ate for breakfast.

Gallup believed that accurate public opinion polls served an important function in a democracy. As he explained, "If government is supposed to be based on the will of the people, somebody ought to go and find out what that will is." He believed that polls were the best defense against special-interest groups who claimed to speak for everyone, and would help legislators make more informed decisions. He became one of the most vocal defenders of polls, publishing numerous explanations of his practices, several books, and countless articles.

Of course, there are people, both then and today, who are not as optimistic as Gallup was about the role that polls play. Some fear that polls bring about a bandwagon effect, in which people vote for a candidate simply because he or she is ahead in the polls. Others fear that because of this bandwagon effect, poll results may be tampered with to influence elections. Gallup acknowledged these fears in his first book, *The Pulse of Democracy*: "At various intervals, Republicans have charged that polls

were supporting the Democrats, and Democrats have suggested that polls were in the pay of the Republicans. Socialists have hinted that the polls are in the hands of 'reactionaries,' while extreme conservatives have accused them of being 'too democratic.'"

GALLUP ALWAYS DENIED any evidence of a bandwagon effect, but he never claimed to be infallible. As he explained in 1944, "There is always error and we do not know which way it is going to bite you. There is an error inherent in all sampling operations. You can never be absolutely right." Sometimes, however, Gallup's errors made critics suspicious. A U.S. House of Representatives committee went so far as to hold hearings in 1944 to investigate the Gallup Poll.

The investigation was, according to committee chair Clinton Anderson, "an effort to determine the usefulness of polling as an aid to democratic processes and particularly to check the election polling which . . . is best known through the Gallup Poll." The committee was

also to check into "numerous reports that the poll might have been used to influence the outcome of the [1944] Presidential election."

The suspicions arose from an underestimation of Democratic strength due to adjusting poll results to reflect the opinions of "likely voters" rather than all respondents. Adjustments were also made to correct sampling biases of different sources of information, competence of local staff, and so on. This situation illustrates the complexity of predicting elections: A pollster has to not only measure the support each candidate has, but also estimate how many citizens will voice their opinion when it counts—on election day—as well as a myriad of other variables that could skew poll results.

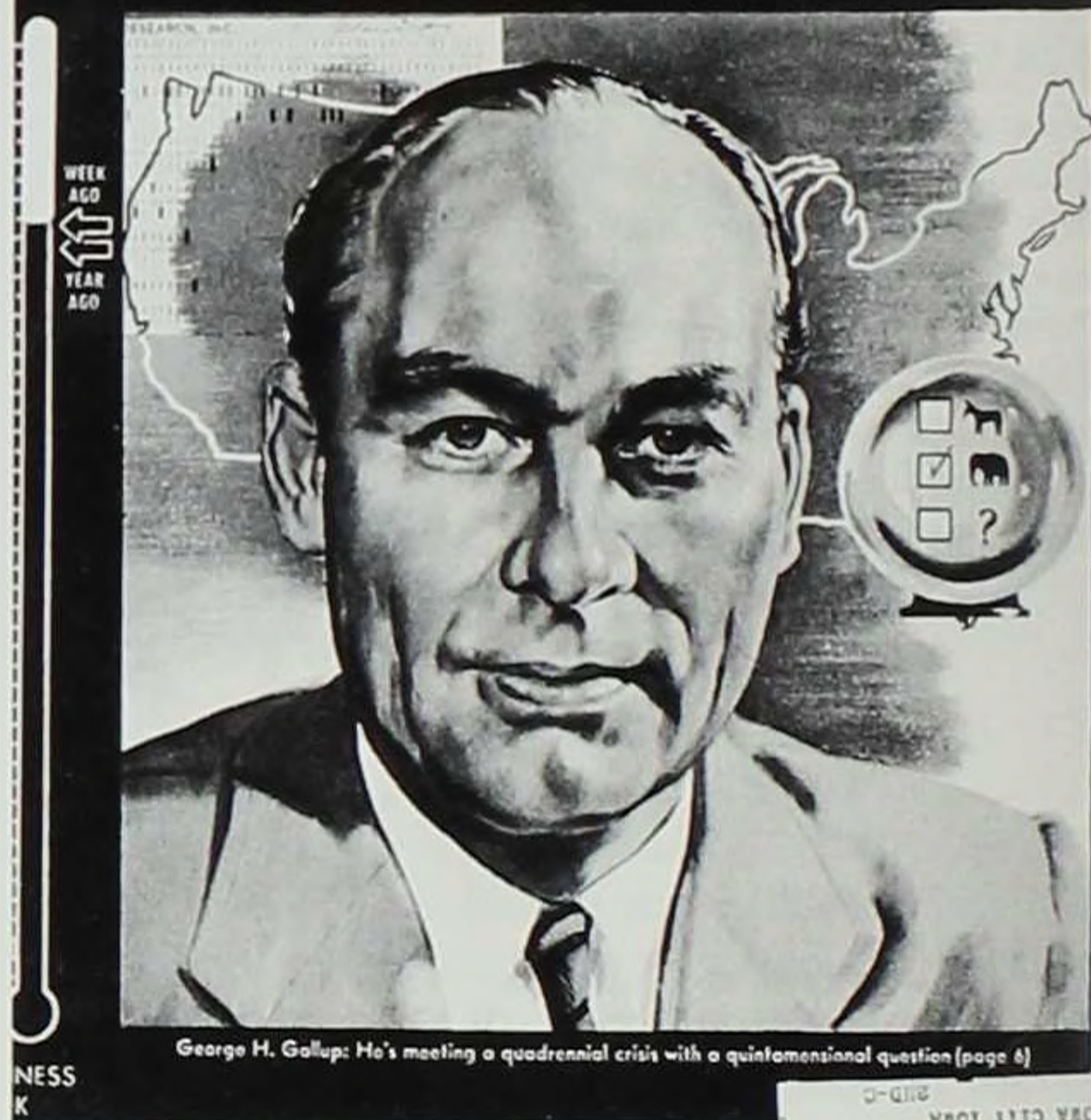
The committee concluded that the Gallup Poll "sincerely tried to use scientific polling methods in its 1944 election polls, and to achieve greater accuracy, introduced other non-polling indications of party preference which involved the use of judgment and interpretation. . . . Because of the reliance placed on personal judgment, it is entirely conceivable that another investigator using the same data could have arrived at a different conclusion." Gallup was cleared of any wrongdoing, although he was advised that he should publicly note when adjustments had been made to the poll results.

PERHAPS GALLUP'S most infamous error was in the election of 1948, when he and most other pollsters predicted that Thomas Dewey would defeat Harry Truman. Gallup attributed this error to the fact that they had stopped polling nearly two weeks before the election and to several other methodology problems. Many pundits of the time predicted the demise of polls, and a number of newspapers canceled their subscriptions to the syndicated Gallup Poll.

However, Gallup learned from his error. He reformed his sampling procedures, using the election precinct as the sampling unit for election surveys. He also removed the previous latitude interviewers had in choosing subjects to

BUSINESS WEEK

JUNE 19, 1948



Although 1948 was an election year, as this June 19, 1948 cover suggests, the *Business Week* article actually detailed what was always Gallup's main polling activity—marketing and advertising research.

interview to fill their sampling quotas, by creating a rather elaborate, uniform procedure regarding which homes to visit and whom to ask for. By improving his methodology and defending his poll in the popular media, Gallup was able to keep the poll alive.

In the ensuing years, the Gallup Poll continued to grow (it founded forty-five foreign affiliates), and continued to poll on the most important social, economic, and political issues of the day. Beginning in 1969, Gallup conducted annual social research on Americans' attitudes toward the public schools. Published in *Kappan*, an educational journal, it is frequently cited by educational reformers who want to make schools more responsive to the needs of families.

Following in Gallup's footsteps would be

other national polls, and several state polls (including the *Des Moines Register's* "Iowa Poll," the second state-wide poll in the nation, founded in 1943)—all to measure what Gallup called "the pulse of democracy."

Gallup's organization grew even faster in the area of marketing and advertising research. Gallup was committed to his Institute of Public Opinion, but the Gallup Poll was never the major focus of his organization's work. It was also not very profitable. Gallup found marketing and advertising research far more lucrative. As *Business Week* phrased it in 1948, "Market research . . . puts jam on his bread."

Gallup founded and administered a number of successful marketing research firms, but one of the best known was Audience Research, Inc., an enterprise he founded in 1936. ARI was consulted by numerous big-name clients, including Walt Disney, RKO, Columbia, and Bantam Books. ARI test-marketed everything from movie plot lines, titles, and casts, to advertising's impact on the purchase of children's toys. It was this and other forays into the

profitable business of marketing and advertising that indirectly subsidized the Gallup Poll.

THE MAN WHOM *Time* magazine called the "Babe Ruth of the polling profession" died on July 26, 1984, at his summer home in Switzerland, a country he had always admired as the "oldest and purest democracy in the world and virtually run by polls." Gallup had once remarked that "the Swiss vote on all important issues almost every Sunday in the spring and fall."

Gallup left behind more than a Jeffersonian view of the importance of the people's voice—he devoted his life to developing a scientific method for ascertaining what it is that people are saying. His methods and his poll remain in use today, giving ordinary people "channels of self expression" to insure that the "common man" will not become the "forgotten man." □

What did Americans tell Gallup? Turn the page to find out.

NOTE ON SOURCES

Gallup's own publications best explain his methodology and why he believed polling was important. They include: *A Guide to Public Opinion Polls* (Princeton, 1944); *Public Opinion in a Democracy* (Princeton, 1939); "The Changing Climate for Public Opinion Research," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 21 (Spring 1957); Gallup and Saul Forbes Rae, *The Pulse of Democracy: the Public Opinion Poll and How it Works* (New York, 1940); and of course, the mammoth *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971* (New York, 1972). Testimony from the House "Hearings Before the Committee to Investigate Campaign Expenditures" (78th Cong., 2nd Sess., H.Res.551, part 12, Dec. 28, 1944), was extremely interesting.

An oral history interview from the Columbia University Oral History Research Office (copy held by University of Iowa Libraries) filled many gaps in Gallup's Iowa years, as did a letter from Gallup to Gladys Myers, quoted in her master's thesis, "A Narrative History of the *Daily Iowan*" (University of Iowa, 1949), and a 1956 interview with Gallup by a *Daily Iowan* reporter (held by the University of Iowa School of Journalism). Material on Gallup and the

Des Moines Register was found in Raymond Moscovitz, *Stuff: The Life of Newspaper Pioneer Basil Walters* (Ames, 1982); and George Mills, *Harvey Ingham and Gardner Cowles, Sr.: Things Don't Just Happen*, ed. Joan Bunke (Ames, 1977).

For the history of survey research, see: Jean Converse, *Survey Research in the United States* (New York, 1987); and three pieces in *Public Opinion Quarterly*: Archibald Crossley, "Early Days of Public Opinion Research" (Spring 1957), and "Straw Polls in 1936" (Winter 1948), and Peverill Squire, "Why the 1936 *Literary Digest* Poll Failed" (Spring 1988).

Information on Ola Babcock Miller is from David Jordan, "Those Formidable Feminists," *Iowan* (Winter 1982), and Ethel Nattrass Hanft, *Remarkable Iowa Women* (Muscatine, 1983).

Annotations to this article are held in the *Palimpsest* production files. The author thanks the pollster's son, George Gallup, for his kind help in verifying facts, sending additional information, and granting permission to quote poll results.