

OUR CENTURY

1992

AT A GLANCE

New evidence surfaces in Demjanjuk case

For six years, he had been held in solitary confinement in a Jerusalem prison. For four years, he had been under sentence to hang for “crimes against humanity.” Suddenly, John Demjanjuk found himself on the verge of freedom.

A survivor of the Treblinka death camp told CBS’ “60 Minutes” that Ivan the Terrible, the sadistic concentration camp guard at Treblinka, was Ivan Marczenko, not Demjanjuk. Evidence made public after the collapse of the Soviet Union supported the statement. So did 80 depositions by 37 Ukrainian guards and forced laborers assigned by the Germans to Treblinka. The evidence did indicate, however, that Demjanjuk had been a guard at another camp, Sobibor, though there was no evidence that he committed atrocities. The Israeli prosecutor argued that he could still be convicted, but the judges ruled the prosecution must show proof of specific crimes.

As the year ended, the Demjanjuk family waited. Would Israel release him? Would he be allowed to return to his home in Seven Hills?

•

The “Four L’s” — the school board slate for whom Mayor Michael White had campaigned — chose the mayor to swear them in. Then they set to work looking for a new superintendent. In May, they chose Sammie Campbell Parrish, then an assistant state superintendent in North Carolina. Facing a \$34 million deficit, the board put a 9.8-mill levy on the ballot, but withdrew it after White told them the time was not right. An emergency state loan kept schools open.

An evaluation of the system showed that in the previous year, attendance and reading scores had decreased while the dropout rate and the number of weapons seized in schools increased. Federal Judge Frank Battisti still found sufficient progress toward desegregation to reduce busing. About 800 students were reassigned to schools near their homes.

•

Twenty-eight tornadoes struck Ohio on July 12, the most ever in one day. Thirty homes were destroyed in Medina County’s Liverpool and Lafayette townships. Lorain County’s LaGrange, nearly wiped off the map in 1965, was hit again. Lightning started fires in the Broadview-State Rd. neighborhood.

Nineteen days later, the month ended in a deluge. The Cuyahoga River spilled over its banks in Valley View, Brecksville and Independence. The mayors of Cleveland and Parma appealed for state disaster aid.

•

Redistricting had eliminated one Cleveland-area congressional district and reshaped the others. Republican businessman Martin Hoke ended the 16-year congressional career of Mary Rose Oakar, who had been hurt by the House Post Office scandal. Hoke apologized to Oakar for his backers’ singing “Ding-Dong, the Witch is Dead” at his victory celebration.

In the 19th District, Democratic State Sen. Eric Fingerhut beat Republican Bob Gardner. Sherrod Brown, the former Democratic attorney general, defeated Margaret Mueller in the new “toilet seat-shaped” 13th District.

Bill Clinton became the first Democratic presidential candidate to carry Ohio in 16 years. John Glenn became Ohio’s first four-term U.S. senator, defeating Republican Lt. Gov. Michael DeWine.

•

With all-stars Dick Daugherty and Mark Price working the pick-and-roll to perfection, the Cavaliers matched the best record in their history, 57-25. Price set a Cavs record with 51 straight free throws. Larry Nance set another with 243 blocked shots, the most ever by an NBA forward.

In their first playoff game against the New Jersey Nets, Daugherty scored 40 points and Price 35. The Cavs beat the Nets three games to one. Then they ousted the Boston Celtics, winning the seventh and deciding game before 20,273 cheering fans at the Coliseum.

That pitted them against the Chicago Bulls and Michael Jordan — the basketball equivalent of the Denver Broncos and John Elway. The Bulls won in five games, but the Cavs had gone further than ever before.

Before the 1992 season, General Manager John Hart signed promising youngsters Sandy Alomar Jr., Charles Nagy and Carlos Baerga to long-term contracts. Manager Mike Hargrove’s Indians were slow in starting, but won 28 of their last 48 games to finish 76-86. In the offseason, Hart signed Albert Belle, Kenny Lofton and Steve Olin to long-term deals.

•

A long-running murder case ended as Theodore Soke, his son Donald and Danny Crawford were convicted of the 1985 stabbing deaths of retired Plain Dealer Executive Editor Philip Porter and his wife, Dorothy, in a burglary at their Shaker Heights home. Donald had testified against his father.

After his conviction for the 1986 murder of Karen LaSpina in Eastlake, Donald recanted his testimony in the Porter trial. His father won a new trial and turned down a plea bargain for a life sentence. His gamble failed when the jury sentenced him to death. In 1995, an appeals court reduced the sentence to life.

But neighborhoods decline

By Fred McGunagle

You couldn’t tell the Ford Motor Co. executives from the United Auto Workers officials on stage. They all wore UAW caps and blue-and-white jackets with “Dave” and “Don” and “Alex” and “Ernie” on them.

You couldn’t tell them apart by their speeches, either. They used the same phrases, especially “world-class quality.” A thousand autoworkers cheered. Outside the new Ohio Plant in Avon Lake, the sign read, “Quality Together — UAW and Ford.”

As recently as 1985, a visiting economist had told Clevelanders, “Manufacturing is gone.” Now it was roaring back. In large part that was because bosses and workers — admittedly, fewer of the latter — had decided that they would survive together or not at all.

The beleaguered auto industry was leading the way with the aid of — another shock — Japan. Japanese “transplants” were popping up around the Midwest, beginning with a Marysville Honda plant in 1983. Back in Japan, the “Japanese miracle” had turned into the “bubble economy.” The Nikkei stock average fell by more than half.

In particular, Cleveland had the right auto company. While General Motors announced plans to close 27 plants, Ford was investing \$3 billion in Brook Park and its two Lorain County plants. Greater Cleveland assembled one of every seven Fords made in North America. Suppliers clustered nearby.

Ohio had 13.2 percent of U.S. auto production, compared with 12 percent in 1979. The ships that had brought foreign steel and autos 10 years earlier were carrying products from Ohio, the No. 3 export state.

The Midwest — the rust belt of the ’80s — led the nation in income growth. For the first time in decades, more people were moving into Ohio than out of it. Though it had lost population, the Cleveland metropolitan area remained the 13th-largest in the country. Its eight counties had more people than 22 states.

And though fewer worked in manufacturing, other jobs more than made up for the loss. The area had gained 75,000 jobs in five years. Its per-capita income, the best measure of how the average citizen is doing, was increasing faster than the nation’s.

Yet while the recession had ended in mid-1991, a strange thing was happening: Employment continued to fall. Companies still “downsized” and “outsourced” to compete with Korea and Singapore. Or, like 89-year-old Hough Bakeries, they closed. The unemployed stood along highways with signs that said “Will work for food.” Poverty rates continued to rise.

Subdivisions of \$300,000 and \$400,000 homes were sprouting in Westlake, Strongsville and Solon. But older suburbs were in trouble. High-income residents were moving further out.

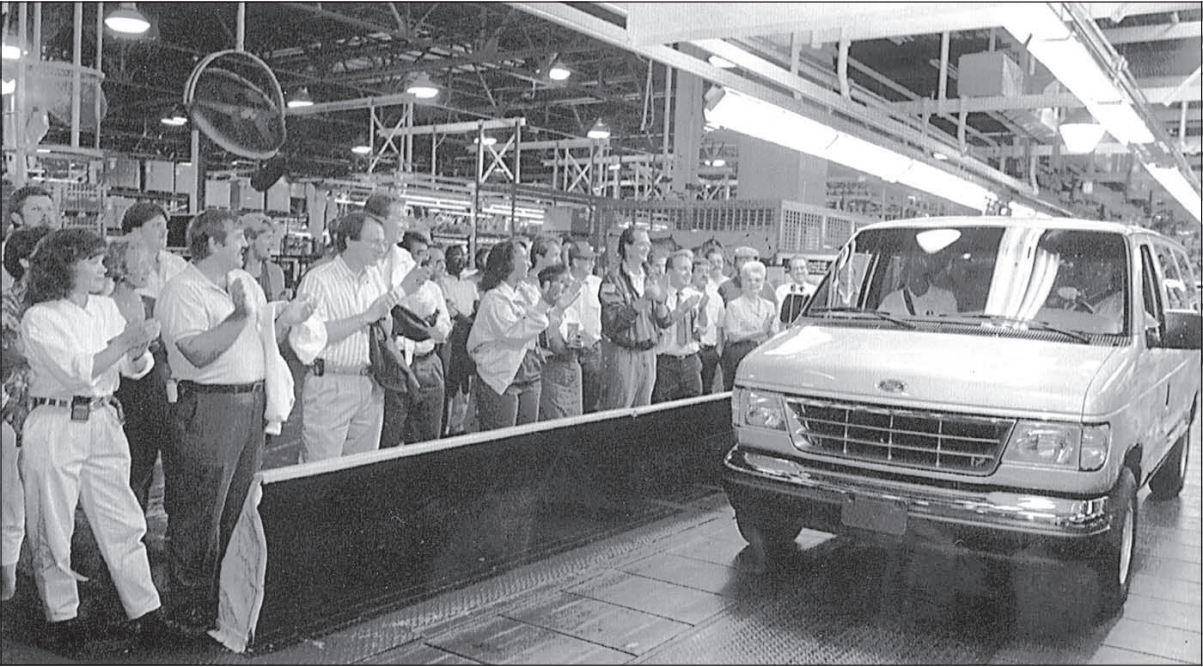
And while the expensive new homes went up, old Cleveland houses stood vacant and vandalized until the city tore them down. In the 1980s Cleveland had razed 21,600 homes. That was the equivalent of tearing down Lakewood or Cleveland Heights.

Jobs, too, were hitting the freeway to the suburbs, where officials often welcomed them with tax abatements. Manufacturers left the “brownfields” with their pollution and urban problems for “greenfields” across the county line.

While Ford was building in Avon Lake, Cleveland’s giant Coit Rd. Fisher Body plant stood empty. Once it employed 14,000. Since 1983, it had employed nobody: PCBs contaminated the land.

Wholesalers moved to the suburbs, following the retailers who had followed the people. “Edge Cities” — mini-downtowns — sprang up in Independence, North Olmsted and Beachwood.

Thomas Bier, the Cleveland State University researcher who had predicted the city’s 1990 population within three people, issued a new forecast: If the trend continued, “eastern Lorain County over the next



ASSOCIATED PRESS

A new 1992 Ford econoline rolls off the line at Ford’s Lorain plant. Below, steel made at Cleveland’s LTV plant is unloaded for shipment to Japan.



20 years will grow by 54 percent, northern Medina 65 percent, the city of Cleveland *minus* 50 percent.

“Half the households now living in the city will be gone in 20 years,” said Bier. “Half the occupied units will be vacant.”

CSU figures showed that 89 percent of 1991 Cleveland home-sellers had moved out of the city — 46 percent to the western suburbs, 12 percent to Lorain and Medina counties, 11 percent to the eastern suburbs and 4 percent to Lake, Geauga, Portage and Summit counties.

At its June 1 meeting, Cleveland City Council passed an ordinance contributing \$55,000 to the Living in Cleveland program to attract new residents. But then — in one of the saddest meetings in memory — member after member rose to tell of city problems.

They spoke of a city where rubbish sat uncollected on treelawns, in which city trucks had bare springs sticking out of their seats, in which drug dealers broke into a Lee-Harvard area house and terrorized a family, in which a W. 50th St. man tried to stop a man from urinating on his lawn in view of his children and was shot to death.

Ray Pianka, who reported the last incident, told his colleagues: “We passed legislation today — \$55,000 for marketing Living in Cleveland. Well, unless we can solve these problems we won’t have people living in the city of Cleveland.”

In May, the national Urban Affairs Association invited two speakers to talk about Cleveland. Richard Shatten, executive director of the business-sponsored Cleveland Tomorrow program, told of the area’s economic rebound.

“In the 1980s in manufacturing,” he said, “the Ford Motor Co. invested \$4 billion in this market — that’s four *billion* dollars — LTV invested \$1 billion, U.S. Steel invested nearly \$1 billion.” Pointing to improved efficiency



PLAIN DEALER FILE

A new subdivision illustrates Medina’s explosive growth. Below, workers lost their jobs when Hough Bakery closed its doors in August.

and labor relations at Cleveland companies, he said, “We’re not where we need to be, but we’re catching up.”

Norman Krumholz, a CSU urban studies professor, described a different Cleveland. “A half-mile from where you’re sitting,” he said, “you’ll find crime- and drug-ridden, dilapidated neighborhoods with alienated residents without hope or prospects. For all the impressive new downtown structures, the city rots.”

Neither Shatten nor Krumholz challenged anything the other said.

McGunagle is a Cleveland freelance writer.

E-mail: fmcgoo@prodigy.com

Photo researcher:
David G. Jardy
Plain Dealer Library



LOOKING AT A YEAR

Feb. 1: Following the collapse of the Soviet Union months earlier, President George Bush and Russian President Boris Yeltsin proclaim the Cold War to be over. In June, the two agree to a series of nuclear weapons reductions.

April 8: Tennis legend Arthur Ashe reveals he has contracted AIDS from a blood transfusion.

June 24: In a 7-2 ruling, the Supreme Court says the law requiring warning labels on cigarette packs does not protect tobacco companies from lawsuits.

July 10: Former Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega is sentenced to 40 years in a U.S. prison for drug trafficking and money laundering.

Aug. 24: Hurricane Andrew devastates South Florida.

Sept. 24: At an inquiry into the U.S. Navy’s Tailhook scandal, it is revealed that high-ranking officers covered up the affair to avoid unfavorable publicity about sexual harassment.

Nov. 3: Bill Clinton is elected presi-

dent, easily defeating Bush and Ross Perot.

Deaths: Former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt, author Alex Haley, actress Marlene Dietrich, Watergate Judge John Sirica, sportscaster Red Barber.