

OUR CENTURY

1946

AT A GLANCE

Tight budgets and pricey food dominate the news

The postwar recession failed to materialize, yet it was a turbulent prosperity Clevelanders faced.

Prices jumped, unions struck and there were shortages of everything from car batteries to light bulbs. Meat was in such short supply that it was Page One news in June when 500 lambs arrived at Cleveland Union Stockyards. Housewives staged a boycott in July, refusing to pay 90 cents a pound for butter. Seventy-five members of the Koshers Meat Dealers Association threatened to shut down unless price controls were restored. By Christmas, turkey was selling at 55 to 72 cents a pound; coffee, 39 cents; eggs, 65 cents a dozen; bread, 16 cents a loaf.

Consumer prices had risen 51 percent above 1939, The Plain Dealer reported. However, average earnings in manufacturing had risen 76 percent, to \$45.83 a week. Still, Cleveland's 250,000 union members, no longer getting wartime overtime, were up in arms. As the year began, they shut down the three daily newspapers for a month. Among other strikers: Great Lakes sailors, carpenters and the caddies at Canterbury Country Club. Nationally, the most militant union was, as usual, John L. Lewis' United Mine Workers. Their strike in November sharply cut electric generation and forced brownouts in Cleveland within a week.

Gov. Frank Lausche reinstated wartime restrictions affecting street lighting and elevator service. A federal court fined Lewis \$10,000 and the UMW \$3.5 million. Still, the miners stayed out. Finally, Lewis ordered them back "to take the pressure off the Supreme Court." With veterans returning daily, the housing shortage was horrendous. After 81 eviction cases were filed in one day, Alfred Benesch, chairman of the mayor's fair rent committee, called for a moratorium on evictions. Gov. Lausche proposed reinstating rent controls.

Racial tensions were growing. In February, an off-duty black policeman was shot accidentally when he went to the aid of black youths being evicted from Euclid Beach. The guards told evicted police it was "park policy to prohibit Negroes from the dance floor." Owner Dudley Humphrey declared, "We have never had any trouble with our colored patrons. We are convinced that most of these incidents are caused by Communist agitators." However, the Community Relations Board and its chairman, Mayor Thomas Burke, called for a law banning discrimination in admission to amusement parks.



PLAIN DEALER FILE

Entrants for the 1946 Cleveland Air Races. Left to right, Capt. Jack Sullivan, Maj. G.E. Lundsquist, Lt. Walter J. McAuley and Maj. K.O. Chilstrom

The National Air Races returned for the first time since 1939. Paul Mantz, a movie stunt pilot, won the Bendix Trophy by averaging 435.607 mph from Los Angeles to Cleveland. Test pilot Alvin Johnson won the closed course Thompson Trophy at an average 373.908.

Maj. Gus Lundsquist of the Army Air Force averaged 535.583 to win the world's first closed course race for jet planes. In a straight speed dash, Lt. William Riley averaged 578.360 to win a trophy sponsored by the Weatherhead Co. Margaret Hurlbert of Painesville averaged 200.588 to win the first closed course race for women, sponsored by Halle Brothers.

Civil aviation had come of age, thanks in large part to improvements in aircraft design during the war. Municipal Airport logged 1,286,144 passengers for the year on 86,530 plane trips. The city began construction of a lakefront airport.

The Republican slogan was "Had enough? Vote Republican." Voters did. Among those swept out was Lausche, who was defeated by another Clevelander, Attorney General Thomas Herbert.

Archbishop Joseph Schrembs, head of the Catholic diocese since 1921, died in November and was succeeded by Edward F. Hoban, who would be bishop until 1966. His biggest challenge: building churches and schools for the Catholics who, like other Clevelanders, were moving to the suburbs.

The return of the veterans meant an upsurge in marriages, from 11,945 in 1945 to 19,165 in 1946, and births, from 24,056 to 29,144. Traffic deaths fell to 104; there had been 275 in 1929.

It wasn't yet considered a health issue, but city officials reported progress against the "smoke nuisance." Total precipitation was cut to 52.5 tons per square mile from 60 tons in 1945.

On to the real fun

Sports takes center stage for war-weary Clevelanders

By Fred McGunagle

Finally, the headlines — and life — no longer were dominated by the war. True, the headlines told of strikes and rising prices and what was becoming known as "the cold war." But the papers, freed from wartime newsprint restrictions, were now full of the blessedly mundane news of normalcy.

In particular, there was a sports boom such as Cleveland had never seen. The stars were back from the service to reclaim their positions from the 4-Fs and old-timers. Fans had money to spend and, as 1946 began, they couldn't yet spend it on new cars.

So they bought sports tickets. They crowded into the Arena, where humidity, excitement and the scent of peanuts were in the air. Barons' attendance averaged 10,146 for the 1945-46 season with some crowds over 12,000, at least as announced. It later turned out the Arena couldn't hold that many, but those it held filled every seat and yelled their heads off.

The team was battling for first place as the new year began, but wound up third in the West Division of the American Hockey League. That was good enough for the playoffs, and, in a typical Barons finish, they quickly eliminated the Providence Reds and Pittsburgh Hornets, and took a 3-1 lead over the Buffalo Bisons in the finals. The Bisons battled back to win Game 5. In Game 6, Les Cunningham was hobbled by a groin injury and the Bisons swarmed all over Tommy Burlington. With the score 3-3 in the third period, a body check slammed Burlington into the boards. He had to be carried from the ice. The Bisons scored the winning goal. The next night, with Burlington still out, they defeated the Barons 5-2 for the Calder Cup.

Bob Feller was back and better than ever, winning 26 games — including his second no-hitter and sixth and seventh one-hitters — while striking out a Major League record of 348. Lou Boudreau hit .293 while playing a sensational shortstop. But once more, the Indians were under .500 when, on June 22, there was an event that would change the Indians and, for that matter, baseball: Bill Veeck, fresh out of the Army, bought the team.

Veeck bummed a ride from the press conference to League Park, where the team was about to take the field. Spurning an offer to see his new office, he headed for the bleachers and sat down with the fans. They gathered around him to talk baseball.

Veeck put in a direct line so fans could call his office, and he answered it himself. His home number was listed, and he talked to drunks at 3



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Officials of the Cleveland Indians and the New York Yankees conduct some semi-official business over a bar room table as the major and minor leagues held their annual meetings. Left to right: Larry MacPhail, Yankee president; Harry Grabiner, Cleveland vice president; Bill Veeck, Indians president, and Bucky Harris, new manager of the Yankees.

a.m. To liven up games, he brought in baseball clown Max Patkin and trick artist Johnny Price. He put on circus acts between games of double-headers and shot off fireworks after night games.

When Veeck arrived with the season nearly half over, the Indians had drawn 289,000 people. Other owners snorted that his bush-league stunts never would work in the majors. Yet at the end of the season, attendance was 1,052,289 — the first of consecutive records that would stand until the Jacobs Field era. Oh, the Indians. They finished sixth. The fans didn't care. They had a new hero, their tireless "beloved burrhead."

Paul Brown was the highest paid coach in football at \$25,000 a year and, since the new All-America Football Conference had no draft, he was using Mickey McBride's money to sign up returning servicemen for Cleveland's entry. The National Football League champion Rams saw the handwriting on the wall. On Jan. 12, 1946, they became the first major pro sports franchise to move to the West Coast.

Rams tackle Chet Adams balked at moving. A judge ruled that the Los Angeles Rams couldn't hold him to the contract he signed with the Cleveland Rams. He joined the Browns. So did Rams backs Don Greenwood and Tommy Colella. Brown signed players from his Great Lakes Naval Station team, notably quarterback Otto Graham, and his national champion 1942 Ohio State team, notably guards Bill Willis and Lin Houston, end Dante Lavelli and a tackle named Lou Groza who could also kick field goals.

The signing of Willis broke the "color line" in professional football. Jackie Robinson had signed a baseball contract months earlier, but wouldn't integrate the Major Leagues until the following year. Brown added another black player, fullback Marion Motley.

The Browns' opener on Sept. 6 was notable for two reasons: It drew 60,135 fans to the Stadium — the largest crowd ever to see a professional football game — and the Browns beat the Miami Seahawks, 44-0. The new team was for real.

The Browns continued to win and the fans continued to come: 71,385 saw them beat the Los Angeles Dons for their seventh straight. The next week, Frankie Albert and the San Francisco 49ers showed they were mortal, and they also lost a rematch to the Dons, but their 8-2 finish was tops in the AAFC West.

The Eastern Division New York Yankees came to the Stadium Dec. 22 for the game that would decide the first championship of the new league. When it was over, The Plain Dealer reported, Cleveland had "a brand



In 1946, the nation's — and the city's — eyes no longer were on the war. Sports dominated the lives and pocketbooks of Clevelanders. Above, the multi-talented Lou Groza, and at right, quarterback Otto Graham. In the Browns, The Plain Dealer reported, Cleveland had "a brand new professional football crown, spattered with mud and snow and slush but a crown nevertheless."

new professional football crown, spattered with mud and snow and slush but a crown nevertheless."

The 14-9 victory came in the last five minutes on a 16-yard touchdown pass from Graham to Lavelli. A fingertip catch by halfback Edgar "Special Delivery" Jones had kept the winning drive alive. When the game ended, the players hoisted the coach to their shoulders and fought their way through the crowd swarming onto the field.

"When police barred the way to the shower room," The Plain Dealer reported, "fans hoisted other fans on their shoulders and broke in through transom windows." Young fans poured out of the bleachers and tore down the goal posts. In the stands, older fans stood roaring their approval.

Cleveland was a champion. Peace, it's wonderful.

McGunagle is a Cleveland freelance writer.



PLAIN DEALER FILE

Cleveland's favorite owner: the Indians' Bill Veeck and kids at the Stadium.

LOOKING AT A YEAR

March 2: Ho Chi Minh is elected president of the Republic of Vietnam.

May 16: The musical "Annie Get Your Gun," starring Ethel Merman, opens in New York.

June 19: Joe Louis retains his world heavyweight title, knocking out

Billy Conn in the eighth round.

Aug. 19: Mao Tse-tung declares war on the Chinese government of Chiang Kai-shek.

Sept. 20: The first Cannes Film Festival opens in France.

Oct. 16: Nine Nazi war criminals

are hanged in Nuremberg.

Nov. 9: President Harry Truman lifts wage and price controls imposed during the war.

Born: President Bill Clinton, Oliver Stone, Sylvester Stallone, Steven Spielberg, Candice Bergen, Cher

(Cherilyn LaPiere Sarkisian).

Died: British novelist H.G. Wells, American poet and playwright Gertrude Stein, boxer Jack Johnson, Supreme Court Chief Justice Harlan Fiske Stone, W.C. Fields, former New York Mayor Jimmy Walker.