

# OUR CENTURY

## 1983

### AT A GLANCE

## Recession isn't over in Cuyahoga County

The recession was over, but nobody told Cleveland. Cuyahoga County's unemployment rate was 12.5 percent as the year began. The Salvation Army was averaging 220 people a night in its homeless shelters.

Thrift stores were low on merchandise. People were selling their old clothes and furniture rather than giving them to charity. Poverty showed even in Rocky River, where the Junior Women's Club collected food, clothing and money for needy local families.

Gradually, factories began recalling workers. By October, the unemployment rate was down to 9.9 percent, but the Interchurch Council was still serving 52,000 meals a month at its hunger centers.

For the year, unemployment in the metropolitan area averaged 105,000. That was more than double the 46,700 out of work in 1979 — and 5,000 more than in 1982, the year the recession supposedly ended.

The theme from "Rocky" swelled to a crescendo. Dennis Kucinich, bathed in the glow of TV lights, jumped on a chair and, as the crowd roared, raised his arms in the gesture made famous by Sylvester Stallone. The "boy mayor," now 36, was back in office as Ward 12 councilman. His Slavic Village neighbors-to-be — he was still living on the West Side — overwhelmingly elected him to the vacancy created by the death of Joseph Kowalski.

Cleveland braced for renewal of Kucinich's wars with Mayor George Voinovich and Council President George Forbes. They were surprised by a calmer, less combative Councilman Kucinich.

School Superintendent Frederick "Doc" Holliday won cheers from neighborhood audiences. He talked about teaching students for the information society. He said, "I believe boys and girls should sit up, should listen, should learn, behave and do homework."

That — plus a lot of work by teachers, parents, school employees and other volunteers — produced what board member Kenneth Seminare called "literally a miracle": passage of a 9.9-mill levy. It was the first operating tax to pass in 13 years.

Developer John Ferchill offered the board another \$10 million if he could turn the landmark School Administration Building into a 500-room luxury hotel. Preservationists protested loudly. The plan eventually fell through.

The new governor, Richard Celeste, persuaded the legislature to make permanent the 50-percent "temporary" income tax increase of his predecessor, James Rhodes, and to raise the rate an additional 27 percent.

In one of many public relations fiascoes, he allowed the increase to become known as "Celeste's 90-percent tax hike." Opponents forced a referendum, but Ohio voters kept the tax.

It was a lively year in Cleveland's federal court. Mahoning County Sheriff James Traficant, conducting his own defense, convinced a jury that, despite FBI videotapes, he hadn't accepted bribes or failed to pay income taxes on them.

John Demjanjuk was being held pending a decision on whether to extradite him to Israel to stand trial for war crimes at a Nazi death camp.

But it was the judges who provided a soap opera. Judge Ann Aldrich said Judge Frank Battisti's nephew had drunkenly bragged at a party of collecting a kickback in a bankruptcy case involving his uncle and lawyer John Climaco.

Climaco responded that Aldrich couldn't have heard that because she herself was drunk. He also produced an affidavit from a lawyer in his firm who said he had spurned Aldrich's proposal of marriage. Bankruptcy Judge Mark Schlachet was forced to resign and attorney Lewis Zipkin was convicted of embezzlement, but no action was taken against Aldrich or Battisti.

Ted Stepien at last turned control of the Cavaliers over to an experienced general manager, Harry Weltman. To the relief of the fans, Weltman fired Coach Bill Musselman and hired Tom Nissalke. The team won 23 games — eight more than the previous season. Then Stepien, again to the relief of the fans, sold the team to George and Gordon Gund. They persuaded the league to give the Cavs extra first-round draft picks to replace the ones Stepien had traded away.

Mike Ferraro was named Indians' manager, then discovered he had a cancerous kidney. His surgery was successful, but the season wasn't. The record improved after Pat Corrales replaced Ferraro in July. Still, the Tribe finished seventh. Rick Sutcliffe won 17 games, but the team hit only 86 home runs.

Brian Sipe threw four touchdown passes in the last game of the Browns' season, but at 9-7, the team fell just short of qualifying for the playoffs. After the game, Sipe announced that he had signed a contract to play for Donald Trump's New Jersey Generals in the new United States Football League.

Frank Spisak was unrepentant when he was sentenced to the electric chair for killing the Rev. Horace Rickerson in a Cleveland State University restroom. He made a courtroom speech praising the "Aryan Nation" and ending, "Heil Hitler!"

In another shocking murder, Colleen Shaughnessy, a deputy to Secretary of State Sherrod Brown, was stabbed in the State Office Building. A 16-year-old who had been seen in the office was charged with the murder, but acquitted in a 1985 trial.

# A welcome breather at City Hall

## While Voinovich keeps peace and mends fences, Kucinich begins his comeback and Forbes consolidates power on City Council

By Fred McGunagle

George Voinovich was a dull mayor. He admitted it. In fact, he bragged about it. After the tumultuous Dennis Kucinich years, peace was what the voters wanted.

Quietly, Voinovich moved to reconcile the warring groups of the 1970s. He posed for smiling pictures with business leaders — Kucinich's "greedy corporate bloodsuckers." The pictures ran in New Cleveland Campaign ads in business magazines, along with Voinovich's slogan, "Together, we can do it."

More important, he cultivated the neighborhood groups which, with the disintegration of the Democratic Party, had become the most potent political force in Cleveland. They had elected Kucinich in 1977 when he responded to their lists of demands with, "You want it? You got it!"

And they, rather than business leaders, had defeated Kucinich in 1979. When the presidents of the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co. or Standard Oil Co. attacked Kucinich, Cleveland voters figured any enemy of CEI or Sohio was a friend of theirs. But then Kucinich's abrasive aides alienated the neighborhood organizations, sealing his fate.

One woman was knocked down at a meeting of the St. Clair-Superior Coalition when top Kucinich assistants Bob Weissman and Betty Grdina tangled with the audience. When the Citizens to Bring Back Broadway was unable to get a meeting with Grdina, members showed up at night outside her apartment. She called police.

To demonstrate their dissatisfaction with refuse collection, the St. Clair group dumped garbage in the service director's office. The most damaging incident occurred when the Senior Citizens Coalition marched on City Hall to demand better police protection. Kucinich and Weissman retreated across the street to the Convention Center, appearing to hide from the old folks.

The neighborhood movement in Cleveland was largely the creation of Harry Fagan, director of the Commission on Catholic Community Action. With funds from the government and the Gund Foundation, he trained young idealists to be community organizers, who showed neighborhood how to "empower the folks."

The tactics were those developed in Chicago by social agitator Saul Alinsky, who told his followers: "The enemy properly goaded and guided in his reaction will be your major strength." The Cleveland groups used similar "guerrilla theater" methods to win concessions from insurance companies and banks as well as public officials.

Fagan didn't always approve of the tactics. In his book "Empowerment: Skills for Parish Social Action," he urged respect for adversaries, adding: "And remember, when in doubt tell your stories, laugh, say a prayer, have a drink and get some good advice." Still, he refused to rein in the community organizers.

Voinovich learned from Kucinich's mistakes. He spoke frequently to community groups and, unlike previous mayors, stayed around to chat. He assigned aides to stay in touch with the groups to avoid unpleasant surprises.

But the movement was losing steam. Its targets had learned how to react to provocation — with sweet reasonableness as long as the TV cameras were rolling. Now it was the frustrated demonstrators' turn to make themselves look bad.

The movement's Waterloo came in September 1982. With television crews close behind, 600 members of a group called National People's Action stormed the Chagrin Valley Hunt Club to confront Sohio President Alton Whitehouse about energy costs. They paraded into the dining room shouting, "We want Whitehouse," but Whitehouse wasn't among the 60



PLAIN DEALER FILE PHOTO

Dennis Kucinich came back as a chastened Cleveland City Council member. (Details in At a Glance.)



George Forbes gained power in City Council.



Mayor George Voinovich made peace with businesses and in the neighborhoods, bringing a welcome dullness to city politics.

members eating lunch. After parading with their picket signs, the demonstrators left, chanting, "We'll be back! We'll be back!"

That was too much for the foundations that had backed them. They switched their neighborhood funding to home-insulation and storefront-renovation programs run by non-profit corporations eligible for tax-deductible contributions, meaning they couldn't engage in political activity. Neighborhood leaders were "co-opted" — a word they hated — into going along if they wanted money to help their neighbors.

Politicians found an even more effective way to silence their critics. Federal community development money was now distributed in block grants to local governments on the theory that they were closer to their constituents than were bureaucrats in Washington.

The mayor and City Council channeled the funds to local groups and made sure the groups knew whom to thank. Most of it went to churches and civic organizations, but some to such council members' pets as Brownette's School of Charm and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

The grants gave the mayor and council the ability to reward or punish neighborhood groups. Those that gave officials a hard time could be cut. For that matter, Council President George Forbes could cut off money to wards of council members who gave him a hard time.

In 10 years in the office, Forbes had steadily built his power. He ap-

pointed himself chairman of the Finance Committee, giving him control of council's two most powerful positions, and filled its seats with his supporters.

He forced through a change in the council rules making "miscellaneous business" — the sound-off period which closed each meeting — subject to the discretion of the chair. That allowed him to turn complaints about the administration on or off as he saw fit.

Forbes was a shrewd judge of what people wanted and what price they were willing to pay to get it. He knew Voinovich needed the Democratic council if he was to keep saying "Together we are doing it." He knew the mayor needed to brag about how he had ended the era of confrontation.

The price of peace for Voinovich was a gradual ceding of more and more power to Forbes.

Publicly, the mayor continued to talk of his "partnership" with the council president. But in a moment of candor, he told Cleveland Magazine columnist Herb Kamm, "You don't know how many times I vomit around this place to keep things going."

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The recession was officially over, but all too many in Cuyahoga County had not gotten the news yet. (Details in At a Glance.)

### LOOKING AT A YEAR

**March 23:** President Ronald Reagan proposes building an missile defense shield over the United States. The concept is quickly dubbed "Star Wars."

**April 19:** Forty people die in a terrorist bombing of the U.S. Embassy in

Beirut.

**June 9:** Margaret Thatcher becomes prime minister of Britain.

**June 24:** Sally Ride becomes the first American woman in outer space.

**Sept. 15:** The Soviet Union shoots

down Korean Air Lines Flight 007, killing all 269 aboard.

**Sept. 17:** Vanessa Williams becomes the first black Miss America.

**Oct. 15:** A terrorist assault on a U.S. Marine barracks in Lebanon kills 216 soldiers.

**Oct. 31:** U.S. troops invade the Caribbean island of Grenada.

**Deaths:** Playwright Tennessee Williams, football legends Paul "Bear" Bryant and George Halas, actress Gloria Swanson, musician Eubie Blake.