

OUR CENTURY

1980

AT A GLANCE



A workman hangs a banner welcoming the country to Cleveland and the presidential debate.

Ninety minutes of debate fame

"It's a 90-minute campaign now," The Plain Dealer headline said of the race for president — and the 90 minutes was in Cleveland!

A week before the election, the national media descended on the city for the climactic debate between President Jimmy Carter and Republican Ronald Reagan. Cleveland's leaders went all out to show 1,000 reporters that the city wasn't as bad as they thought. Council President George Forbes even ruled out speeches at the meeting the night before the debate. "We've got a good city and I want to keep the image that way," he declared.

On the Public Hall stage, the candidates were cautious. A survey showed that television viewers thought Reagan won by 2-1. Reagan's margin among voters turned out to be almost that large. He swept the nation, including traditionally Democratic areas such as Parma.

Sen. John Glenn was one of the few Democrats to survive the Republican landslide, defeating State Rep. James Betts. Democrat Dennis Eckart narrowly defeated Judge Joseph Nahra to win the 22nd Congressional District seat. Thirteen-term Rep. Charles Vanik didn't run, citing his discomfort with fund-raising.

Republicans took control of the Cuyahoga County commissioners. Vincent Campanella ousted Robert Sweeney, and Virgil Brown became the first black commissioner by defeating Timothy Hagan.

For the first time, Browns fans had Super Bowl fever. After losing their first two games, the "Kardiac Kids" won 10 of their next 13, six of them in the last minute. Leading the heroics was quarterback Brian Sipe, the National Football League's most valuable player.

They still needed a win over the Cincinnati Bengals for the Central Conference championship. They got it on a 22-yard Don Cockroft field goal with 1:25 left. "Browns, city drink in euphoria that goes with division title," a Plain Dealer headline read.

The wild-card Oakland Raiders stood in the way of a trip to the American Conference title game. The game was played in a zero-degree Stadium with wind whipping off the lake. Trailing 14-12 with 2:22 left, out of time-outs, Sipe took the Browns 72 yards to the Raiders' 13, in easy field goal range. They had a second down with 1:35 left, and the Raiders were down to their last time-out.

Coach Sam Rutigliano called a play that became etched in the memory of all Browns fans: Red Right 88. Sipe threw it in the end zone — to Oakland's Mike Davis. "The interception turned Cleveland Stadium into a frigid mausoleum — so quiet you could hear 77,655 dreams drop," wrote Ron Smith in "The Cleveland Browns: the Official Illustrated History."

Cleveland's other pro teams gave fans little to cheer about. New Cavaliers coach Stan Albeck traded Jim Chones and Bingo Smith, two of the heroes of 1976. The season was memorable for a 154-153, four-overtime win over the Los Angeles Lakers, but not much else. The team finished 37-45.

The Cleveland Press had been founded by E.W. Scripps in 1878 as the workingman's paper. Under Louis Seltzer, editor from 1929-1966, it had been the biggest moneymaker in the Scripps-Howard chain. In 1964, Time magazine picked it as one of the nation's 10 best.

But the Scripps-Howard heirs failed to invest in new equipment and the paper's later leaders — brought in from other failed Scripps-Howard papers — were timid. The Press also suffered from its lack of a Sunday edition — part of a gentleman's agreement with The Plain Dealer — and the difficulty in getting timely news to the growing population in nearby counties.

In September, Scripps-Howard shocked the city by announcing the Press would close if it could not find a buyer. The Plain Dealer, which had passed the Press in circulation in the 1970s, was no longer interested in a joint operating agreement.

At the last minute, retailer Joseph Cole stepped in. After negotiating concessions from Press unions, he took over the paper and brought in Kenneth Johnson from Colorado Springs to run it.

By Fred McGunagle

Clevelanders were prepared for bad news from the Census Bureau. But not this bad!

The city's population had fallen to 573,822. It was down 176,000 from 1970 and 340,000 from 1950, when it had peaked at 914,000. Cuyahoga County had fallen to 1,498,400, down 223,000 from 1970.

Even the four-county metropolitan area was down to 1,898,825 in 1980, from 2,064,000 in 1970. That 8 percent drop was the largest in the nation after St. Louis.

The suburbs were the first to get preliminary figures. "That's just ridiculous," exclaimed South Euclid Mayor Arnold D'Amico. He pointed out that in the previous year alone, subdivisions with 54 homes had opened in the suburb. Lakewood Mayor Anthony Sinagra couldn't believe his city's population had dropped by 8,500 — not when it had added more than 1,000 households.

Early figures showed Cleveland's count as only 532,000. That meant Columbus would pass Cleveland as Ohio's largest city. Community Development Director Vincent Lombardo complained of "severe undercounting." Some census-takers said workers had lost census forms or merely counted names on mailboxes, rather than interviewing residents.

The final count showed that Cleveland was still the state's largest city, though it had been passed by sun belt cities like Memphis, Tenn., and San Jose, Calif. But it could take solace that cities across the Northeast and Midwest also showed losses. Of Ohio's dozen largest cities, only Columbus had gained, thanks in part to annexation.

The mayors were right about the growth in households — the suburbs had added 70,000 in the decade. But the county's population per household had dropped from 2.97 to 2.58. North Olmsted Mayor Robert Swietynowski couldn't believe it. "We are a largely Catholic community," he said. "It is impossible to believe we average 2.9 persons a household."

Edric Weld, the Cleveland State University economist who had been trying to warn civic leaders about the population trend, chuckled at that. "Sure," he said, "but they're also an aging Catholic community."

The children whose tricycles filled sidewalks in the 1950s were growing up and moving into apartments. The birth rate had plunged. There were 45,000 fewer area teenagers than in 1970, and the number of children under 5 was down from 140,000 to 96,000.

Meanwhile, the number of city households had fallen by 30,000. Bulldozers tore down the vacant, vandalized houses that were left. Thousands of families had achieved the "American dream" of a house in the suburbs, but they left behind a wasteland. "Sometimes," observed long-time city planner Norman Krumholz, "things that are good for people are bad for cities."

There were benefits to the population loss. The "overcrowded slums" were at least less crowded slums. Housing was more affordable.

More blacks were moving into the suburbs. Living costs were rising at rates below those of other cities. Personal income lagged other areas, but per-capita income — total income divided by population — still was among the nation's highest.

It took several years for the Census Bureau, still struggling with computerization, to churn out the details. It turned out the "flight to the sun belt" was greatly exaggerated. Much of the sun belt's gain came from Asia and Latin America. A total of 3.2 million people moved out of the Midwest



PLAIN DEALER FILE PHOTOS

The remains of vacant, leveled houses littered lots across the city.



CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

City planner Norman Krumholz: "Sometimes, things that are good for people are bad for cities."



North Olmsted Mayor Robert Swietynowski: "We are a largely Catholic community. It is impossible to believe we average 2.9 persons a household."



Lakewood Mayor Anthony Sinagra: "How could Lakewood's population have dropped by 8,500 when it had added more than 1,000 households?"

during the '70s, but 2 million moved in — a net loss of 1.2 million, or 2.2 percent.

The movement was, as usual, greatest among those in their 20s, especially the educated. That meant Cleveland fell behind other cities in college graduates. It had few jobs to offer the graduates of local colleges, let alone Stanford or MIT.

Actually, Greater Cleveland's was a tale of two cities. The city proper was hemorrhaging people, businesses and jobs. But a booming community twice as large surrounded it, with new homes, shopping centers and industrial parks.

Clevelanders — which is how all thought of themselves — focused on the population numbers. After decades of growth, "the best location in the nation" was losing people. Its sports teams, whose championships had swelled civic pride, were losing games. With national attention focused on default, the city was losing face.

Clevelanders couldn't help thinking of themselves as losers.

McGunagle is a Cleveland freelance writer.

E-mail: fmcgoo@prodigy.com

Cleveland climbs out of default

After a year and four days, Cleveland was out of default. With the state guaranteeing the loans, eight local banks lent the city \$36.2 million on Nov. 19 to pay off the defaulted notes and meet pressing needs.

That meant the city's bonds were investment-grade, though they would carry a higher interest rate than before default. The city would not free itself of state oversight for six more years.

Still, the new administration of George Voinovich was not out of the financial woods. Two weeks earlier, voters had turned down a 0.5 percent income tax increase. The opposition was led by former Mayor Dennis Kucinich, who had been keeping a low profile since his defeat by Voinovich in 1979. Voinovich said he would resubmit the tax in February to avoid facing a 1981 deficit.

One of Voinovich's first moves as mayor had been to mend relations with business leaders. Addressing the Greater Cleveland Growth Association, he character-

ized himself as a corporation president reporting to his shareholders. "What you, the shareholders, want to know is what has this new president done to place the mechanisms that will solve the vast array of problems facing the corporation," he said.

Voinovich named 89 business executives to an Operation Improvement Task Force. In July, it recommended steps to improve city operations. They included closing 14 fire stations and turning over the air-pollution division to the state.

Many council members were skeptical. "Inviting this kind of executive task force to analyze the ills of the city and prescribe the solution is like asking an embezzler to come in and audit the bank books," said Jay Westbrook.

"The task force members don't have to live in my ward, where I wipe one-eighth of an inch of soot off my car each morning," said Michael White.

— Fred McGunagle

LOOKING AT A YEAR

Feb. 24: The United States hockey team wins a gold medal at the Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, N.Y. A day earlier, speed skater Eric Heiden had won his fifth gold medal.

Mar. 11: "Scarsdale Diet" Dr. Herman Tarnower is shot to death by his girlfriend, Jean Harris.

Mar. 21: President Jimmy Carter announces that the United States will

boycott the Summer Olympics in Moscow to protest Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

Mar. 28: Mount St. Helens in Washington, dormant since 1857, erupts, spewing steam and ash. It erupts again two months later, killing eight people.

Apr. 28: A rescue effort to free American hostages in Iran fails, killing eight American servicemen.

Apr. 30: At age 52, Gordie Howe retires from hockey.

Aug. 14: Sen. Edward Kennedy ends his bid to deny Carter the Democratic Party nomination for president.

Nov. 4: Ronald Reagan is elected president.

Dec. 8: Mark David Chapman shoots former Beatle John Lennon to

death outside Lennon's apartment in New York City.

Died: Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito; Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi of Iran; Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas; filmmaker Alfred Hitchcock; entertainers Barbara Stanwyck, Mae West, Jimmy Durante, Peter Sellers and Steve McQueen; futurist Marshall McLuhan; labor leader George Meany.