

OUR CENTURY

1981

AT A GLANCE

Tax-hike proposal revives a rivalry

It was Dennis Kucinich vs. George Voinovich again.

After losing the mayoralty to Voinovich, Kucinich had led the campaign that defeated Voinovich's 0.5-percent city income tax increase in November 1980. City Council put it back on the ballot for Feb. 17.

The difference this time was that black leaders, led by Council President George Forbes, got the vote out. The tax that had lost by 14,000 votes in November won by 24,000.

Kucinich had been hinting that he would run for mayor in the fall. In May, he announced he would not. But who would? After a hunt, Cuyahoga County Democratic Party Chairman Tim Hagan came up with State Rep. Patrick Sweeney.

Meanwhile, there was another issue to be settled — a June 30 special election on whether to reduce council from 33 to 21 members. Council members, desperate to save their seats, told blacks it was aimed at their rising power and whites that blacks would win most of the seats. The issue passed nearly 2-1. All 19 white wards voted for it, with the ratio 13-1 in Kamm's Corners. Thirteen of 14 black wards voted against it.

Sweeney had little money and the media weren't interested in the mayor's race, covering only two of the four debates. So Sweeney ran a polite, make-no-enemies campaign. Voinovich won with a record 76.5 percent of the vote.

In a dramatic coup, 11 of the 21 new council members supported Lonnie Burten for president. They made the mistake of announcing their stand in advance. Black leaders pressured black Burten supporters to switch to Forbes, who held on to the dais he had occupied since 1973.

The Illuminating Co. avoided a nine-figure antitrust verdict in 1980 only because one juror held out for 13 days, forcing a retrial. The city once again set out to show that CEI had used "dirty tricks" to try to force Munny Light out of business. After three months, the jury came in with a verdict in less than five hours: It found for CEI.

After a lengthy trial, U.S. District Judge Frank Battisti revoked the citizenship of John Demjanjuk, a Ukrainian who had served in the Soviet army in World War II. The government charged that, after the capture of his unit, Demjanjuk served as a guard at German death camps. Demjanjuk said he had been forced by the Germans to perform other duties but had not been at the camps.

He admitted lying on his citizenship application, but only because he feared execution if he were returned to the Soviet Union. The trial prompted demonstrations by Jews against Demjanjuk and by Ukrainians for him.

The school feuds continued. Battisti briefly jailed board member John Gallagher and Treasurer Paul Yacobian for contempt. When the board was so divided that it could not settle on a choice to fill a vacancy, the job fell to a Probate judge, who named Alva T. "Ted" Bonda, the Indians president and an executive at Apcoa Inc. In September, Bonda declared that Battisti himself was an obstacle to solving school problems.

The news media, which had been loath to report criticism of Battisti, had to report that. The blast aroused business leaders, who had ignored school problems once busing turned out to be peaceful. They helped elect three reform-minded board members who, with Bonda, formed a majority.

Cavaliers Coach Stan Albeck departed after quarreling with new owner Ted Stepien. Stepien hired Bill Musselman, who quickly became a target of fan discontent. After Stepien traded away four future No. 1 picks, NBA Commissioner Larry O'Brien temporarily banned him from trading.

Stepien was castigated by the media, especially Pete Franklin of WERE. Stepien ended WERE's contract to broadcast games, causing the loss of popular radio announcer Joe Tait. "Joe Tait Night" drew a crowd of 20,175 to cheer Tait and boo Stepien. According to "Cavs: From Fitch to Fratello," by Joe Menzer and Burt Graeff, it was the only sellout crowd during Stepien's three years of ownership.

Stepien replaced Musselman with General Manager Don Delaney, whose previous coaching experience was at the junior college level. The Cavs finished 28-54, the worst record since their second season.

The 7,290 fans who showed up at the Stadium the cold night of May 15 saw Lenny Barker pitch the 12th perfect game in major league history, beating the Toronto Blue Jays, 3-0. In a season split by a 50-day players strike, the Tribe finished 52-51.

The Browns had finished 11-5 in 1980 before "Red Right 88" killed their Super Bowl hopes. In "Pressure," his book about his Browns coaching career, Sam Rutigliano's only mention of 1981 reads, "After the 1981 season with a 5-11 record, we wanted to make sure we came back strong." The team had lost six of its last seven games, fumbling nine times in its last loss.

It was a newspaper war with red ink flowing, if not the blood that flowed in the 1920s wars. The Press launched a Sunday edition on Aug. 2 at no extra cost to those paying \$1 for six daily editions. A seven-day Plain Dealer subscription cost \$1.40.

After buying the Press from Scripps-Howard, Joe Cole modernized its mailroom and cut costs with buyouts of 30 editorial employees. His strategy appeared to be to force The Plain Dealer into a joint operating agreement in which the two would share profits.

Beleaguered Cleveland prunes its image

'Plum' campaign launched to rescue city from the nation's punch lines

By Fred McGunagle

It didn't get much of a laugh from the glitterati at President Ronald Reagan's Inaugural Ball. Comedian Rich Little advised Poland that if the Russians started to invade, "I'd change the name to Cleveland — no one ever goes there."

But the nationally televised joke got a reaction from Cleveland. Fired up by politicians, newspaper columnists and disk jockeys, Clevelanders shot off thousands of letters and phone calls to Little, his agent, NBC and newspapers. "I am totally fed up with everyone taking a shot at our city, and am not going to accept it meekly anymore," said one Plain Dealer letter writer.

Little was astonished. He told UPI columnist Vernon Scott: "I guess the people of Cleveland have become a little touchy." At his next national television appearance, on the Johnny Carson show, he protested that, "In all sincerity — I really mean this — I love you, Cleveland. For some reason or other," he added, "whenever they write a joke about a city out here in Hollywood, they use the name Cleveland."

Clevelanders — conscious of a string of national black eyes that included default and the second-largest population loss of the 1970s — were in no mood to laugh. Both newspapers appeared to have assigned their gossip columnists to monitor the media for mentions of Cleveland.

The Press caught Willard Scott making a disparaging remark at 7 a.m. on the "Today Show." Apparently, the network was paying attention. A few days later, the Press breathlessly reported "The NBC 'Today Show' mentioned Cleveland favorably on three different shows last week." The Plain Dealer found a knock in the Hollywood Reporter. But somebody had something nice to say in a newspaper in Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

Boston Mayor Kevin White caught flak for saying that his city's financial situation was going "from Camelot to Cleveland." Mayor George Voinovich protested. White was unabashed. He wrote Voinovich that Boston had survived facetious remarks from Mark Twain to Johnny Carson. "I am sure Cleveland will also," he said.

Out-of-town newspaper columnists discovered they could get material for a week by making fun of Cleveland. Cleveland disk jockeys read the columns and listeners sent barrages of outraged letters. Cleveland columnists kept the feud going by making fun of other cities.

The media leaped to Cleveland's defense. Smythe-Cramer Co. ran a series of ads with pictures captioned "Take Another Look. It's Cleveland," suggesting anything nice-looking about Cleveland inspired a double take. After the first three ads showed suburban scenes, the company said it would include something from the city.

The three local TV stations changed news directors regularly. Whenever one arrived from out of town, he would quickly run a series to share with Clevelanders his own amazing discovery: Cleveland wasn't the armpit of the nation!

In May, The Plain Dealer sent all 468,000 Sunday subscribers bumper stickers that read, "New York's the Big Apple But Cleveland's a Plum." The paper passed out thousands of "Cleveland's a Plum" buttons. It ran a huge picture of Publisher Thomas

Vail, with a smiling Voinovich beside him, throwing out the first plum at a Yankees-Indians game.

The Greater Cleveland Growth Association renamed the south shore of Lake Erie the "North Coast" and served reporters "North Coast cocktails" (Lake Erie water). The city went all out to impress reporters and television viewers at the baseball All-Star Game in August. The banner headline in the Press wasn't the outcome (The National League won, 5-4), but "A Smash Hit for Cleveland."

So sensitive were Cleveland's leaders that when sportscaster Howard Cosell praised the city during a baseball game, Voinovich presented him with a key to the city. And when Joe Garagiola said nice things during the All-Star game, the Convention Bureau scheduled a civic luncheon in his honor.

Actually, Clevelanders weren't as down on their city as the media thought: A survey showed 65 percent of Greater Clevelanders were very satisfied with life here. In fact, 57 percent had been very satisfied in 1978, the year of default.

And Cleveland's national reputation wasn't as bad as some thought. A national poll rated Detroit as the city with the worst image, with New York second. Cleveland was fifth-worst.

Los Angeles was convinced it had the worst image. So were Great Lakes cities from Buffalo to Milwaukee; their columnists and disk jockeys complained they were being put down by out-of-towners. So did Parma; Mayor John Petruska complained about its portrait as a city of white socks and pink flamingos.

Meanwhile, the New Cleveland Campaign, a promotion agency formed in 1978, was sending out news releases bragging about Cleveland's virtues and proudly circulating reprints whenever it got a favorable story.

Unfortunately, to show how much the "new" Cleveland had improved, it had to stress how bad the old Cleveland had been. It dwelled on the 1969 river fire, though industrial river fires had been common before passage of the Clean Water Act, and the 1978 default, even though New York had defaulted on 300 times as much in 1975 (New York called it a "moratorium").

The campaign hit the jackpot in October with the society magazine Town and Country. "Cleveland's Come-Around" told how "businessmen, lawyers and concerned citizens" rescued Cleveland from "the petulant, pugnacious Dennis Kucinich." It called Voinovich's Operation Improvement Task Force under E. Mandell de Windt "the most significant undertaking in Cleveland since Moses Cleaveland stepped ashore on the bank of the Cuyahoga River in 1786." It also told its readers "Lake Erie has beautiful and exciting year-round sailing."

Leaders were delighted at the improvement in Cleveland's "image." It was a word given currency by Daniel Boorstin's 1962 book "The Image: Or What Happened to the American Dream?"

He wrote: "Formerly, when we worried about our reputation, we wondered what the world will think of us or our way of striving. Now we worry about what the world will think of our image."

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PLAIN DEALER FILE PHOTO

George Voinovich throws out the first plum at an Indians-Yankees game, launching a campaign to sweeten Cleveland's image nationally.

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The Greater Cleveland Growth Association christened the North Coast and distributed North Coast cocktails of Lake Erie water.

LOOKING AT A YEAR

Deaths: Boxing great Joe Louis, American general Omar Bradley, musician Bob Marley, Nazi architect Albert Speer, civil rights leader Roy Wilkins, actor William Holden.

Jan. 20: As Ronald Reagan takes the oath of office as president, Iran frees the 52 American hostages held

for 444 days.

Feb. 24: Jean Harris is convicted of murdering diet doctor Herman Tarnower.

March 26: Carol Burnett wins a \$1.6 million libel lawsuit against the National Enquirer.

Mar. 30: Reagan is shot by would-

be assassain John Hinckley Jr.

May 13: Pope John Paul II is wounded in a failed assassination plot.

June 21: Wayne Williams is charged with the murder of 28 persons during a two-year killing spree in Atlanta. He is convicted the follow-

ing February.

July 7: Reagan nominates the first woman Supreme Court justice, Sandra Day O'Connor.

July 29: Prince Charles marries Lady Diana Spencer.

Oct. 6: Egyptian President Anwar Sadat is assassinated in Cairo.