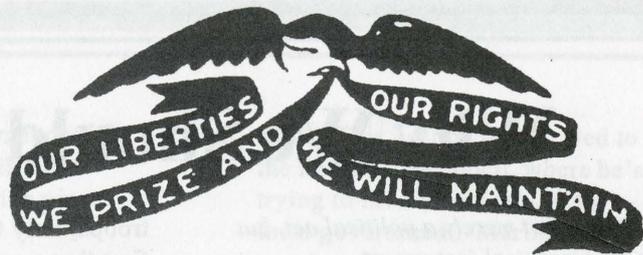


THE PRAIRIE PROGRESSIVE



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January 2004

A NEWSLETTER FOR IOWA'S DEMOCRATIC LEFT

Prairie Dog's Honor Roll, 1993 - 2002

Prairie Dog is embedded with one of the presidential campaigns, and is unable to contribute our usual honor roll of progressives for the past year. In order to prevent the past achievements of Iowa progressives from slipping down the memory hole, we resurrect selected past honors from the last decade.

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Campaign to Organize Graduate Students—It began as a small canvassing effort on the University of Iowa campus, then grew into a spirited drive to carve out a bargaining unit for teaching and research assistants. Currently negotiating with the Board of Regents, COGS is on the verge of becoming the largest public sector local in the state.

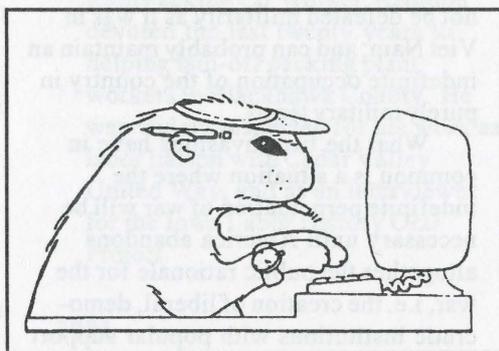
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the margin of votes and turned the tide of public opinion.

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Heather Shank—The Iowa City Human Rights Coordinator pressured the state Civil Rights Commission to extend protection to gays and lesbians, produced a public education video on gender identity, and hosted a record 170 citizens at the city's annual human rights breakfast.

*1993-2002 Honor Roll,
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Why We Should Caucus for Kucinich

"War is not merely a political act, but also a political instrument, a continuation of political relations, a carrying out of the same by other means."

—Karl von Clausewitz.

Which country wins the prize for the greatest military/diplomatic disasters of the last century? The grand prize surely belongs to Germany. Twice within a century, their leaders launched a war on two fronts that they could not possibly win, bringing disaster on their own country, their neighbors, and much of the rest of the world.

For second prize there are numerous contenders. I am not referring to government-sponsored disasters such as the purposeful slaughter of one's own citizens. In that competition, the clear winners are Communist China and the Soviet Union, whose governments surpassed even Nazi Germany in sheer mass murder, although a special honorable mention should be reserved (on a per capita basis) for Cambodia. I am referring instead to colossal mistakes in judgment, where diplomacy is abandoned for war when alternatives remain. Since war is the greatest disaster known to humanity, the launching of an unnecessary war is one of the most morally objectionable acts known to humanity, regardless of the good intentions of the perpetrators.

With the invasion and occupation of Iraq, the United States must be considered a contender for second place. Twice within half a century the United States government has committed the bulk of its ground forces to an unwinnable war on the other side of the globe. In both cases, the American people and their representatives were lied to by the President in order to pursue a war that Americans would not otherwise have supported. In both cases, Americans rallied around the

troops, only to suspect from the very first that something was not quite right about this war. In both cases, Americans became bitterly divided.

The invasions of Vietnam and Iraq are in many respects fundamentally different. The scale of the casualties in Iraq bears no comparison to those in Vietnam, where 50,000 Americans died in the course of killing somewhere between 2 and 3 million Vietnamese, an ocean of blood. There is no heavily armed neighbor of Iraq, and no super-power anywhere in the world, supplying material and ideological support for the utterly disorganized Iraqi resistance, unless you count the psychopaths of Al Queda (who now pose an even greater threat to Americans). The United States military will not be defeated militarily as it was in Viet Nam, and can probably maintain an indefinite occupation of the country in purely military terms.

What the two invasions have in common is a situation where the indefinite perpetuation of war will be necessary until America abandons altogether the public rationale for the war, i.e. the creation of liberal, democratic institutions with popular support in the occupied nation. We can no doubt occupy Iraq indefinitely, but we will never create popular, democratic institutions as long as American troops are there as illegal foreign invaders, using force, violence, and injustice in a vain attempt to create stability. Although we can avoid "losing" the war in narrow military terms simply by maintaining our troops there, we can never "win" if our goal is to create a government in Iraq that is recognized as legitimate by the people of Iraq.

Many argue that we can not leave Iraq to anarchy and violence, without realizing that the presence of American troops is a source of anarchy and violence. As long as American troops remain, they will be killed and they will

kill. They will lose their eyes in roadside bombing, and be blown out of the sky by rocket propelled grenades. They will shoot down university students demonstrating for Iraqi independence, and teenagers in the streets who throw rocks at American tanks, claiming that they are "insurgents". They will rain 500 pound bombs down on the cities of Iraq, mutilating elderly couples as they lie sleeping in their beds, and burning children alive. They will arrest thousands of Iraqis, hold them without trial, deny them prisoner of war status, and shield them from outside scrutiny.

As more and more working class graduates of West Branch and Tipton high schools are sent to Iraq to die, or have their legs blown off, the more will the country be polarized over the issue of war. War is not just one issue among others, for passions run very high in matters of life and death. The longer the war in Iraq continues, the more will Americans refuse to speak to former friends, and accuse each other of mass murder or lack of patriotism. More and more American will agree to spy on each other, and others will become paranoid about being spied upon.

We have the luxury, as Iowans, of having a chance to speak out against this madness, and the best way to do that is to caucus for Congressman Dennis Kucinich on January 19th. Kucinich is the only presidential candidate who understands the realities on the ground in Iraq. His plan to withdraw all American soldiers, and replace them with UN troops under UN command, provides the only possible way to bring an end to this illegal occupation within a matter of months rather than years.

Kucinich's plan may not work, but we know that the plans of the other

*Why We Should Caucus for Kucinich,
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Memories of Caucuses Past

Shortly before he died of complications of heart surgery last month, former Senator Paul Simon appealed to his former supporters in Iowa to support Howard Dean in the presidential caucuses. Many of his supporters from 1988 (I was one of them) have fond memories of his campaign in Iowa, largely because of the loyalty that Senator Simon was capable of inspiring. Here was a career politician whose integrity had been untainted by the corrupting influences of American political life. Given the succession of greedy, self-absorbed, amoral, misogynist, and violent presidents who have inhabited the White House recently, the election of Paul Simon to our highest office now seems an event reserved for the fantasy world of West Wing.

In 1988 Simon was a serious contender until the Iowa caucuses put an end to his campaign. Gephardt was declared the caucus "winner" by the East Coast media early in the evening in 1988, on the basis of partly counted votes, and the Simon campaign never recovered. In his memoir about the 1988 campaign, *Winners and Losers*, Simon is less than complimentary about our caucuses. ABC and CBS both declared Gephardt the winner before they went off the air, although NBC still said it was too close to call. For weeks after the caucuses there continued to be discussions about who had actually won, but of course the media had no interest in those discussions. They had made the decision on the basis of partial returns in order to provide morning headlines.

Simon also points out that the collection of the popular vote totals done by the media ended at 1:00 a.m. with about 70 percent of the voted counted. "Those not counted," he writes, "included one large county, which leaned heavily for me (28)." That was Johnson County, which went for Simon in a landslide. The Rev. Jesse

Jackson came in second, and Gephardt, who "won" Iowa, had very little support in Johnson County. The Johnson County Democratic chair in 1988 was a Gephardt supporter who was so slow at getting in the returns that the Democratic State Chair at the time, Bonnie Campbell, threatened to call the county sheriff in order to produce the returns.

So, the Johnson County caucuses have made a difference, although not perhaps one we can be proud of. In 1996 the Johnson County caucus returns were manipulated once again, although in that year it made no difference in the outcome of the election. Word had gone out from the Clinton campaign that their candidate was to be renominated unanimously in Iowa. In at least two Johnson County precincts, however, caucus attenders refused to follow orders, and elected uncommitted delegates in one case, and delegates committed to Ralph Nader in the other. The existence of these delegates, duly reported to county headquarters, was suppressed by the county party in their reporting to the press.

The Press-Citizen in particular found the reports of Johnson County delegate totals peculiar, since one of their reporters attended Precinct 19 and filed a story on how the caucus was divided over whether to support Clinton or Nader. Reporters from the Press-Citizen repeatedly called Johnson County Democratic headquarters to ask about the number of non-Clinton delegates, and were told repeatedly that every delegate was for Clinton. The next morning, the Press-Citizen ran a front page feature about the election of Nader delegates in Precinct 19. Inside the paper, a table reporting the Johnson County delegate totals, based on information supplied by Johnson County Democratic Party, showed only Clinton delegates from Precinct 19. The Nader delegates had disappeared from history.

Paul Simon would not have been surprised at what happened in 1996, although unlike the events of 1988 it had no influence on the outcome of the election. I'm sure he would encourage all Johnson County caucus attenders to keep a close eye on the returns. ✂

—Jeff Cox

How Beloved Was Al Grady?

The Press-Citizen's headline was ironic: "Beloved" sportswriter Al Grady dies.

Grady was, indeed, beloved by readers and friends. Too bad he couldn't have been more beloved by the Press-Citizen when it counted.

When Grady became sports editor of the newspaper in 1951, he was pretty much a one-man band. He covered sports events for Iowa City's four high schools (City High, University High, St. Mary's and St. Patrick's), as well as

sports at the University of Iowa. And, of course, he had to find time to gather information about sports in area towns.

Over the years, he had help from a variety of part-time assistants, and eventually full-time assistants. The hours were always long, however, and the work demanding. Grady did his job cheerfully and thoroughly. He was doing what he loved, and readers loved him back.

How Beloved Was Al Grady?
Continued on Page 4

Dean for President

Joe Lieberman and the Democratic Leadership Council recruited me to the Dean campaign.

Last summer I hadn't been following the presidential campaign much. There were too many candidates and anyway I was definitely going to vote for the nominee, whoever they were.

Lieberman and the DLC, however, drew my attention to Howard Dean. They had declared that no one, especially Dean, had any business running for president if they had opposed the war in Iraq.

Since I believe that no one who supported the war in Iraq has any business running for president, let alone being president, Joe and his friends narrowed the field for me.

Dean's web site told me more. I like the fact that he switched from Wall Street to family medicine. I like the fact that he was a local Democratic Party chair, that he was a state legislator, and that he was a governor of a small state.

If elected, a political moderate like Howard Dean will certainly disappoint me many times. That's what I expect from mainstream candidates who can win national elections.

But Dean is good enough for me. He's not part of the Washington crowd that brought us the Iraqi quagmire. Dean is not one of those Democratic Party leaders who blew it when we really needed them to lead.

Defeating George Bush will be difficult. The attacks on any Democratic candidate will be unbelievably vicious and dishonest. Our candidate must stand up to these bullies.

I've come to see Howard Dean as pugnacious bulldog who has already sunk his teeth deep into Bush's rear end and isn't going to let go until Wednesday, November 3rd.

I'm caucusing for Dean because he's the best chance we've got. ✂

—Rusty Martin

*How Beloved Was Al Grady?,
Continued from Page 3*

Conditions at the newspaper began to change after it was sold to Gannett. Long-time executives were replaced with corporate recruits. Each new person in charge introduced his own ideas. Each new person would soon be replaced by another new person with another set of ideas. To staff members, it was a kind of yo-yo management.

Meanwhile, Grady had heart attacks and bypass surgery. Demands of the editor's job became more than he could physically handle. He opted to become a part-time writer and columnist, focusing on Hawkeye sports.

Various managing editors had various ideas about his role. One insisted that his columns run on the front page. The next hired another writer that he thought should get top billing. Grady rolled with the punches, continuing to connect with readers and do what he thought was right.

Things began to fall apart with the arrival of yet another new managing editor. His first day on the job, Grady introduced himself when they met in a hallway. Making small talk, Grady said something about hoping the man's family was enjoying Iowa City. "My family is none of your business," the editor responded.

It went downhill from there.

Grady was not the only one to tangle with that editor. He disliked anyone who was a part of the community, preferring to hire reporters from out of town. Mention of such women in authority as Lolly Eggers, director of the Iowa City Public Library, or school Superintendent Barb Grohe, sent him into tirades. The newsroom was filled with constant tension.

Sportswriters felt it, too. They were told to write objectively, not as fans. Never mind that Grady was a columnist, and Press-Citizen readers were more interested in Hawkeye fortunes than those of Ohio State or Minnesota or wherever.

When the editor told Grady that he would be required to work with a writing coach, Grady threw in the towel. He had to quit, he said, because working there was jeopardizing his health. He announced his retirement in a column he had written a couple of years earlier, so it would be ready whenever he needed it. Grady didn't mention the dispute with the editor; the editor did that himself in another article, making sure that everyone got the message that Grady was not sufficiently cooperative.

The community was erupted in outrage. Letters to the editor poured in. That created an interesting dilemma for readers. Many who wanted to cancel their subscriptions also didn't want to miss any of the dozens of Grady letters. Letters were still coming in when the publisher decreed that no more Grady letters would be published.

The Cedar Rapids Gazette and Des Moines Register both queried Grady about writing for them. He declined to consider either. It would seem disloyal to the Press-Citizen, he said.

Because pensions were based on income at the time of retirement and Grady had worked part-time, his calculated pension was so tiny that he was paid a small lump sum. His friends found that more appalling than he did.

Grady went on to work for Voice of the Hawkeyes and kept doing what he liked to do. He could still cover games and communicate with diehard Hawk fans.

After he died, the attention he got in the Press-Citizen almost equaled the attention he got when he "retired." The accolades were appropriate, and Grady never carried a grudge. Some of the rest of us, however, aren't about to forget. ✂

—The Prairie Avenger

1993 - 2002 Honor Roll

Continued from Page 1

2800 UPS workers in Iowa—who taught us all a lesson in solidarity.

1998

Miya Rodolfo-Sioson—Seven years ago she was a random victim of violence on the University of Iowa campus. Today she works for the Center of Independent Living in Berkeley, where she helped pass a city ordinance to permanently fund emergency-assistance services for people with severe disabilities. Rodolfo's advice for activists, with or without disabilities: "There's tons of stuff you can still do. Just focus on what you can do, and don't worry about the stuff you can't do."

The Cedar Rapids Gazette—Having already astonished eastern Iowa with its first-ever endorsement of a Democrat for Governor, the paper urged the City Council to protect the rights of gays and lesbians in the areas of employment, education, credit, and housing.

1999

Robert Pratt—U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Iowa, took the unusual step (for a judge) of

publicly denouncing mandatory minimum sentencing in a Des Moines Register opinion piece.

Mark Smith—The State Federation of Labor chief bullied, cajoled, persuaded, and begged the Governor, the Democratic Party, and the rank-and-file to fight the Stanley Amendments. The startling defeat of both amendments was a tremendous victory for many, but none more than Smith, a former school teacher who articulates progressive positions as powerfully as anyone in Iowa.

2000

Carol DeProse—Jail bond vote in Johnson County: 65.5% no, 34.5% yes.

Gene Redmon 1936-2000—A former Rath Packing Co. worker, Redmon devoted the last twenty years to helping laid-off packing plant workers in Blackhawk County. He was widely respected for his work as labor liaison with Cedar Valley United Way, and as an interviewer for the Iowa Labor History Oral Project.

2001

Rusty Martin—Risked jail when he refused to register for the draft in

1980. This year he was elected to the Perry City Council, where he's trying to involve citizens in their local government. Martin holds regular office hours, has an e-mail newsletter for constituents, and knows a lot about sidewalks and fire trucks.

Elkader, Iowa—the only town in America named after an Islamic revolutionary. When a local exhibit of Algerian memorabilia was criticized as "inappropriate" after Sept. 11, former mayor Ed Olson didn't back down: "We should cross borders in friendship, not war."

2002

Richard Sturgeon—He has dedicated his life to helping workers. He draws no salary for publishing the monthly 'Workers Have Rights Too' newsletter out of Sioux City.

Peg Mullen—She was a farm wife from La Porte City when she lost a son in Viet Nam. Now 85, she has lost no passion since writing "Unfriendly Fire" 25 years ago. Mullen was recently seen at an anti-preemptive strike rally in Davenport carrying a sign that said 'Bush & Cheney—Your War, YouGo.' ✨

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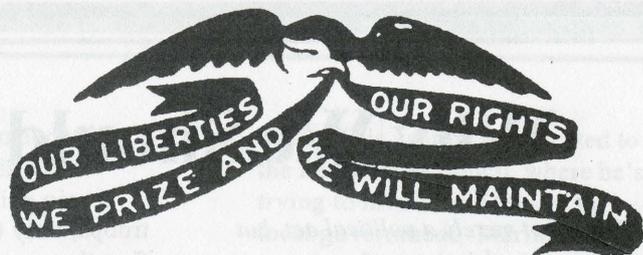
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"Get into politics as if your lives depend on it, because they do."

—Justin Dart, Jr., disability rights activist, 1930-2002

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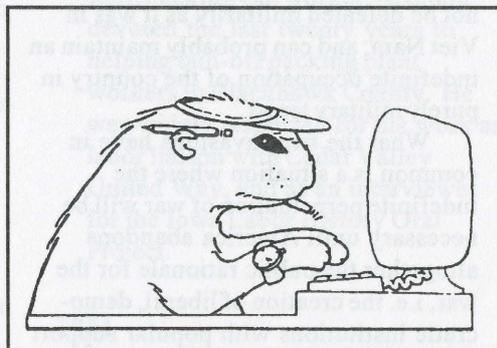
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