

OUR CENTURY

1979

AT A GLANCE

Chaos continues in city schools

Three years after federal Judge Frank Battisti ordered desegregation of Cleveland public Schools, it began — in junior high schools in February and the rest of the system in September.

The first day was confused but, to general relief, peaceful. Business leaders in particular had feared violence of the type that had damaged the "image" of Boston and Louisville. They had set up "rumor centers" and persuaded news media to tone down coverage, a policy that also stifled legitimate criticism of the plan.

On Oct. 3, voters turned down an operating levy and a building levy by more than 2-1. That made five school issues defeated by wide margins in 18 months. On Oct. 18, teachers struck, shutting the schools — but, the school board noted, saving the strapped system \$300,000 a day. At year's end teachers and school were still out.

What the media called the "carnival kick-back trial" drew so much interest that WEWS Channel 25 videotaped it daily and broadcast it at night. Council President George Forbes and seven other present and former members — all but one black — were charged with bribery, theft in office and extortion for their role in getting permits for carnival operators. Some of the carnival gambling games were allegedly rigged.

A folksy visiting judge, George Tyack of Franklin County, established rapport with the jury, but not with Assistant Prosecutor Donald Nugent. He eventually threw out all the charges.

Julius Kravitz had started in the grocery business as a stock boy at the age of 11. At 68, he was chairman of First National Supermarkets Inc., which owned the Pick-n-Pay stores, and was a leader of the Jewish community.

On May 1, he and his wife, Georgene, were kidnapped from their Shaker Heights apartment by two men who demanded \$1 million ransom. After driving the couple around Eastern suburbs for four hours, one of the men turned and started shooting.

Kravitz was killed. His wife was wounded, but managed to open the door and roll out of the moving car. Shaker Heights police had enough clues to issue fugitive warrants for Michael Levine, a Cleveland Heights auxiliary policeman, and John File.

Both surrendered within days. Levine was found not guilty by reason of insanity and was sent to the State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. That brought cries for tightening of Ohio's insanity defense. File was sentenced to life, which brought protests from blacks that the white defendant had escaped prison.

In another brutal crime, the body of 11-year-old Kevin Green was found in a clump of bushes. He had been stabbed 69 times, apparently with an ice pick. Richard Lawler, a recently released convict, was arrested two weeks later, convicted of the murder and sentenced to life imprisonment.

The Cavaliers bickered with Coach Bill Fitch and each other, straggling to a 30-52 record. Fitch, who had coached the team since it started in 1970, resigned. Two days later he was named coach of the Boston Celtics. Owner Nick Mileti replaced him with Stan Albeck.

The Indians started slowly. In July, Dave Garcia replaced Jeff Torborg as manager, and the team rallied to an 80-81 finish. Andre Thornton hit 26 home runs, but slumped to a .233 average. Third baseman Toby Harrah hit 25 homers and Bobby Bonds 24. First baseman Mike Hargrove hit .325, but drove pitchers and fans crazy with his fidgeting in the batter's box.

Sam Rutigliano's Browns beat the Giants in overtime in the opener. Next they beat the Colts in the final moments on a Brian Sipe pass to Reggie Rucker. Next they beat the Colts on a last-minute Don Cockroft field goal set up by a 75-yard pass from Sipe to Ozzie Newsome. The newly christened "Kardiac Kids" beat the Cowboys 26-7 to run their record to 4-0 as excitement mounted, then lost three in a row. They finished 9-7, out of the playoffs for the eighth straight year.

Hurricane Frederic's tail hit Cleveland, Sept. 14, raising the Cuyahoga River in Valley View to 22.1 feet, second only to the January 1959 flood. Police evacuated 125 families, many by boat.

With enrollment down to 365 boys, Cathedral Latin School closed in June. The E. 107th St. high school had been a perennial football power and also produced many of Cleveland's leading lawyers, judges, doctors and priests, including two cardinals. In 1988, with the support of alumni, it was resurrected and merged with Notre Dame Academy as a coed school.

For the second time in six years, the OPEC oil cartel raised prices. Once more, auto-dependent Cleveland was hit harder than the rest of the nation by the recession that resulted. Gasoline hit \$1 a gallon. Other prices were up too, wiping out the wage gains of the 1970s. President Jimmy Carter called energy conservation the moral equivalent of war, which had the unfortunate acronym MEOW.

The Federal Reserve Board raised interest rates, checking inflation but worsening the recession. Two years earlier Youngstown had lost 5,000 jobs when the Campbell Works of the Lykes Corp. closed. Now, on Nov. 27, U.S. Steel Corp. announced the closing of its Ohio Works in Youngstown and a dozen smaller facilities, throwing 13,000 out of work.

A shudder spread across the whole Midwest.

Muny survives, but Kucinich is out of power

By Fred McGunagle

Their game of "chicken" had ended in an earth-shaking, blood-curdling, head-on crash. Now a sobered Mayor Dennis Kucinich, City Council and bankers gazed in horror at the wreck.

They had placed two issues on the ballot Feb. 27 to raise money — a 0.5-percent income tax increase and sale of Muny Light. The Growth Association, the Citizens League, The Plain Dealer and the Press supported both issues. Councilmen David Collier and Walter Cox formed an "Ax the tax" committee against the tax. A poll in January showed voters were evenly divided on the tax, but 70 percent favored the Muny sale.

Both newspapers carried lengthy series detailing Muny mismanagement, but showing that much of it had been by politicians who favored CEI. They also reported that, rather than



Top aide Bob Weissman declared Dennis Kucinich "unbeatable" after the Muny vote.

the \$158.5 million the sale was supposed to net, it would produce only \$10 million the first year and perhaps \$70 million over 20 years. They quoted the year-old ruling by the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board that CEI had conducted a series of "dirty tricks," such as using its connection with Muny to cause Muny outages and illegally refusing to transmit cheap power that Muny had arranged to buy from Niagara Falls.

Most tellingly, they reported that Fort Wayne, Ind., now bitterly regretted its 1974 vote to turn its light plant over to a private utility. Rates had soared. The mayor who had backed the sale was now suing to overturn it. A new poll in February showed a turnaround: 55 percent of voters now favored keeping Muny.

Glenville Councilman Michael White was a leader of the campaign to sell Muny. Kucinich led the campaign to save it. He got a break when two television stations refused to show a commercial calling CEI officials "thieves." Viewers protested, and the stations wound up showing the commercial in news stories at no cost to Muny backers.

As usual, there was a snowstorm the day before the vote. Predictions were for a turnout of 75,000-90,000. Instead, it was 110,000. The tax won by 40,000, the Muny sale was defeated by 30,000. "The people of Cleveland have written the last chapter in CEI's monopoly dream book," Kucinich crowed.

The mayor who had been written off as a lame duck after the recall vote now looked like a good bet for reelection. "He's unbeatable!" exulted top aide Bob Weissman.

Others didn't think so. State Sen. Charles Butts announced he was running in April. On July 5, Basil Russo, council majority leader, entered the race with the backing of most black council members. George Voinovich, the Republican lieutenant governor, twice indicated he might run and twice said he wouldn't. Then, on July 26, he announced "one of the most difficult decisions in my life."

March 10: In a precedent-setting

He ran.

This time there were four candidates crisscrossing the city. But, unlike 1977, there were no debates except brief exchanges when candidates ran into each other at the same meeting.

There was one overriding issue: Kucinich. Did voters want his "new urban populism," and if not who was the best choice to defeat him? The Plain Dealer endorsed Voinovich; the Press went with Butts.

The turnout in the primary exceeded the 1977 Perk-Kucinich-Feighan contest. Voinovich led with 47,000 votes to 36,000 for Kucinich. Russo with 21,000 and Butts with 19,000 were eliminated. The biggest surprise was Voinovich's showing in black wards, where he was expected to run last. Instead he trailed only Butts, with Kucinich last.

At Kucinich headquarters on election night the band played the theme from "Rocky." Kucinich chose a football metaphor: "We are trailing at the half, but what counts is who's winning at the end of the fourth quarter."

Voinovich, scorned by Kucinich as a "fat-cat Republican," sounded like his opponent. "Cleveland is the little people's city and we're going to give it back to the little people," he told his supporters. Then he reminded them that at the City Club debate Kucinich had challenged him to make public his income tax return.

"Well," Voinovich said, pulling out an envelope, "I want you to know . . ." and he flung his return high and watched it flutter down into the roaring audience.

Kucinich appealed to Democrats to unite behind him, but county Chairman Tim Hagan declared, "There is no way in hell anyone can call Dennis Kucinich a Democrat."

Prominent Democrats endorsed Voinovich, including Russo, Butts and U.S. Rep. Mary Rose Oakar. So did the Cleveland AFL-CIO.

Everything changed on Oct. 8. Nine-year-old Molly Voinovich was returning to school after lunch when she was struck and killed by a 19-year-old who ran a red light. Voinovich immediately halted his campaign, and Kucinich did, too, holding up distribution of a flyer attacking Voinovich.

Voinovich didn't return to campaigning until Oct. 19 and then on a limited schedule. He canceled commercials attacking Kucinich and instead ran endorsements by prominent Clevelanders. Kucinich in turn avoided attacking Voinovich. The death of Molly had cast a pall over the campaign.

Kucinich took a daring gamble. In the primary he had courted white voters who resented busing for desegregation. Now he shifted 180 degrees. He got his old foe Carl Stokes, who was now an NBC television newsman in New York, to endorse him. So did the black 21st District Caucus, headed by Stokes' brother Louis.

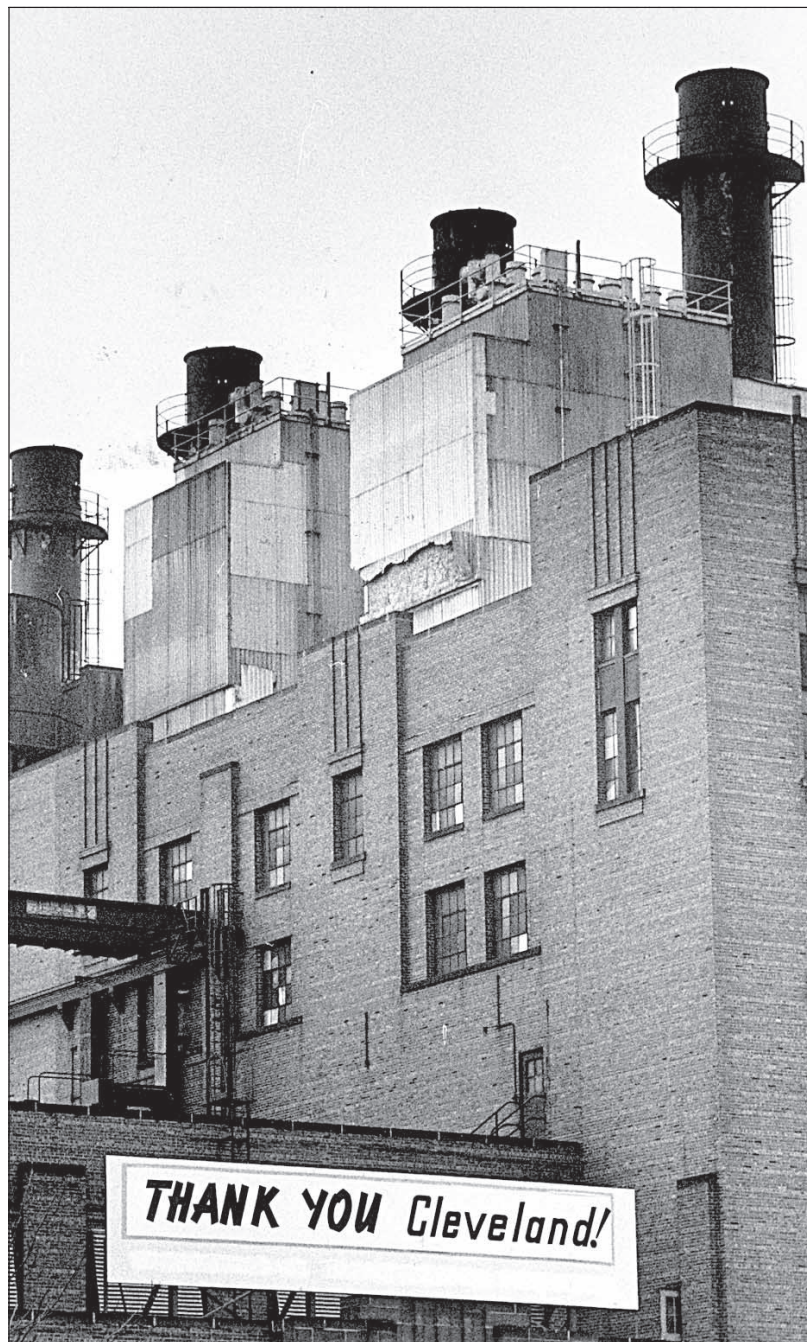
Kucinich announced a building program in which most of the improvements were on the East Side. He campaigned in black churches, drawing "Amen!" from the congregations. Carl Stokes took a leave of absence to campaign for him, saying Kucinich had done more for blacks than any other white mayor.

But when the votes were counted it was 94,000-73,000 for Voinovich. Confrontation-weary voters had ended the Kucinich era. Voinovich announced he would meet immediately with Gov. James Rhodes to discuss state aid in clearing up the debts left from default.

As for Kucinich, his critics chortled, his career was over. He could never be elected to any office again.

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PLAIN DEALER FILE PHOTOS



Dennis Kucinich won battle to prevent the sale of the Municipal Light Plant, but voters, perhaps tired of the turmoil, chose George Voinovich, left, over Kucinich as mayor. Below, Kucinich sought and received the endorsement of former Mayor Carl Stokes.



LOOKING AT A YEAR

Died: Nelson Rockefeller, John Wayne, Mary Pickford, Richard Rodgers, Arthur Fiedler, Emmett Kelly, Al Capp, Cyrus Eaton.

Jan. 30: The Shah of Iran flees his country, soon to be replaced as the nation's ruler by the exiled Ayatollah Khomeini.

March 10: In a precedent-setting

legal action, actor Lee Marvin's long-time girlfriend sues him for "palimony."

March 29: Uganda dictator Idi Amin Dada is driven from office.

March 31: A leak in the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in eastern Pennsylvania causes the evacuation of people living within five miles of the plant.

May 3: England's Margaret Thatcher becomes Europe's first female prime minister as the Conservative Party wins a decisive victory in elections for Parliament.

Aug. 30: British war hero Earl Mountbatten is killed when Irish terrorists explode his fishing boat off the coast of Ireland.

Nov. 26: In Iran, the Ayatollah Khomeini supports students holding 49 hostages at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.

Dec. 10: Mother Teresa wins the Nobel Peace Prize.

Dec. 20: Congress approves a \$1.5 billion loan bailout to save Chrysler Corp. from bankruptcy.