

## The Political Scene

Presidential politics has long constituted the great American game, and Iowa has been an eager participant since 1848. The preliminaries come in the early speculation; the party conventions are the warm-up; and the heated fall campaign is the grand climax to four years of gossip, planning, handshaking, and tireless work. The final results of the 1952 campaign were approved by the majority of Iowa's electorate. Before the outcome was known, however, Hawkeye State voters shared the best opportunity Americans had ever had to evaluate the candidates who courted their ballots. The big difference that marked the 1952 elections from earlier campaigns was television.

Through the media of television many Iowans watched the pre-convention fights for delegations, were vicariously jostled on the convention floor by lengthy demonstrations for various candidates, and finally sat in on the acceptance speeches of the nominees. The main arena was in Chicago, but the housewife in West Liberty shared a view of General Eisenhower's facial expressions at the same moment with the convention delegates. When Adlai Stevenson waved his acceptance to the cheering mob at Chicago, the farmer from

Stanhope was able to see the Illinois governor more clearly than many thousands in the convention hall. No accurate gauge of the effect of television on the final voting is possible, but it is certain that more people actually saw the candidates and more Iowa citizens voted in 1952 than ever before.

Early in January a group of Iowa Republican supporters of General Eisenhower announced their plan to organize and seek convention support for their candidate. Governor William S. Beardsley had been on record as an Eisenhower backer for many months. Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio was an avowed candidate for the Republican nomination, while the general's political intentions were still in doubt. Convinced that Eisenhower was available for the campaign, however, his supporters continued to garner sentiment for a convention victory. After strong showings in several state preferential primaries, Eisenhower resigned his post as supreme commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces, came home to Abilene, Kansas, and entered the campaign "for keeps."

Iowa Democrats shared the quandary of other party members after President Truman announced that he was not a candidate for re-election. Many county chairmen refused to believe that the President would turn down a convention draft, and insisted that Truman was their choice for the presi-

dential bid late in March. Meanwhile, Senator Estes Kefauver showed signs of becoming a serious contender for the Democratic nomination. Governor Stevenson repeatedly told reporters he did not want the nomination, although he left the door open for a "call from the people."

With the political stage thus set, Iowa Republicans held their convention to choose national delegates early in April. Many party regulars of long standing rallied behind the Taft standard, but Eisenhower supporters cited poll results as evidence that their man was "the only Republican who can win in November." After much heated argument, the party named fifteen Eisenhower and nine Taft delegates to the national convention. State Democrats displayed no tendency to place themselves on record for any candidate when they met late in May. Senator Guy Gillette had some "favorite son" support, but the convention favored an uninstructed delegation for the Chicago meeting. The result of their decision was a series of trips to Iowa by most of the avowed candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination.

After hearing the opening-day speeches at the Republican convention in Chicago, it was obvious to most voters that the long tenure of the Democratic party, "the mess in Washington," and "creeping socialism" would become important issues in the days ahead. General Eisenhower and

his wife, a native of Boone, had visited her home town en route to the convention, and 12,000 Iowans roared their approval of the wartime hero. The same enthusiasm swept through the convention in Chicago. Senator Taft was the only real opposition, despite the insistence of a Norfolk, Virginia, gentleman that he was heading a movement to draft Hanford MacNider of Mason City as the party's standard-bearer. Eisenhower raced to a victory on the first ballot, but six Taft delegates from Iowa stayed with their man to the end. General Eisenhower accepted the nomination, promised his party a "crusade," and began mapping his strategy for the November voting.

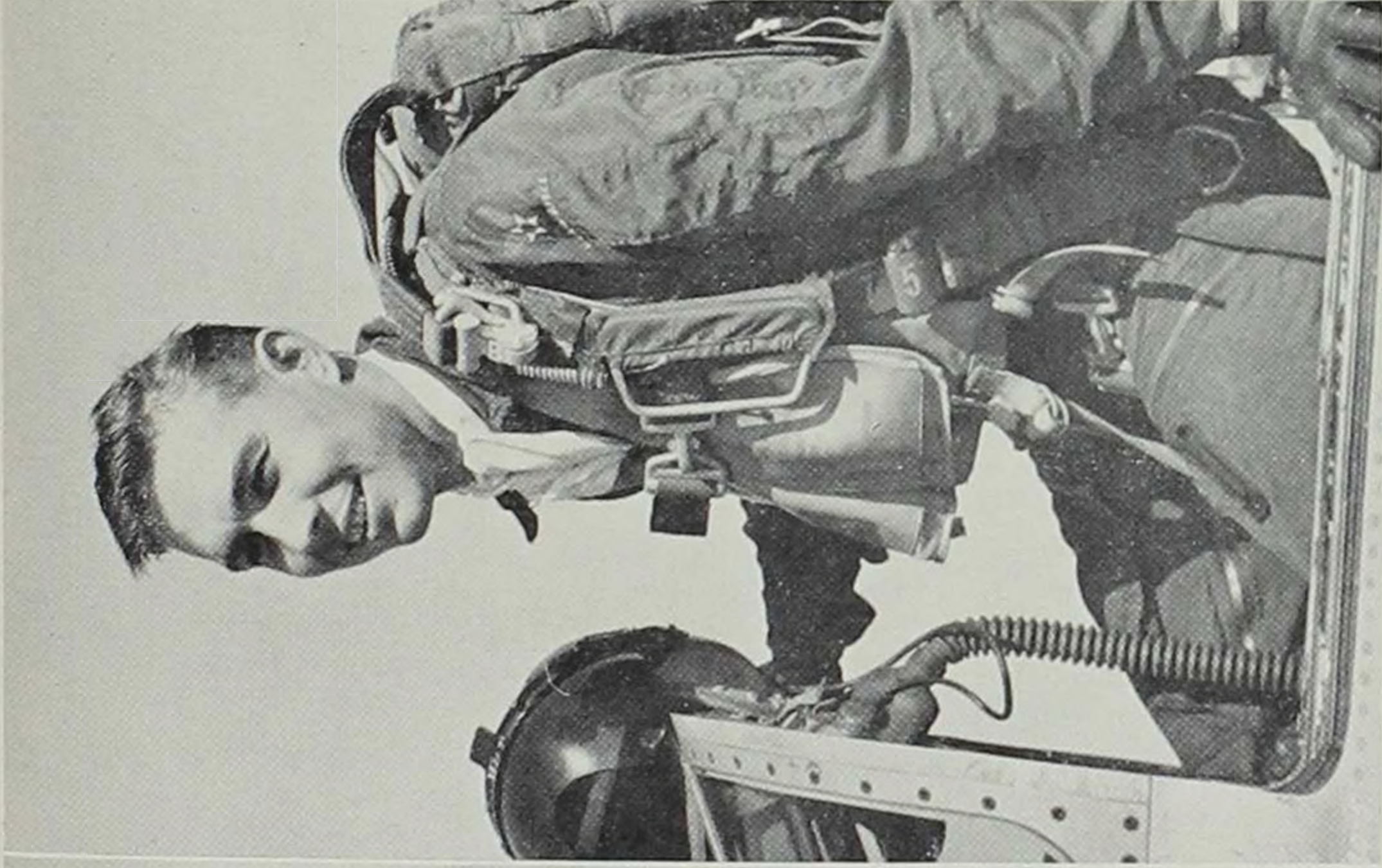
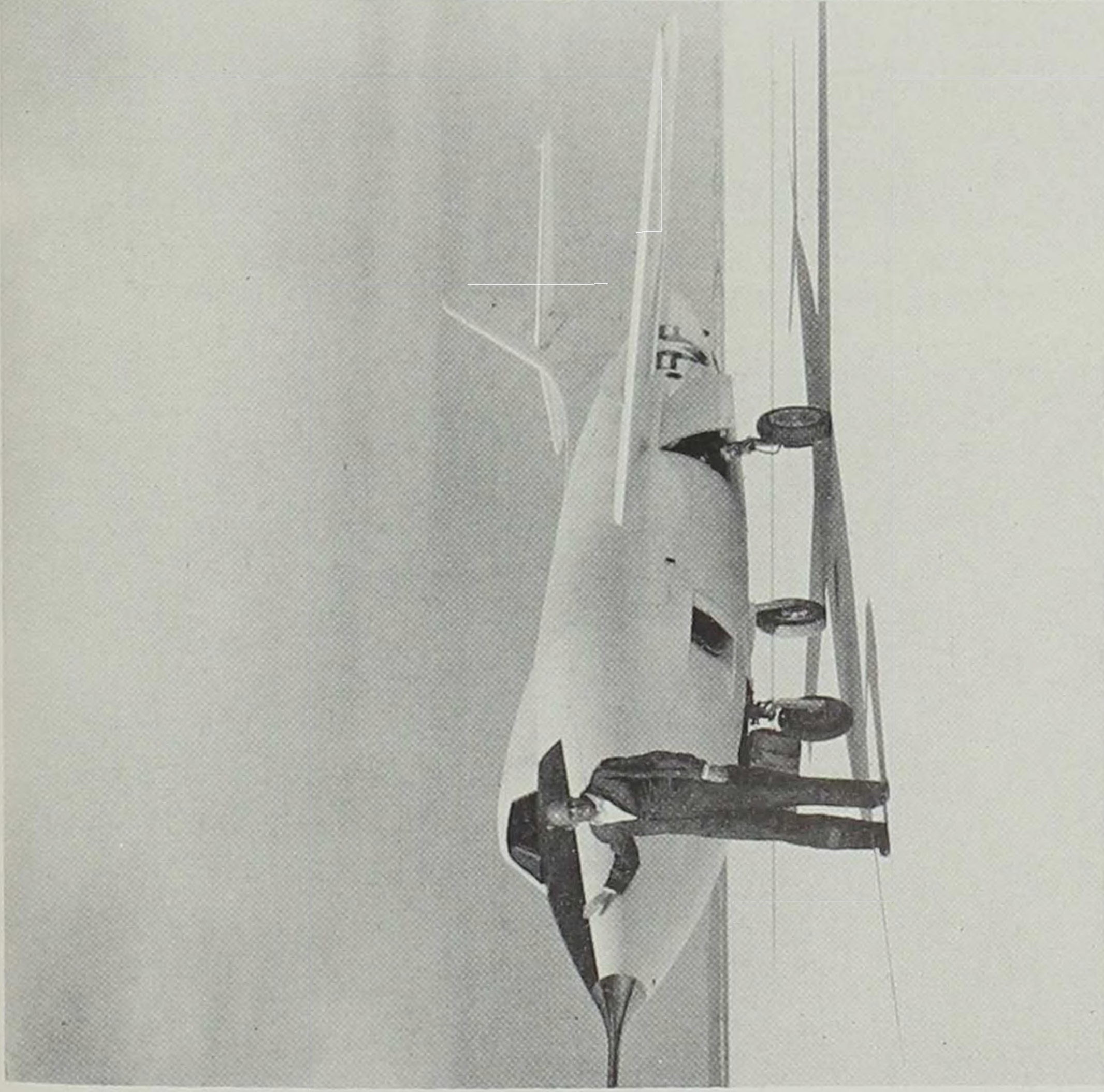
Iowa Democrats were divided when they followed their opponents into the International Amphitheater at Chicago two weeks after the Republicans had left. Both Stevenson and Kefauver held strong appeal to eighteen of the twenty-six Iowa delegates. Senator Richard Russell, Senator Robert S. Kerr, and Vice President Alben Barkley shared the other eight. On the decisive third ballot, ten Iowans cast their votes for Stevenson, eight went along with Kefauver. The convention chose Stevenson over his declared protest, but he accepted the nomination as President Truman stood by his side. For the Democrats, the main issue seemed to be the continuance of prosperity as opposed to the "specter of depression."

Campaign whistle-stop tours were mapped by

both parties, and Iowa voters soon found themselves courted by some of the most prominent Americans of the day. An estimated 90,000 Iowans stood in railroad yards to hear Eisenhower as he sped across the state promising to replace the Fair Deal with "an honest deal." Stevenson, who had once owned a 320-acre farm near Hornick, came to Fort Dodge and accused the general of "jumping on our [farm plank] right in broad daylight." Henry A. Wallace, a native Iowan who was an old hand at politics, visited Des Moines in September and declared that he saw little difference between the presidential candidates. A poll of Iowa voters indicated more discernment on their part, as a majority expressed a preference for "Ike" over the Illinois governor. Meanwhile, Stevenson named Stephen A. Mitchell, a native of Rock Valley, as chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

When Democratic speakers in Iowa hammered on the farm issue the Republicans fought back. Senator Richard Nixon, who was chosen as Eisenhower's running mate, told a Sioux City audience the Democrats were waging "a campaign of fear" among Iowa farmers. President Truman, convinced of the salutary effects of his 1948 speech at Dexter, missed a meeting with Senator Taft at Shenandoah as both men appealed for votes there on Pancake Day. The President later returned to Iowa for a whistle-stop tour with his

IOWA'S SONS MADE AVIATION HISTORY



*Left — Ottumwa-born Bill Bridgeman Flew 1238 M.P.H. in Douglas Skyrocket.*

*Right — Lieut. Harold E. Fischer, Jr., Swea City Jet Pilot — He Shot Down Two MIG-15s and Damaged Another in Korea.*



Mariam Brown of Grundy Center and Sgt. Raymond G. Larr  
There Was Nationwide Interest in Their Pen-Pal Romance



*Left* — Olympic Wrestling Champion Bill Smith of Iowa State Teachers College



*Right* — Actress Donna Reed Vacationed with Her Parents at Denison

daughter, Margaret, and at Manly thanked the crowd for coming to see "the man who is running the campaign for president." The GOP "truth squad" which was following the Truman train jumped on this statement by declaring it was proof that Governor Stevenson was the "captive candidate" of the President.

Jasper County gained national prominence when a staff of pollsters invaded the area. The poll-takers labelled it a "test-tube county" because it had picked the winner in every presidential election since 1896. The findings of the poll, which *Look* magazine published, showed that Eisenhower was winning in Jasper County. Perhaps "Jasper County" was to replace "Maine" in the old saying, "As Maine goes, so goes the nation."

In 1952 the poll-takers and Jasper County were right. The Korean war became a vital factor in the campaign late in October when Eisenhower promised to visit that tragic battleground if elected. His campaign was invigorated by public response to this announcement. A record turnout of voters, brought on by an intensive publicity effort by civic organizations, crowded polling places on November 4. The first Iowa returns gave Eisenhower a commanding lead. By 11 p.m. a national landslide for the general was in prospect.

The surprising factor in the 1952 Iowa election returns was the size of Eisenhower's plurality. Many observers had conceded Iowa to the Repub-



lican candidate, but some disaffection among the traditional farm vote had been expected. But Democratic allusions to prosperity and their campaign chant of "don't let them take it away" had been drowned in an avalanche of protest votes over Korea, the steadily rising national debt, the unbalanced budget, and the exposure of official corruption. Eisenhower received 808,906 votes in Iowa, the most ever given to any presidential candidate. The general carried all of the state's 99 counties and had 64 per cent of the total vote.

While Iowans were following the national campaign with interest, a formidable contest had developed in the state primaries. Governor Beardsley sought re-election for a third term against opposition from Kenneth A. Evans and William H. Nicholas. The eight incumbent Iowa Congressmen, all Republicans, also asked voters to return them to Washington. Otha Wearin, a former Congressman, was expected to win the Democratic gubernatorial nomination from Mayor Herschel Loveless of Ottumwa without difficulty. Attention was centered on these races, although the major state offices and many state legislative posts were also at stake. When the spring primary returns had been counted, the Iowa voter had shown a strong preference for most of the men already in office. Beardsley and his fellow incumbents in the state capitol were all renominated, along with the eight Congressmen. The

only surprise in the balloting came in the Democratic primary where Loveless triumphed over the experienced Wearin. The Republican nomination for the lieutenant-governor's position was not settled in the regular balloting because of the close vote. State Senator A. L. Doud of Douds had 83,698 votes, and State Senator Leo Elthon of Fertile had 82,433, which meant that neither had the necessary clear majority. A later GOP state convention decided the contest in favor of Elthon.

Iowa's century of loyalty to the Republican party caused many minor state offices to fall into GOP hands without a contest from their opponents. Outside of the race between Beardsley and Loveless for the governor's post, the only statewide contest of great interest pitted incumbent Republican Clyde Spry, Secretary of Agriculture, against Democrat Lester Gillette. Loveless campaigned on a platform calling for better highways, local option on sale of liquor by the drink, colored oleomargarine, and removal of the sales tax on food. Governor Beardsley stood on his record and asked for votes to continue a frugal administration in office. Both Loveless and Beardsley supporters charged the other camp with "mud slinging" in the late stages of the campaign, but such charges were not unusual — and indeed, seem to be expected around October 15 of election years.

Republicans captured every state office without difficulty, and only a handful of Democrats was

elected to serve in the state legislature. The only close vote in the state elections came in the gubernatorial contest, where returns from 690 precincts gave Governor Beardsley a mere 350-vote margin out of 293,426 ballots. Beardsley steadily increased his lead, however, and finally defeated Loveless by approximately 50,000 votes.

As a result of the November 4 events Iowans could look forward to a thoroughly Republican administration for at least two years, and possibly for four or more. The Democrats had been routed by the voters' explicit demand for a national "housecleaning," but Iowans appeared to be quite content with the political status quo in their home state. Indeed, all the mechanism was set in order for a new era of good feeling in Iowa politics.

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