

OUR CENTURY

1986

AT A GLANCE

A shooting, then reconciliation

It was the most serious racial violence in Cleveland since the 1960s.

Months of harassment of a black resident of W. 88th St. climaxed the evening of June 10, when neighbors threw firecrackers into the yard of Marlene Armstrong. A friend of her family, 23-year-old Michael Spraggins, produced a shotgun and wounded seven whites.

Emotions in the neighborhood were fevered. Then something unprecedented happened: Six of those Spraggins had shot asked that the charges against him be dropped. They apologized for taunting Armstrong and said they would welcome new black neighbors.

"In all my years, I've never seen anything like this," marveled Stanley Tolliver, Spraggins' lawyer. He, too, urged that both sides forgive and forget. Apparently in that spirit, a grand jury declined to indict Spraggins.

About 350 people came to a service at nearby Simpson United Methodist Church to condemn violence and apologize for their own actions. They were joined by political and religious leaders.

The Rev. Otis Moss, one of 20 clergymen present, said he had been involved in civil-rights struggles in Ohio, the South and South Africa but had seen nothing like this. "This is the first time that I've been involved in a meeting where the reconciliation process started seven days after the incident took place," he said.

Bernie Kosar led the 1986 Browns to a team record 12 victories. That put them in the playoffs as the calendar turned. In eight days, fans were to know agony and ecstasy. The ecstasy came first, on Jan 3. With 4:08 to go against the New York Jets, the Browns trailed 20-10. Then, with 78,106 fans roaring, Kosar took over.

Two completions to Reggie Langhorne, two to Brian Brennan and one to Curtis Dickey put the ball on the 1-yard line. Kevin Mack plunged over.

But the Browns still trailed, 20-17, when they took over at their own 33 with 51 seconds left. A penalty and a 37-yard pass to Webster Slaughter took them to the 5, where Mark Mosely kicked the tying field goal.

Mosely missed a 23-yard field goal in the 12th overtime. With 2:02 gone in the "sixth quarter," he lined up for a 27-yarder. The Plain Dealer described the result: "Snap. Kick. Good. Bedlam."

The Stadium erupted. Cars paraded up and down Old River Rd. with horns beeping and drivers exchanging high fives.

The Denver Broncos stood between the Browns and the Super Bowl. With 5:32 left in the fourth quarter, the Browns led, 20-13. The Broncos were on their own 2, unable to hear John Elway's signals over 79,915 screaming fans.

What followed went down in Browns history alongside "Red Right 88." It was "the Drive." It lasted just under five minutes and ended with Elway's 5-yard touchdown pass to Mark Jackson.

The Browns got the ball in overtime but had to punt. Elway took over on his 40. After 5:48 of overtime, Denver's Rich Karlis kicked a 33-yard field goal. The Stadium was as silent as a tomb.

The new school superintendent, Ronald Boyd, had problems with parents, the media, federal Judge Frank Battisti and the school board. But remembering the firestorm of abuse after the suicide of Fred Holliday, nobody dared criticize him.

In March, Boyd gave a speech before local journalism societies that left public relations people in the audience shaking their heads. He repeatedly volunteered statements about the "massive" pressure he felt and the possibility of losing his job.

Responding to complaints about his information policy, he said, "I've got a whole city waiting for me to walk on water, and I can't deal with issues like this." When a reporter said the system's refusal to provide information to the media was "paranoid," Boyd started to walk out, but was talked into staying.

In July, the board got up its courage and fired Boyd, though with a \$300,000 buy-out. To replace him, it chose Alfred Tutela, the controversial former desegregation official who had been the runner-up.

John Demjanjuk, a retired Seven Hills autoworker, was on trial for his life. "I am not the 'Ivan the Terrible' you want to hang," he told his Israeli judges.

His prosecutors said they had eight witnesses who would identify Demjanjuk as the brutal concentration camp guard who forced Jews into the gas chambers. Demjanjuk's lawyer pleaded for more time to go over the eight cartons of evidence the prosecution intended to introduce.

After three years of improvement, the Cavaliers fell to 29-53 and missed the playoffs. With 15 games left, General Manager Harry Weltman fired coach George Karl. At the end of the season, owners George and Gordon Gund fired Weltman.

The 1985 Indians had lost 102 games. The '86 Indians improved their victory total by 24 and more than doubled their attendance, to nearly 1.5 million. Pat Tabler, Julio Franco, Joe Carter and Tony Bernazard all hit .300 and Tom Candiotti won 16 games. But the Tribe finished fifth.

The F.J. O'Neill estate finally found a buyer for the team — a couple of publicity-shy brothers named Richard and David Jacobs.

By Fred McGunagle

George Voinovich wanted to be senator. George Forbes wanted to be king. So they made a deal.

Forbes didn't quite become king of Cleveland. But by November, a Cleveland Magazine cover story called the City Council president "not only the most powerful man in the city today but perhaps the most powerful man ever to dominate Cleveland."

Forbes for years had presided over the weekly Finance Committee meeting like a talk show host, joking with members of the audience. He would allow discussion of an ordinance for a while, then suddenly announce, "It's approved," or, "It's being held," without asking for a vote.

Council members didn't object. In the evening, they rubber-stamped the committee action.

Forbes had control over federal block-grant funds for their wards. He also had raised a campaign chest from business leaders, which he distributed to candidates who were in his favor.

Past mayors had used their own considerable power to build a bloc of council supporters. But Voinovich had defeated the combative Dennis Kucinich on the slogan, "Together we can do it." He wanted to avoid controversy — especially racial controversy, as a clash with the black council president would have been perceived.

It was an open secret Voinovich intended to challenge Sen. Howard Metzenbaum in 1988. That meant he needed peace on the home front more than ever.

Forbes became even more imperious. He berated administration officials and issued orders to them. Mayors Carl Stokes and Dennis Kucinich had pulled their directors out of council meetings when they were attacked. Voinovich's people had strict orders not to argue with Forbes.

An extreme example was on May 12. Forbes didn't like an ordinance for new telephones in City Hall. Pointing to administration officials in the hearing room, he declared: "I want you and you and you and you and the telephone company in my office at 10 o'clock tomorrow."

Administration official Cesar Moss, a former councilman who owed his new job to Forbes, looked dumbfounded. "I'm talkin' to you," the black council president told him. "You want to be the black boy in charge, you gotta talk to me, boy." In the front row, Theo Caviness, the mayor's liaison with council — and another black ex-councilman — roared with laughter.

Later in the meeting, Forbes didn't get an answer quickly enough from Gary Conley, the economic development director. Forbes told him, "Don't sit there with your thumb up your nose, just answer the question." When Conley tried to satisfy him, he shot back, "Oh, [expletive], who do you think you're kidding?"

Forbes became unofficial spokesman for the administration. At the end of a Finance Committee meeting, he would announce, "Jim Conrad, the mayor's assistant, called me," or, "The mayor came to see me this morning," and then tell of a new administration plan.

A Plain Dealer editorial observed that "George Forbes, not George Voinovich, generally runs the city." Forbes made sure the point wasn't lost on developers, investment bankers and lawyers. When an ordinance brought them to a committee hearing, he put the directors and commissioners through their paces like a circus animal trainer.

The Cleveland Magazine article — "An Obsession With Power" — declared that Forbes had become "wealthy, probably a millionaire, by investing with friendly white businessmen and using his law firm to represent them and other public interests."

Occasionally, Voinovich balked at one of Forbes' maneuvers. He would quickly give in when council members started to complain he was ignoring city duties in favor of his Senate campaign.

In particular, Forbes protected Voinovich from what appeared to be a serious scandal. In September 1985, Inspector Howard Rudolph's narcotics unit reported a major "bust" with a large quantity of cocaine seized.



PLAIN DEALER FILE PHOTOS

The detectives had set up a sting that led to the arrest of six suppliers in Florida.

On March 1, Voinovich announced he would appoint Rudolph police chief, despite reports that federal agents were investigating the narcotics unit. The investigation turned out to involve a drug dealer named Arthur Feckner. He told the FBI that Cleveland detectives caught him in May 1985, but allowed him to continue in operation. He sold 6.5 kilos (14 pounds) of cocaine in the Central neighborhood during the summer. He said the detectives told him they wanted to set up a big bust to help Rudolph's chances of becoming chief.

Voinovich stuck by his appointment of Rudolph, and Forbes blocked calls in council for an investigation. However, revelations throughout the year kept the case in the news.

On only one issue did Voinovich refuse to knuckle under — expansion of Cleveland Public Power. He seemed indignant at the "dirty tricks" the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co. had used to sabotage the former Muny Light. In 1984, with emotion in his voice, he had told a reporter: "Someday, when somebody writes a book about Cleveland, they will remember a man named George Voinovich who did more for public power than any other man but Tom L. Johnson."

Forbes dragged the hearings out, but he was losing support. With CEI's rates steadily rising, council members wanted cheaper power for their wards. Forbes said he would go along with a plan that expanded Cleveland Public Power on the East Side first, but he continued to delay passage.

At year's end, Forbes was the subject of a chapter in a book called "The New Black Politics: The Search for Power." Professor William Nelson, chairman of the black studies department at Ohio State University, called Forbes "the acknowledged boss of Cleveland's black political machine," which had "changed the fundamental goal of black politics from community uplift to self-aggrandizement." He noted that black turnout in mayoral elections had fallen from 80 percent when Stokes first ran in 1967 to 28 percent in 1985. Forbes' politics, Nelson wrote, had caused "the virtual demise of the civil rights movement" in Cleveland and "the atrophy of black political organization."

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George Voinovich and George Forbes, above, reached a working agreement in City Hall. Howard Rudolph, at right, was sworn in as police chief.



Browns stubbed by a toe



The Browns lost their playoff game to Denver when Denver's Rich Karlis kicked a 33-yard field goal in overtime. The play came to be known as "The Drive." Details in At a Glance.

LOOKING AT A YEAR

Jan. 31: The space shuttle Challenger explodes over the Atlantic Ocean, killing schoolteacher Christa McAuliffe and six other astronauts, including Cleveland-area native Judith Resnik.

Feb. 10: Haitian dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier flees Haiti for France.

Feb. 27: Defeated for re-election, Ferdinand Marcos flees the Philippines.

April 8: Movie star Clint Eastwood is elected mayor of Carmel, Calif.

April 21: U.S. warplanes bomb Libya in retaliation for what President Ronald Reagan calls that country's international "reign of terror."

April 30: A major accident occurs at a nuclear power plant in Chernobyl in the Ukraine.

June 8: Despite evidence of his Nazi past, Kurt Waldheim is elected president of Austria.

June 24: Basketball star Len Bias dies from a cocaine overdose.

Dec. 30: Reagan admits "mistakes

were made" in the administration's decision to sell arms to Iran.

Deaths: British political leader Harold Macmillan, actors James Cagney and Cary Grant, lawyer Roy Cohn, Hitler aide Rudolph Hess, ambassador Averell Harriman, lyricist Alan Lerner, musician Benny Goodman; Wallis Simpson, widow of England's abdicated King Edward VIII.