

The Web of Life

Iowa's attention was chiefly centered upon its own problems during 1954. The war in Korea was over, and most of the boys were home. Although they were not indifferent to the war in French Indo-China, or to the problems of establishing a European Defense Community, Iowans were most interested in the state political campaigns, the farm price support controversy, and other matters of local significance.

In the field of entertainment the year saw better times for the motion picture industry. In 1950 there were 527 movie theaters in Iowa. During the next four years 117 closed their doors as the state became blanketed with television stations. In 1953 the movies began to strike back at TV with the introduction of 3-D pictures, a fad which was replaced by CinemaScope in 1954. By 1955 probably three-fourths of Iowa's theaters were equipped to show this new type of film. Movies might not be getting better but they certainly were getting bigger. The attraction of the wide screen, plus stereophonic sound, greatly improved color processes, and even some entertaining pictures, made 1954 a highly successful year for most Iowa theaters.

Although the first CinemaScope production, *The Robe*, was released in 1953, most Iowa theaters did not have an opportunity to show it until 1954 when it became either the first or second most popular picture in the houses where it played. Toward the end of the year *White Christmas* introduced VistaVision, another wide screen process, and it, too, broke box office records throughout the state.

Another success was *The Glenn Miller Story*, which excited state pride. Glenn Miller, the famous orchestra leader of the early 1940's, was born in Clarinda, where, in 1954, a day was set aside, honoring this native son who was killed in World War II. A National Guard armory, named after the bandleader, was dedicated by Governor Beardsley. Miller's mother was brought back to Clarinda, where she met James Stewart, who portrayed her son in the picture. The day was climaxed by a special preview of the movie, complete with spotlights and formal evening dress.

Other Iowans were prominent in the entertainment world during 1954. Donna Reed, the Denison girl, won the Academy Award as best supporting actress for her portrayal of a woman of dubious reputation but a heart of gold in the Award-winning picture — *From Here to Eternity*. On Broadway, Richard Bissell, formerly of Dubuque, collaborated with producer George Abbott to turn his popular novel of 1953, *7½ Cents*, into

what critics agreed was the best new musical comedy of the year — *The Pajama Game*.

Three new television stations, at Mason City, Des Moines, and Sioux City, began operations during the year, bringing to eleven the number of Iowa TV outlets. These stations, plus others in Omaha, Rock Island, and other nearby out-of-state cities, left few areas without good reception. One of the exceptions was Dubuque, where the citizens approved a franchise to a company which would pipe television programs by special cables into Dubuque homes.

About as many farm as urban families in the state now had receivers. Surveys of viewers indicated that the favorite programs were Ed Sullivan's "Toast of the Town," the "Jackie Gleason Show," and "I Love Lucy." In addition, farmers were especially interested in programs of farm news and information which many stations presented during the noon hour when the farmers could eat their midday meal while watching their TV sets.

Many Iowans were able to enjoy a wide variety of artists in live performances. The Metropolitan Opera presented *La Traviata* in Des Moines. Capable road companies brought such outstanding Broadway productions as *Stalag 17* and *The King and I* to the state. George Gobel and Martin and Lewis appeared before audiences who were already familiar with these comedians from their ap-

pearances on television and in the movies. The fabulous Ringling Brothers Circus thrilled young and old as it made its annual tour of Iowa cities.

In September many Iowans joined a nationwide television audience in watching Iowa defeat Michigan State's defending Big Ten football champions. The fine showing that Iowa's sophomore-studded team made in 1953 caused sports writers and fans to entertain high hopes for the squad in 1954. Successive defeats by Michigan and Ohio State quickly brought fans down to earth. A heart-breaking defeat at the hands of arch-foe Minnesota and a sound trouncing by a healthy Notre Dame squad left Iowa with a season's record of 5 wins and 4 losses. This was not a fair measure of the strength of the Hawkeye team, Iowa's best since the days of Nile Kinnick in 1939 and 1940. Unanimous choice on every All-American team was Iowa's powerful guard, Cal Jones. It was one of the best years in some time for Hawkeye fans, because earlier in the season, a young, predominantly sophomore basketball team nearly took the Big Ten cage title.

Iowa State College, meanwhile, launched an ambitious program to build that school into a major sports power. Vince Di Francesca was hired to coach football, and Bill Strannigan took over the basketball team, while greater inducements were offered athletes to attend Iowa State. However, President James M. Hilton declared that "at

no time will the desire for winning athletic contests be allowed to jeopardize the high standards or the good reputation which this great college enjoys."

In April the 45th Drake Relays were run in Des Moines. One of America's classic track meets, it was featured this time by the sensational performance of the great miler, Wes Santee, who paced his Kansas team to four relay titles, two of them in record times.

Muscatine won its first boys high school basketball championship in 27 years by defeating Des Moines Roosevelt, 67 to 53. The state girls title again went to Garnavillo which became the fifth team successfully to defend its title when it beat Oakland, 48 to 45. In November Garnavillo's record string of 60 straight victories was broken by Monona.

Art Andrews, a 16-year-old youth from Iowa City, won the state junior tennis singles, and advanced to the semi-finals of the national junior championships before being defeated. In August he was one of eight players selected as the nation's brightest young prospects to be trained by the famous star, Jack Kramer. Bob Leahy of Denison won the Iowa Amateur golf championship. Herb Klontz of Cedar Rapids, who won this title two years earlier, took the Western Junior golf title in 1954.

Paul Moon, who coached Davenport High School to several basketball championships, retired

in 1954. Iowans shared the disappointment of another famous Iowa sports figure, Bob Feller, when he did not get a chance to pitch for the Cleveland Indians in the World Series against the New York Giants.

There was a seamier side to the sports picture. A Des Moines Roosevelt youth admitted beating up an Independence player in an Iowa City hotel room during the boys basketball finals. Floren Di-Paglia, a Des Moines businessman, was convicted of trying to bribe a Drake basketball player. R. H. Chisholm, former executive secretary of the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union, was brought to trial charged with embezzling Union funds. Such events, however, could not detract from the enjoyment which Iowans obtained from sports during 1954.

Once again anniversaries were observed which gave evidence of Iowa's increasing maturity. This was the 150th year since Lewis and Clark set out in 1804 up the Missouri River, past Iowa's western border, on their historic expedition through the newly acquired Louisiana Purchase. Sioux City, Waterloo, North English, Alden, and several other Iowa communities celebrated their centennials in 1954, as did such counties as Floyd, Kosuth, Chickasaw, Carroll, and Greene. The Iowa State Education Association marked its 100th anniversary with ceremonies in May at its birthplace in Muscatine.

The Iowa State Fair, that symbol of Iowa's agricultural greatness, was also 100 years old. To mark this occasion a covered wagon caravan proceeded from Fairfield, the site of the first Fair in 1854, to the modern fairgrounds at Des Moines where a replica of the original Fair had been built. All attendance records were broken as over 600,000 people poured through the gates. Due to rising costs, the record for profits was not approached, but Fair Secretary Lloyd B. Cunningham was happy, feeling it was probably the biggest as well as the best State Fair.

The year saw more cases of polio reported than in any past year except 1952. In April and May, however, some 12,700 first, second, and third grade children in Linn, Scott, and Woodbury counties took part in the nation-wide field test of the Salk vaccine which, it was hoped, would prevent any more epidemics of this dreaded disease in future years.

Meanwhile, a controversy was stirred up in medical circles when Attorney General Leo Hoegh ruled that hospitals were practicing medicine illegally if they hired doctors to run their X-ray and pathology departments. Under Iowa law a corporation, such as a hospital, cannot practice medicine. The Iowa Hospital Association refused to accept this interpretation. Only changes in the law or a court decision could apparently resolve the conflict.

In May Attorney General Hoegh ordered trading stamp companies to halt their activities in Iowa. He based his order on Iowa's gift enterprise law. A trading stamp firm won a ruling from Polk County District Judge C. Edwin Moore that this law was unconstitutional. Hoegh appealed to the Iowa Supreme Court which upheld Judge Moore's decision. The gift enterprise law, the court ruled, was "clearly arbitrary" and unconstitutional. A move for a rehearing of the case was refused. The Supreme Court also ruled that a Cherokee doctor could not go ahead with plans for a home because it would obstruct "the magnificent view" from a nearby lawyer's residence.

Another decision of the state Supreme Court was upheld by the United States Supreme Court. By a 4 to 4 vote the latter refused to reverse the Iowa court's ruling that a Sioux City cemetery did not violate the Constitution in refusing to bury Sergeant John R. Rice, an Iowa Indian who was killed in Korea.

Individuals figured prominently in the year's news. Herbert Hoover returned to his birthplace at West Branch on August 10 for his 80th birthday. Almost 10,000 persons from Iowa and throughout the nation took part in a celebration honoring the former President. Governor William S. Beardsley, representing the people of Hoover's native state, declared: "All Iowa joins with you on this happy occasion of your eightieth

birthday and wishes you the good fortunes of life."

Later that same month Hoover returned to visit the Iowa State Fair with President Dwight D. Eisenhower. This appearance had occasioned some comment earlier when Fair officials announced that they would break their rules by charging the guests no admission. When the President was introduced, he handed a surprised Governor Beardsley a dollar bill to pay the gate fee for himself and for Hoover. The President's address to the 25,000 people who packed the grandstand and paddock was strictly nonpartisan, presenting a review of recent American foreign policy.

Iowans rejoiced in the visits of these two famous Americans. They were saddened by the deaths on Iowa highways. A new high of 633 persons died as a result of highway accidents during 1954. In recognition of his long record of promoting safety, W. Earl Hall of Mason City was given the annual \$10,000 Mutual of Omaha award as the individual judged to have contributed the most in the field of health and safety. Officials tried to hold down the number of auto accidents by dealing more severely with traffic violators. In September, after a record total of 20 persons had been killed in one weekend, Governor Beardsley, who had made highway safety one of his major concerns, called for an increase in the size of the state highway patrol.

But the death toll continued to rise, and on November 21 the state was shocked to hear that the Governor himself was a victim of a highway accident. In the evening of that day Governor Beardsley and his wife were returning from Ames, where they had driven in hopes of seeing their son Dan, a student at Iowa State College. Just north of the Des Moines city limits the Beardsley car ran into the back of a panel truck, whose driver was slowing down to help a stalled motorist. The Governor was dead on arrival at Iowa Lutheran Hospital. Mrs. Beardsley suffered from shock and was hospitalized for weeks. Witnesses and officers said that the accident was unavoidable. The Governor was driving at a normal speed, but a hill hid his view of the truck until it was too late to stop.

Governor Beardsley was Iowa's first chief executive to die in office. At the annual Governor's Day at Clear Lake in July he had declared that he was "leaving the governor's office with a heart full of appreciation and gratitude to the people of Iowa." His death, just 53 days before the expiration of his term, brought expressions of sorrow and grief from President Eisenhower, governors of other states, leaders of both political parties, and from his many friends and neighbors in his home town. "Everyone was shocked," one resident of New Virginia said. "We are going to miss Bill a lot."

Leo Elthon, a quarry operator at Fertile and Lieutenant Governor during Beardsley's third term, was informed of the Governor's death by a phone call late in the evening from Allen Whitfield, a long-time associate of Beardsley. "Heavens, that can't be!" Elthon cried. "I loved that man!" At 2 A. M., Elthon set out on a lonely three-hour drive through the dark night to Des Moines. At 9:30 A. M. on November 22, he was sworn in as Iowa's thirty-second Governor.

Elthon had been re-elected Lieutenant Governor on November 2. Thus he became the first man to step from that position up to that of Governor and back to Lieutenant Governor again. Only Warren Garst, who was Governor for 52 days in 1908-1909 after Albert Cummins resigned, served as Governor for a shorter term than Elthon. During the remainder of the year Elthon prepared the Governor's biennial message and recommendations for the 1955 General Assembly.

Meanwhile, Governor-elect Leo Hoegh resigned his position as Attorney General at the beginning of December, and energetically prepared himself for his new job. He went to Washington for a conference with President Eisenhower and other high government officials. In addition, he met with the governors of Iowa's neighboring states to discuss common problems.

In addition to the death of Governor Beardsley, other tragedies, near-tragedies, and deaths dark-

ened the year for many Iowans. On August 22, a Braniff airliner crashed 18 miles south of Mason City, resulting in the death of 12 of the 19 persons aboard. The wonder was that anyone survived the wreck.

On March 1, Republican Congressman Ben Jensen of Exira was one of five Representatives shot on the floor of the House of Representatives by Puerto Rican fanatics. Jensen, who was hit in the shoulder, stumbled out of the chamber into a cloak room and fell almost at the feet of another Iowa Congressman, H. R. Gross of Waterloo. Jensen was back at work before the end of the month.

Among the notable Iowans who died in 1954 some had achieved fame elsewhere. In this group were Hugh A. Butler, U. S. Senator from Nebraska, a native of Missouri Valley, the popular novelist, Bess Streeter Aldrich of Cedar Falls, Carl Stephenson of Fayette, a leading medieval historian, and Algernon Lee of Dubuque, one of the country's leading Socialists. Others who died whose work was more closely associated with Iowa included such prominent farm leaders as James R. Howard, first president of both the American Farm Bureau Federation and the Iowa Farm Bureau, Dan A. Wallace, and Raymond B. Sayre. The list also included educators like Luther W. Stalnaker and Reuel H. Sylvester of Drake, Samuel A. Lynch of Iowa State Teachers

College, Philip G. Clapp of the State University of Iowa, William R. Raymond of Iowa State, and James P. Van Horn, minister and educator. Otis R. Wolfe, nationally famous eye specialist of Marshalltown, Paul A. Olson, long-time editor and publisher of the *Story City Herald*, and former Supreme Court Justices John W. Anderson and Frederick F. Faville were other well-known figures to die. Former state legislators who died included Nicholas Balkema, William W. Goodykoontz, Ora E. Husted, Frank A. O'Connor, Milton Peaco, Samuel R. Torgeson, and Harry C. White.

While Iowans were saddened at the deaths of these citizens, they took pride in the accomplishments of the living. Archie A. Alexander, Des Moines contractor, was appointed governor of the Virgin Islands. The Washington correspondent of the *Des Moines Register and Tribune*, Richard L. Wilson, won the Pulitzer Prize for his exclusive publication of the FBI report on Harry Dexter White. Willard D. Archie, publisher of the *Shenandoah Sentinel*, Will D. Alexander, editor of the *Chariton Leader*, and Carl C. Caswell, publisher of the *Clarinda Herald-Journal*, were recipients of the 1954 Master Editor-Publisher awards. The new national president of the American Legion Auxiliary was Mrs. Elizabeth R. Lainsen of Fort Madison. Virgil M. Hancher, president of the State University of Iowa, served on the five-man

commission which chose Colorado Springs as the site of the new Air Force Academy. Joseph N. Welch, a native of Primghar, who graduated from Grinnell and went on to become a successful New England lawyer, achieved national fame as the witty special counsel for the Army in its dispute with Senator Joseph McCarthy.

The achievements of these and many other Iowans made it certain that the state would not be lacking in men and women ready and able to handle the problems which the state had to face in the areas of politics, education, industry, and agriculture.

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