

THE MAKING OF A MAYOR

CONTINUED



Locher machine, which was tiring and wearying, it cost money and time and all it did was take away from the general effort that had to be produced in order to defeat Carl Stokes.

MEANTIME, there was Fast Frank.

Early in the spring when the business community was being scouted by the various political camps one thing became evident. Vanik appeared to be the ideal candidate to run for mayor, but his candidacy would be opposed by the business interests, the men with money to fuel political campaigns. The scouts — including Seltzer — found Celeste would be acceptable to this powerful interest group. They encouraged the former Lakewood mayor to move to Cleveland and run.

The syrupy and inviting promises gave Celeste courage and confidence, but even from the beginning he must have seen the way things would go, for during the entire primary campaign, even on the last day, he would keep saying:

"We are in this race to stay."

A Plain Dealer poll a few days before the primary showed that Celeste could only expect 5.6% of the vote and political candidates were anticipating that he would run worse than any

prior candidate. The poll showed Locher ahead by .6% with election day three days off.

For those involved with the Locher campaign, things were far from encouraging. But some still hoped. The Locher headquarters was set up in room 220 of Hotel Carter. This was the room that had been used in all of the previous campaigns and there was that certain superstition involved. The same telephone number, 621-6181, was used, too.

"We tried to indicate that we were getting a bad rap," Klem would later explain. "There were all kinds of ways to describe any deficiencies in the administration. It wasn't all the doom and gloom that everyone thought. We pushed the idea of what's wrong with first place and showed why we were in first place."

"The only trouble was," a Locher worker said, "nobody was listening to what Ralph was saying. In reality, the administration was not that bad. Watch Stokes now, he's going to be the biggest ribbon cutter in the city's history because of the projects that Locher got going under his administration."

Locher won the support of the Democratic party, but lost that of The Plain Dealer and when the Press indicated that a vote for anybody but Locher would serve the community well there were further danger signals for the mayor's camp.

"The campaign went along like Grimm's Fairy Tales," one worker said. "There was no effort to change the administration's image. Locher would bowl on Fridays as if there was nothing going on and everybody else would go off and do what they wanted to do. On election

day two of his commissioners were out playing golf."

"Money was tight," Klem said. "For instance, we had 35,000 envelopes addressed that had to be dumped because there was no money for reproduction and postage."

Locher refused to debate Stokes. It was a simple political decision, one that favored Locher and there was no reason why he should have regretted this decision although Stokes himself said after the primary that Locher could have hurt him if he would have accepted the challenges.

As the final weeks of the campaign drew near, Jack Oliver, who worked as a secretary in the Service Department, began, on his own, to try to organize some kind of aid for the mayor through the city's Negro workers. There wasn't much time to be thorough about it, but Oliver

The Plain Dealer's Key Endorsement

later said that things were coming along when the Democratic party's newsletters hit.

The newsletters were part of a terror campaign to panic people—white people—into a vote against Stokes. They called him a "racist Republican" and warned that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would become the "dictator" of Cleveland if Stokes became mayor.

Oliver said the letters destroyed his work and turned many more of his people against the administration. Stokes later said:

"Those letters hurt him (Locher), boy, in a way neither he nor Albert Porter will ever understand and I say he because Ralph had to know that these letters were going out. He certainly knew after the first one and there's a basic decency about people — a progression in them from the days in which this standard of politics was a common occurrence that rejects an appeal on the basis in the level of these letters."

The money problem affected the Locher campaign, especially on election day when a 10-dollar bill will go a long way in getting someone to help get out the vote. The money would not be there, nor would the effort. A lethargy had enveloped and paralyzed the Locher camp. Those workers who saw it coming, tried to fight it and at times there were fierce feelings expressed within the camp, but it was too late, it was too late for anything.

IN CONTRAST there was the Carl Stokes campaign, which was more of a cause, a romantic movement that promised historical significance and exuded an emotional mysticism that brought workers, black and white alike, to rally about him and give their undivided attention and support to his effort. Much of the mysticism revolved around the campaign's focal point—the issue of race. It was, remember, an issue Ostrow claimed would be disposed of early.

"We more or less had our finger on the pulse of the public," Ostrow said. "We knew what was being said in the streets and what those newsletters were saying. So we had a pretty



Crowd at the second debate at John Marshall.

Photo by Michael Evans

good idea when to bring race up in the campaign."

The week of August 29 the Stokes people published a full page ad in the two daily newspapers. It was bold. In large, thick type the ad announced: "DON'T VOTE FOR A NEGRO." Then, in small type, it explained that a vote should be cast for Carl Stokes as a man and as a candidate and not as a Negro. It was an ad that was remembered, and, in fact, later won awards.

Although Stokes did not want to face the racial issue as an enemy, he was, during the primary, willing to take it as an ally and use it when he met with small groups of persons in house parties on the West Side. In small groups he could explain his feelings and refer to his race, contrasting it with other ethnic groups and their rise in city government.

He was in a position to attack the listless Locher camp and he did with a relentless spirit. Stokes attacked Klementowicz personally, calling him the "evil genius of the Locher administration." He characterized the Silver Falcon as a dictator with a cigarette holder, a public official who was really a public enemy. This was not something he could do with Locher, for as a man the mayor was unassailable.

Perhaps the most important lift Stokes received occurred on the Sunday morning of Sept. 3. The Plain Dealer gave him its endorsement. This event jolted the political community and gave Stokes and his supporters a legitimate foundation, a reference point, if you will, that solidified his campaign and anchored his candidacy.

In fact, early in the evening when he was told by Ostrow that the paper had given him its endorsement his first reaction was:

"Hot dog, now we're legitimate."

The decision for The Plain Dealer endorsement was made by Tom Vail, publisher and editor. He made it as he returned on a flight from Ohio State University after pondering the question for weeks. The problem of whom to endorse was not an easy choice for various reasons, but once that choice had been made it was clearly a turning point in the city's history.

Later Stokes would say:

"A newspaper endorsement would mean nothing to you in Gary, Ind.—nothing in Chicago, Philadelphia—it wouldn't make much difference. But Cleveland is a city in which the electorate has become conditioned to respond to the newspapers because of the absence of effective leadership from both parties and as a consequence The Plain Dealer's support, particularly for Carl Stokes, whose determination had been to garner a respectable portion of the white vote, was most important to him."

Stokes also gave credit to Joe Saunders, The Plain Dealer columnist who wrote a piece asking West Siders to open their homes to Stokes and give him at least a chance. Joseph Glasser, who runs the West Side News, was another who gave Stokes important newspaper support.

There is a certain invisibility to democracy and on election days there is a silent apprehension that also belongs to that democracy, an apprehension for the candidates who, for two or

three months, have performed political rites for the voter. Now it was the voters' turn to perform and by mid-afternoon it was evident that there was going to be a record turnout.

But the day evidenced some startling events from the Stokes organization. True, the Stokes campaign largely consisted of amateurs, but their efforts were guided by unlimited enthusiasm, and additional support of busloads of college students who arrived on the East Side to help turn out the vote proved beneficial.

By dinner time there were only the projections and estimates to judge by and in the end you still had to revert back to predictions the newspapers had made over the weekend. Dick Maher of the Press picked Locher. The Plain Dealer's Jim Naughton picked Stokes. The bookies had gone into election day offering bets, 8 to 5, your choice.

So with the evening hours upon them and the polls just closing at 6:30 p.m., the three candidates retired from the public for dinner and waited. It would not be a long night, as later another night would be, and the suspense would be shortlived. But in Frank Celeste's case there never was any suspense.

The Celeste headquarters was moved in mid-campaign to a vacant store front on West Superior across from the Hotel Sheraton-Cleveland. The headquarters was equipped with 16 telephones which were never used, it was difficult to find people to man them. The money had run out in early September and there was none with which to hire phone canvassers.

About 7 p.m. Frank Celeste arrived with his gracious wife, Peg (there can be nothing worse for a wife than a political campaign and all those

wives — Shirley Stokes, Eleanor Locher, Peg Celeste and Franny Taft, can only be congratulated and sympathized with for enduring such a thing).

Frank himself was congenial and talked with reporters and listened to the results with half-interest. When Louie Seltzer came in with a tape recorder (he was working for a radio station), Frank got him aside and had a long conversation with him and people pointed at the former newspaper editor and whispered his name to others.

About 8:30, Joe Mull, who had quit his job with the Democratic party after it endorsed Locher and also gave up a \$14,000 a year job with the Board of Elections to work on the Celeste campaign, was predicting Stokes at an early hour. The election board had Locher ahead of Stokes by 40,000 votes.

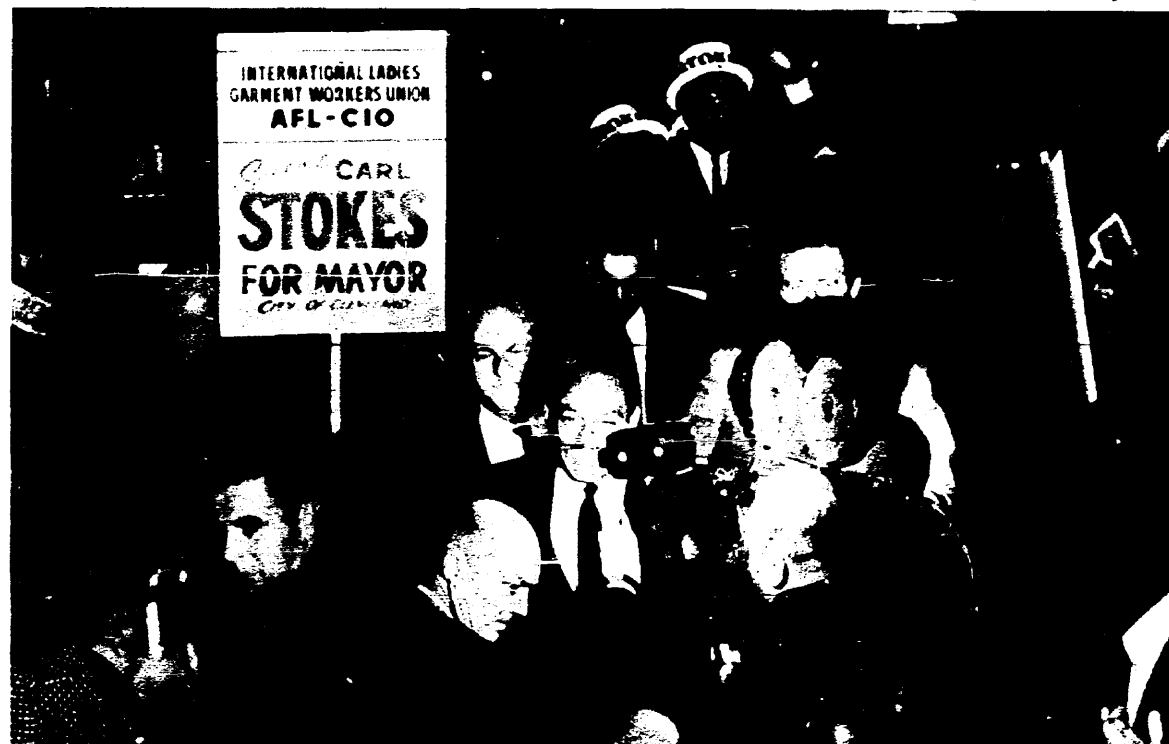
An hour later, the crowd was electrified to hear Stokes himself proclaim victory, a move that the Stokes brain trust thought helped project their candidate as having confidence and direction, but came off as a cocky gesture.

Celeste was shocked by the timing of the victory speech. "Can you imagine," he said indignantly. "That's terrible." Later when he received a letter from the Stokes headquarters notifying him that the winning candidate intended to place guards over the ballots, Celeste shook his head in disgust. Such aggressive actions! To Celeste and his supporters, mired deep in defeat, Carl Stokes was an elected but abrasive nominee.

Finally, when the Celeste count had inched to 7,000 votes and the hour had reached 11 p.m., he conceded and congratulated Stokes. Celeste went on television and thanked his supporters, his family, the reporters and everyone who had

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Photo by Richard T. Conway



Stokes arrives at the Democratic unity party.



Dr. Kenneth W. Clement, the Stokes campaign manager . . .

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voted for him. In his exuberance, he almost thanked those who did not vote for him, too. It was sad to watch his campaign which was never more than a hiccup, for Frank Celeste is really a good-hearted fellow who never should have gotten involved in the first place.

Perhaps it was Rebecca Bell, the City Hall reporter for WKYC, who was the first to see things were not going so well at the Locher headquarters. It bothered her that Klementowicz sat withdrawn and silent. Silence and Klementowicz are not compatible elements.

At 10 minutes to 7, Klementowicz knew it would be a night of defeat. He saw it early and clearly and kept it to himself. The others would know soon enough.

"There were three precincts in from Ward 4

CONTINUED

Taft.



*. . . and Robert
Bennet, manager
for Taft.*

Photos by RICHARD T. CONWAY

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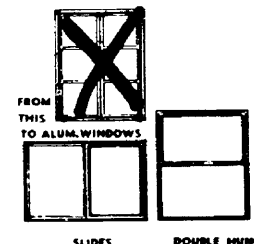
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One-half cup flour One-half cup sugar

In a mixing bowl mix fruits and pecans with flour. Beat egg whites until stiff. Gradually add sugar, continuing to beat until very stiff. Fold into fruit mixture. Drop by rounded teaspoons, 1-inch apart, onto greased baking sheet. Bake at 300° for 30 minutes. Remove immediately to wire rack to cool. Store airtight. Makes about 3 dozen.

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THE MAKING OF A MAYOR CONTINUED

and two from Ward 33," he said. "We were not getting our 180 votes in those precincts, but he (Stokes) was getting 20 to 30 votes and in these wards that was too much. We were getting 140 or 150.

"I was hit pretty hard at that moment. I could see what was going to happen. I did the only thing I could do . . . order a cup of coffee."

By 8:30 defeat was obvious to all at Locher headquarters. The Locher supporters had gathered in Hotel Carter's Embassy Room, but as the results trickled in and the more politically astute translated them, the crowd began to shift to the Pioneer Room bar. Upstairs in Locher's second floor headquarters, the hoping stopped and the drinking started.

Someone ordered from room service and, when the check was presented, it was signed in red ink.

More out of commiseration than anything else, Becky Bell told Klementowicz:

"Don't worry Klem, the NBC computers have Ralph winning by 6,000 votes."

"I hope you're right," Klem replied skeptically. But he knew through simple tinker-toy mathematics that it could not be so, computer or no computer.

There were bitter mutterings by the Locher people about the election and the results, but the mayor himself would never voice his feelings in public. Klem called him in the suite where he was waiting.

"Mayor, we can't win," he said.

Locher did not hesitate.

"All right, announce to the people that I'll be down."

The mayor appeared in the Embassy Room



Photo by Richard T. Conway

at 10:40 and conceded the election to Stokes. There were cheers from the Locher faithful, cheers of agony. Eleanor Locher was at her husband's side and smiling, but it was evident that she had been crying.

Locher stood there, straight and unflinching. (Later he would say of this moment: "You go through a political campaign and you undulate between optimism and pessimism and there are times when you are sure you are going to be a big winner and there are times you know you are going to lose. I was prepared for what happened. I was not really shocked or surprised.")

He looked into the glare of the television lights and said:

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Photo by Richard T. Conway



Jack Russell in a huddle with Albert S. Porter, shepherd-in-chief of the Democrats.

THE MAKING OF A MAYOR CONTINUED

fashion. I congratulate Mr. Stokes. I wish him well. I love Cleveland and have served her to the best of my ability."

Then he took his wife and they went to personally congratulate Stokes while the Hotel Carter took on an atmosphere of an Irish funeral. The bitterness and booze flowed in great quantities, neither of which reflected on the man who had just lost an election and a job.

"I'll never buy another Ford," pouted one man, referring to CORE's Ford Foundation grant for voter registration . . . in Negro neighborhoods.

A salesman turned to Plain Dealer reporter James Van Vliet and muttered: "You guys just cost me \$20,000 a year in commissions."

Long after the sting of that night Locher would comment:

"There is always a little hurt in something like this. There was no hurt, though in going to see Carl Stokes that night. That was simple. You see, I love this city more than I love Ralph Locher."

Outside the Rockefeller Building on West Superior — the home of the Stokes headquarters — a crowd gathered, mostly Negroes, cheering sporadically at nothing, spilling out into the street blocking traffic.

A man appeared holding an early edition of The Plain Dealer, its headline proclaiming: "STOKES DEFEATS LOCHER."

The crowd broke into a spontaneous cry of joy. It was if the World Series had been won, or a war ended and it appeared as if some tremendous weight had been lifted from the shoulders of humanity. The joyousness was electric.

Later that night certain arrangements were made between the victor and a new challenger, Taft. These arrangements dealt with a series of debates, a medium that Stokes had vainly sought

with Locher, but would now agree to with the Republican whom he would face in the general election.

For Stokes the victory was sweet and poetic. It had not come as an entire surprise. Glenn Meser, a volunteer for the organization, who was conducting the polling for Stokes had been able to predict the results perfectly. Later his poll would show other things that were not so favorable to the Stokes effort.

The final tally showed the winner had beaten Locher by 18,231 votes, a rather sizable margin considering all the factors involved. Stokes received 110,522 votes, Locher, 92,321, and Celeste, 8,509.

A week after the election one political observer made this prediction.

"Ralph Locher losing that election was like a relative dying. It is not going to sink in for a while but, boy, when it does, there is going to be a realization that could change this whole election. There is going to be only one question and that is how difficult will it be for a lifelong Democrat to vote Republican?"

There would be something to Celeste aide James D. Nolan's theory.

The Stokes victory caused four days of frantic confusion in the Taft camp. William A. Silverman Jr., the Edward Howard & Co. representative who handled most of the candidate's public relations, had to reorganize the whole campaign. There had been such a strong feeling in the organization that Locher would win the primary that all preparations had been geared to expect such a victory. Speeches had been written, literature was at the printers and the research was

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THE MAKING OF A MAYOR CONTINUED

directed at the troubled City Hall administration.

Revamping of the campaign was accomplished in less than a week, but one of the things Seth Taft had counted heavily on was lost to him. That was the Negro voting bloc.

He had spent considerable time campaigning on the East Side, a decision that was ridiculed by some politicians, but Taft insisted that all issues in this campaign were the same whether you looked at it from one or the other sides of the Cuyahoga River.

Taft and his family were active workers in civic groups formed to help the Negro community. He made a point of these activities many, many times during his appearances, explaining that one of his teen-agers was tutoring here in the community and Franny, his wife, belonged there and he, too, for many years had been on the board of this organization. Some of his campaign workers cringed every time he brought up his family and their relationship with the Negroes. It all sounded so patronizing.

"Is just never occurred to me not to campaign everywhere," Taft said. "I went to the East Side as naturally as I had gone to the West Side. We felt if Locher won the primary the Negro vote could be ours so we went after it, but only in the sense that our effort was to communicate everywhere."

"Besides," a Taft worker said later, "we made the decision to run against Carl Stokes as if he were a white man. He was hiding behind

the fact that he was a Negro and we wanted to take him on as we would any candidate."

A private polling concern from Detroit had conducted a survey early in the campaign that showed Seth Taft could have a chance to win the election if it were a two-man race. But if it were a three-man race, he stood no chance at all.

In retrospect, Carl Stokes had no choice. He had a slight tactical advantage over the rest of his Democrat opponents, but if he filed as an



independent he was as good as finished. Taft had told Stokes that if he were to file as an independent he could expect that Seth Taft would drop out of the race.

This would mean that Stokes would probably have to face the winner of the Democratic primary without the benefit of the Taft vote to detract from the Democrat's total. In all probab-

ity, Stokes would be facing Jim Stanton in the general election, a thought that was not particularly encouraging. Taft would be easier to beat if Stokes could win the primary and if he entered the primary he could block any Stanton bid which, of course, happened. Stokes had no real choice.

In August, another Taft poll was taken and its results were hardly ecstatic. If the vote had been taken at that time, the polls showed Seth Taft getting 19.3% of the vote and Carl Stokes 46% with 20% uncommitted and another 14% saying they would not vote.

The primary activity had taken most of the news coverage from Taft, who still had not been viewed as a serious and potentially dangerous candidate.

The problem of exposure was always Seth Taft's. The more exposure he got the better he got, the better his organization got and the closer the race became. But as the primary raged, he was left out, alone unto himself. The early campaign strategy was to sell Seth as Seth and not just another Taft. Over a fireplace in his headquarters was the sign: "SETH IS COMING." The first literature on the streets told of Seth and his background. It did not discuss issues or programs.

Each day Taft canvassers would attack a neighborhood with vigor, bringing a mobile campaign headquarters and infiltrating as thoroughly as they could. Many were paid workers and this contrasted with the Stokes effort which was

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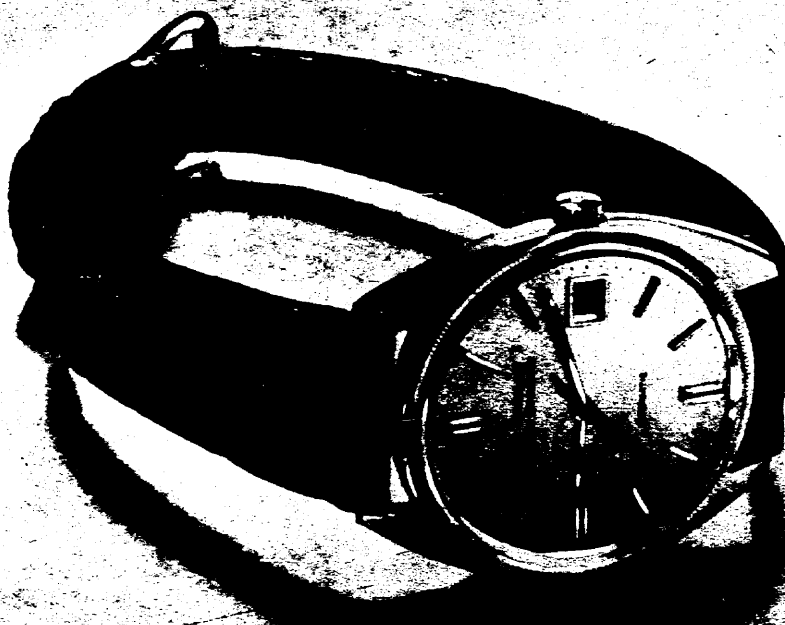
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staffed with more benevolent zeal. Eventually, Taft would open up 21 neighborhood campaign headquarters and his organization would consist of 4,000 workers.

Referring to the early Taft workers, Stokes would later say:

"Let me give you an illustration of the difference between Taft and Stokes. In 19 days I got 61,000 signatures without being paid. In four months, offering \$1.75 an hour he couldn't get together 10,000 signatures and that's the difference in us."

Slowly, painfully, the Taft organization grew, but in those days it lacked a certain spark: it needed to know if it could win. It needed some kind of victory omen, a dash of hope in some transcendental flash or even some kind vicissitudes on the part of the newspapers. Instead, it got a baby elephant, named Denny.

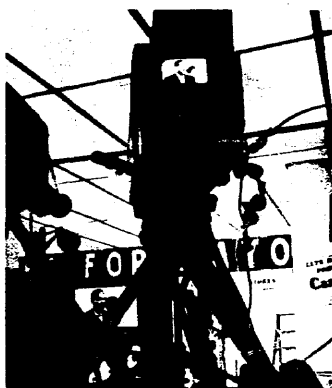
Bill Silverman, something of a promotional genius, rented an elephant. The idea was to "Remember Taft in November."

The elephant did serve a practical purpose. When Seth Taft took it around to the neighborhoods it provided a useful tool in getting people out of the houses and in a pleasant frame of mind. For three weeks the elephant and Taft trudged door to door, each in his own way trying to sell Republicanism to a town that long ago had gone to the Democrats.

"The door to door campaign was a success," Bob Bennett, the Taft campaign manager, said. "I figure Seth met personally 50,000 people that way and when we weren't getting the publicity in the papers that certainly helped."

IN VICTORY, Stokes found himself with a new and chilling deficiency.

"Our poll after the primary indicated an unexpected resentment and bitterness growing



among those who had voted for Locher," a Stokes confidant said. "That resentment was directed at us. Right then, we could see that this was not going to be an easy election."

"People were surprised by Taft's sudden and increasing gains," another Stokes man said. "They were surprised that all of a sudden he appeared larger and tougher than they had anticipated. In some measure, we were able to appreciate what would happen. We never underestimated his organization. It was getting better every day and our poll showed us in trouble."

A poll conducted by Taft's agency between

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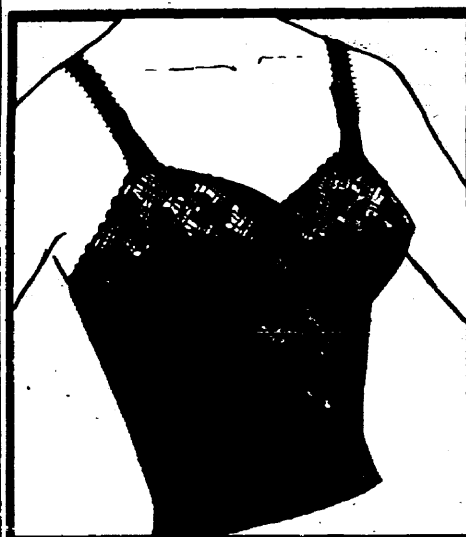
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THE MAKING OF A MAYOR CONTINUED

Oct. 7 and Oct. 9 showed Taft getting 31.2% of the vote, Stokes, 47% with 17.6% uncommitted and 4.2% not caring to vote at all. The uncommitted vote was the key.

The Stokes machine, in addition, now faced the prospect of gearing up for another total effort, a delicate problem in politics as well as athletics. In reality, the opposition was elusive. Taft had not established any kind of political record to attack, he was still a relatively unknown, untested political figure and he wanted to debate, oh, how Seth Taft wanted to debate.

"We had kept saying we would debate the winner of the primary," Silverman said. "We were throwing challenges out right and left, figuring, of course, that our man would be Locher. Stokes wins, and we're faced with the master debater and we've got all those challenges out, not so good."

There were those Stokes advisers who were bitterly opposed to debating Seth Taft. It was good political sense not to, they argued.

Despite what his intentions or original designs were (people within the camp say he was eager to debate), Stokes made a decision that in many ways helped the city, his opponent and the spirit of democracy when he decided to meet head on with the Republican candidate. It was a decision that would cost him dearly in votes.

"Carl accepted the challenge to debate because he didn't want to win by hiding, and besides that was just the way he did things," a Stokes supporter said. "He believed in the democratic process as being more than idle talk and he felt the people, the voters, were entitled to the debates."

"Stokes was eager to debate because he thought he could cream Seth," a Taft man later said. "They tailored those debates to fit Carl's free-style, say-nothing oration."

Four debates, each covering one of these four topics: crime, unemployment, neighborhood decay and an unresponsive City Hall, were Taft's suggestions.

"I knew how the city government worked," Taft said later. "I didn't think he really knew and when they turned down our ground rules and proposed theirs, there wasn't much we could do except to go ahead with it."

Stokes wanted no limited topics. He wanted an anything-goes, open-ended debate.

Two debates, plus the traditional City Club debate, were scheduled and the great race began, at first strangely remiss of excitement.

All through the primary campaign Stokes had attacked Albert Porter, who then retaliated with the controversial newsletters. There was no question that blood flowed between the two, but Stokes now had a power base and was suddenly a very legitimate political figure.

The break came, though, when Porter gathered 40 of the top Democrats around him for dinner at the Hollenden House. Then they marched in a "tour de force" to the Public Music Hall where a massive unity rally was being held for Stokes.

Enthusiasm ran high that night, hundreds of orange balloons broke their moorings and euphorically floated to the hall's high, arched ceiling. It was exactly where the feelings of the 2,000 Stokes

Photo by Richard T. Conway



Telephoning in the Stokes cause.

supporters lingered throughout the night as they offered cascades of applause to those on stage.

Sen. Stephen M. Young, Cong. Charles A. Vanik, Cong. Michael Feighan, former Gov. Michael V. DiSalle, judges, councilmen, state representatives, party strongmen, labor leaders and virtually everyone who was anything in the local Democratic organization attended the rally. Everyone, that is, but Locher.

The Sal Gummings Band played "When The Saints Come Marching In" and Stokes, the man of the hour, appeared in a great explosion of excitement. He made his way up to the stage and proceeded to shake hands with the dignitaries seated there, finally coming to Porter and greeting him as if there was nothing wrong, even though a week earlier he had said that Porter did not "represent either the basic decency or the great moderate majority of the Democratic party" and had asked for his resignation.

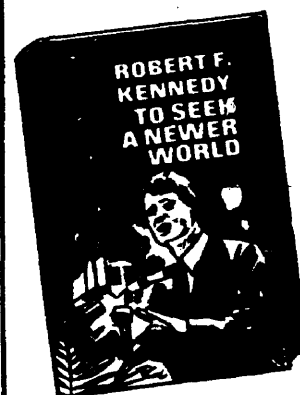
The speeches began, as only politicians can deliver them: America, democracy, life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, all the ancient and hallowed words that long ago had been turned into jingoism by American politicians. It was great. The feelings ran high and the speeches were stirring.

"The battle for City Hall is neither won nor done," Vanik said. "It has just begun." No one in that auditorium that night would know how right Vanik would prove to be.

If it was Stokes night, then it was a night for Celeste, too. He appeared, to introduce the candidate, in a mood that was most exuberant. He seemed to be relieved of a burden. He launched into a story oozy with gesticulations and brought down the house. Paul DeGrandis, sitting on the stage, summed up the atmosphere

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THE MAKING OF A MAYOR CONTINUED

perfectly when he leaned over and nudged Jim Stanton, who was next to him:

"I thought Emmett Kelly was dead."

To the public, the rally appeared a success. Warm words, kind words, helpful words were uttered and accepted. Everyone on the stage, all those important and affluent Democrats seemed to be in accordance. Stokes was as good as in, what with labor support (he received that the night before) and certainly the party now would back him. All appeared radiant in the Stokes camp as the first debate drew near.

IN TAFT'S own words the first debate was a "disaster." There is mixed feeling on this, however, for television was in this campaign to stay and it is estimated that each debate drew at least 100,000 viewers and by the time the series of four major debates and various other appearances in studio debates had been completed over 500,000 persons had been exposed to the candidates. Television played a larger part in this election than ever before and this would help Taft and ultimately hurt Stokes.

The first debate was held at Alexander Hamilton Junior High School, a site of Taft's choice, which was situated in the heart of Stokes country.

It was a warm, sultry night for fall in Cleveland and the heat radiated by the packed audience, clearly Stokes partisans, gave the auditorium a thick sauna-like stifle.

There was a delicious anticipation on the part of newsmen because, finally, they would have something of substance to report. Louis Seltzer was the moderator and began the program. While he introduced Taft, Stokes cleaned his fingernails.

"It is about time somebody pulled you from your high horse, Carl," Taft began, and on the other side of the stage Stokes laughed gleefully. Then Taft went on to discuss his branch city hall program and argue that he had never seen any specific programs produced by his opponent. Just what kind of program did he have to offer?

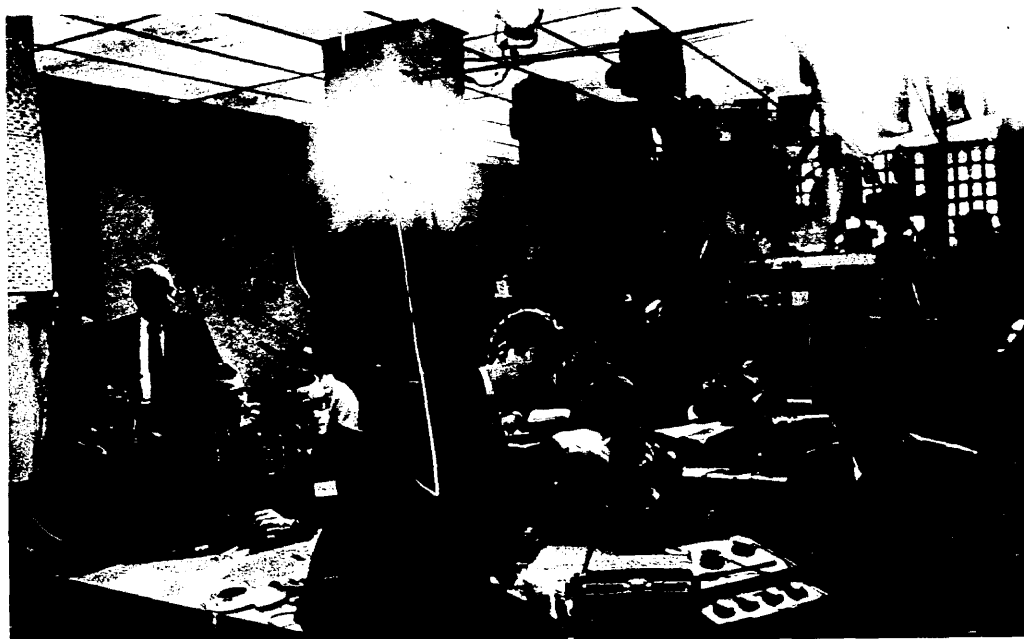
This tack was to be effective against Stokes and hurt him later until, in an effort to dispel any doubts, Stokes would have to submit to a special debate to get his program on the record. But now he had a field day with Taft. He contrasted Pepper Pike and Hough, talked about the police department, his strongest point, and demolished Taft with barbs and witticisms.

Taft was visibly uncomfortable and injured by the fierceness of the Stokes attack. Often, he tried to smile, but the smile was a facade and Seth Taft was being brutally beaten in the enemy camp, a place where he knew he could not raise votes, but perhaps he could be understood and this he wanted very much.

The effects of the first debate produced an astounding blow to the morale of the Taft people, a morale that had desperately been seeking the slightest indication that they were working for a cause that could win. Now it seemed impossible.

"It was as if a funeral was taking place in our headquarters the next day," Taft said.

Scrawled in red nail polish in the men's room in the Taft headquarters was the word: "SMILE."



Election night at Stokes headquarters.

Under it in ballpoint, somebody added, "Why?"

Of course, the victory had the effect of unrestrained euphoria in the Stokes quarters. It was not as they had thought. Taft was not even as tough as they had given him credit for being. Maybe it was cockiness, perhaps over-eagerness to apply the coup de grace or even pure miscalculation, but whatever it was there were only two days to languish with it for the bomb to end all bombs in the election was about to be dropped.

It would not come at Taft's hand, either. It would be nearly suicidal.

THE SECOND DEBATE was scheduled for John Marshall High School. This time the site had been selected by Stokes and this time the audience, in all probability, would be partial to Taft. By the time the debate began the auditorium was crowded far beyond capacity. Nearly 1,100 persons pushed into the auditorium, lining the aisles and hallway. Again, the atmosphere was combustible.

It would be a strategic blunder. Not because, so much, of what was actually said, but rather for the way it was accepted and the way it was passed by mouth on the street. What Stokes was to say in that John Marshall auditorium was nothing he had not said in 100 house parties on the West Side. But the miscalculation came for several reasons.

Television had carried the first debate into thousands of homes and the results of that meeting in the living room had a different affect on viewers than it did to those who were at the debate in person. Many felt that Taft had been exposed to extreme verbal brutality. Many were able to identify with him and extend the compassion that an underdog so often generates. Many were just plain annoyed at the possibility,

now the real possibility, of a Negro becoming their mayor. The Stokes glibness was irksome, too.

The debate began again with Taft opening: "I'm afraid Mr. Stokes confuses toughness with belligerence . . . strength with bravado . . . courage with being cocky . . ."

There were cheers, the loudest that Taft had had to date, and when Stokes appeared, a snattering of boos swept the partisan audience. This should have been an indication that disaster was around the corner, but it did not deter Stokes. He launched into his prepared remarks with the same vigor as two nights before.

He was booed when he assailed Taft for living in Pepper Pike, he was booed louder when he mentioned the seven-bedroom mansion that Taft had in Pepper Pike and when he asked who appeared to be the best candidate the crowd retorted, "TAFT, TAFT!" and Stokes broke into that friendly grin and said he appreciated the feeling of the people there.

Then, on page four of his prepared text, he said:

"I am going to be brutally frank with you—and brutally frank with Seth Taft.

"The personal analysis of Seth Taft—and the analysis of all competent political experts—is that Seth Taft may win the November 7th election for only one reason.

"That reason is that his skin happens to be white."

The auditorium fairly exploded in a backwash of noise, a surge that came like an angry sea, a bellowing roar that jerked Taft's head up from his notes, his eyes dilated in surprise. (Later he said: "I was flabbergasted that he would bring it up. We were prepared for something like this but I thought it would come in the question period, from somebody in the

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THE MAKING OF A MAYOR CONTINUED

audience. I just could not believe that he would leave himself open that way.")

The wave of noise caught the former boxer with his guard down. He stood there for a moment trying to regroup, looking out into an angry crowd that rose to him, an immense cacophony of sound.

He tried to continue:

"But in practically every public utterance he has made during his campaign he not so subtly points out that, and I quote, 'Carl Stokes has more experience than Seth Taft at being a Negro, but Seth Taft has more experience at being a white man.'"

Stokes was getting in deeper and the crowd was getting to him. He stopped and in a flash of indignation snapped:

"Just be quiet for a moment!"

To the side of the stage, Taft, his face reddened, just shook his head.

"Seth Taft is not a racist, he is not a bigot," Stokes said.

"But he does not believe that the people of Cleveland can rise above this issue."

The crowd was on him again, an abrasive, hostile crowd that broke the logic of his remarks



and separated the syntax of his explanation. Stokes, angered now, shot back:

"If you don't agree with me that's what the ballot boxes are for, but at least let me finish my remarks."

Taft followed, encouraged by the sudden change in tempo, bolstered by the fact that his opponent was showing he was not invincible. What was to follow was to be Taft's most spontaneous moment in the entire campaign.

"Well, well, well," his voice rang and projected. In less than 20 minutes his stumbling campaign had been put back on the road, by none other than Stokes himself.

"It seems that the race issue is with us," Taft continued. "It now appears that if I say something on the subject, it is racism. If Carl Stokes says something it is fair play."

He held up a full page newspaper ad.

"Don't vote for a Negro! Vote for a man," he says in his ads. I agree with that. After the primary, the theme changed to 'Let's Do Cleveland Proud!' What has Cleveland done that makes it so proud? Nominated a Negro for mayor! Now it is 'Do yourself proud by electing one ...'"

When it ended, all too soon for the delirious Taft people, it was clear that Stokes had blundered. The fact Stokes had been unable to manage the crowd and turn adversity into victory

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THE MAKING OF A MAYOR



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finally gave the Taft people the omen they were seeking. Stokes was no longer invincible.

Later some frank comments came from those in the Stokes camp concerning the debacle. Dr. Clement, the campaign manager, was quoted:

"When I watched it on television I wished there was a third write-in candidate I could vote for. If he performs like he did last night for the next two weeks, he'll lose. He did it against my advice. Maybe all that booing helped him a little. But, you know, I'm interested in more than Carl Stokes. I'm concerned with what sort of social situation we will have in this city after the election."

Al Ostrow explained the thoughts behind the remarks:

"It was a calculated risk to meet the race issue head on. When I was quoted in the Washington Post as saying that 'It was worth maybe 10,000 votes in the Negro community,' I meant that it was a by-product of what happened. We knew from various sources that race had become the determining issue whether or not Taft approved it.

"Taft supporters had people ringing door bells saying 'You have to vote for Taft or you'll have a nigger mayor.' This was happening in the ethnic communities, a whisper campaign was in progress.

"We felt if we would meet the issue at this stage of the campaign the shock that it would cause would wear off and the people would realize that Carl was right. It was a psychological

thing and we recognized that it had to be done at that time.

"The thing that we had not calculated on was the audience and how it was able to provoke Carl."

THE NEXT DAY the Taft headquarters was besieged by callers asking how they could help. Money, always a critical point in any political campaign, became a little easier to get and as Silverman said later: "It was something we desperately needed. We had to prove that Seth could at least beat Carl as a debater and we did. We were on our way."

But statistical analysis was not so encouraging. Taft would not have enough time to close the gap that his polls recorded. He needed more time and another dramatic break, which was almost too much to ask for. There was one alternative and that seemed dangerous, but it was the only thing he could do. Taft needed another debate. He needed it early. The City Club debate was to be held on the Saturday before the election and probably would have little bearing on the race.

So Taft began to fling challenges about, accusing Stokes of avoiding him at neighborhood meetings. "Every time Stokes faces me I pick up strength because people are seeing through his charm school act," Taft said.

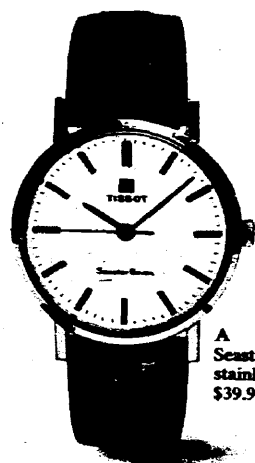
Stokes, bristling over the remarks and anxious to get back at Taft, said: "I am tired of

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THE MAKING OF A MAYOR CONTINUED

hearing the Pepper Pike candidate make false statements that I have no program and I am afraid of him."

In reality, Taft was beginning to make some headway with his criticism of Stokes' elusive and fluid descriptions of his program.

"We decided to accept the challenge for the extra debate," Ostrow said. "It gave us an opportunity to clear up this lack of program business once and for all."

The Stokes people feel that the initiative in the campaign returned to them through a simple incident that occurred at the Goodrich Sterling Neighborhood Center. Early on Oct. 25, a Wednesday, Taft had charged that Stokes was ducking



him and said he would wait for him that night at the Goodrich Center, where they were both scheduled to appear that night at different times.

That night Taft spoke first at the Goodrich Center and then left, just as Stokes began to speak. Stokes quickly called him on it: "I regret Mr. Taft is no longer here. He said he would come early so we could be together. What was the first thing he did? Go out the door."

Then Stokes agreed to a third debate.

"It was at this point," Ostrow said, "that we felt that we had gained the offensive again. For a week Taft had been steadily rising, growing. We were concerned and Carl was preparing for a real effort. The way Taft was talking we thought it might come at Goodrich. It didn't. After that we knew Seth Taft was finished."

To this day Taft is a little uncertain about the decision not to wait for Stokes at Goodrich Center. "It was, perhaps, a tactical error," he says. "At least that's what many of the people in the campaign thought at the time. They might have something, I don't know."

Within an atmosphere of palpitating interest, the third debate, the great rubber match and the confrontation all awaited, was held. It turned out to be nothing more than a ritualistic performance that saw Taft turn attacker, riddling Stokes with personal barbs, only to see his opponent ignore them, drop five pages of similar material from his prepared speech, and discuss his program inch by inch, point by point, trying to defeat the accusation that he had no real program.

The debate, held on a Saturday afternoon (Notre Dame was playing Michigan State on television), was a disappointment to most. It solved nothing, gave neither candidate the edge and was, in fact, rather boring to sit through.

It was evident, though, that Stokes was employing a new strategy. He was trying to appear more humble, trying to assume a quiet, defensive position in contrast to the bold, attacking manner he had exhibited in the earlier debates. He apparently had taken the advice of those, who, before

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THE MAKING OF A MAYOR

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the general election campaign began, had said: "If Stokes loses this election it won't be because Seth Taft beat him, it'll be because Stokes beat himself."

Even so, the seemingly overwhelming odds that had favored Stokes at one time had dropped and for more reasons than immediately met the eye.

"Labor didn't do anything for us," a Stokes man said. "They gave us lip service endorsement and then they forgot there was an election. Shop stewards who were supposed to be helping campaign in the factories were dumping Stokes literature in waste cans."

The Democratic party had given Stokes its endorsement and then worked half-heartedly for his election.

"There were two Taft campaigns going on at this time," Ostrow said. "The one he controlled and the one he couldn't. It was the latter that was hurting us with racial slurs, garbage and slime."

The race question loomed larger as each day passed. The ethnic communities on the East Side, which would give Stokes a pretty good vote on election day, were besieged by those who did not refer to racial bias as such, but would blandly say:

"No, it is not race that we're against. It is crime in the streets."

All these agents were working at once, working against a Stokes who had lost much headway, even though his people generally considered themselves back on the victory road.

A poll, conducted by reporter William C. Barnard and associate editor Todd Simon of *The Plain Dealer* was scheduled to appear on Wednesday, Nov. 1. Everyone knew a poll was coming and that it could very well be a factor in the outcome of the campaign.

The poll appeared the next morning and showed Stokes receiving 50.14% of the vote and Taft 49.86%. It was closer than anyone had figured.

The poll would turn out to be quite accurate.

"It helped us because it showed how close we were and that we could win," Silverman said. "People worked a little harder." (The Taft camp was ready to publicly refute the poll, conduct a hurried one of their own and announce results of their poll if the newspaper's figures had not been in their favor.)

"I think *The Plain Dealer* poll helped us," Ostrow said later. "It helped us get the people out and it showed them that we were in a battle. We really didn't think it was accurate, though. The tide had changed since it was taken."

Saturday before the election brought the City Club debate at the Hotel Sheraton-Cleveland, a debate that began much the same as the one the week before Taft attacked Stokes, calling him an absentee Democrat, an absentee legislator and an absentee landlord. The implication: he'd be an absentee mayor.

Stokes, tense and careful at the beginning, followed his text carefully (for the first time.) He talked programs, largely ignoring the blistering attack from Taft. Stokes had converted his public personality in one week.

"Carl would always get in trouble when he deviated from the text," Ostrow later said. "We wanted him to keep it straight this time. I thought we had Taft and there was no reason why we had to go after him personally. The issues were more important."

But as the debate ended, Stokes was back to his smooth, easy way. He had ignored Taft's charges during the rebuttal period, leaving his opponent without much to rebut. Then he demolished Taft in the question period.

The very last question, to Stokes: What about that crummy attendance record in the legislature?

It was the moment Stokes waited five months for. He whipped out a letter that consisted of one line and read it:

"Dear Carl,

"The reports I hear of your performance in Columbus are excellent and I congratulate you on the job."

It was signed by Seth Taft.

And, as people partial to both candidates filed out of the Sheraton's Gold Room, they all knew one thing: Taft's chances to be mayor plummeted with one sentence, one letter he would wish he never had written. And it happened as the campaign ended.

* * *

THE SNOW outside of the New Sardis Primitive Baptist Church slowed and died by noon.



There was a certain static uneasiness in the air.

Up and down the streets on the East Side the Stokes workers hailed their friends and neighbors. "Hey, you vote yet? Well, get out and mark it for Carl." By noon the turnout was large, but not so overpowering that Stokes could expect another easy victory.

The West Side turnout, which, strangely enough, did not have to contend with any snow at all, enjoyed a moderately large vote as the afternoon progressed. Naughton had picked Stokes to win as did Maher, but both prefaced their choice with footnotes on the turnout. If the vote reached 250,000, Taft would have a chance, Naughton said. He was thinking the turnout could surpass that figure as he drove about the city, observing the polls.

Supper time drew near and waiting lines began to form outside the booths as the workers returned home to vote.

Stokes had voted early with his wife and then had taken his children for a ride, visiting his mother. There was only the waiting left and this is often the hardest. He had been lucky in the primary. They had gotten the results early and there was a minimum of nervous anticipation.

"I want there to be a big turnout," he had said earlier. "It is important to me to win in a representative way."

At 6:30 p.m. the polls closed and the city settled back to await the count and its new mayor. Taft and his family dined in the Presidential Suite of the Hotel Sheraton-Cleveland. Talking over a leisurely dinner, the candidate noted that he felt good about the campaign. It had been a straight line from beginning to end. Throughout the campaign he had impressed upon those working with him his interest in maintaining a clean reputation, both as a man and as a candidate. To the end, even when the sirens of victory lingered enticingly near, Taft refused to deviate from his initial policy.

* * *

The Stokes headquarters began to fill shortly before 7:00. Workers, friends and newsmen presented yellow cards at the door, which was guarded by specially assigned workers and entered a large, barren room in the rear of the Rockefeller Building. There was a small platform around which a multitude of television cameras and lights were situated. There were no provisions, as at Taft headquarters, for recording the count. There was a sealed-off room next to the press section where Stokes workers would keep a secret tabulation.

On the second floor, in room 242, Stokes and his closest aides would pass the evening and wait for the inevitable.

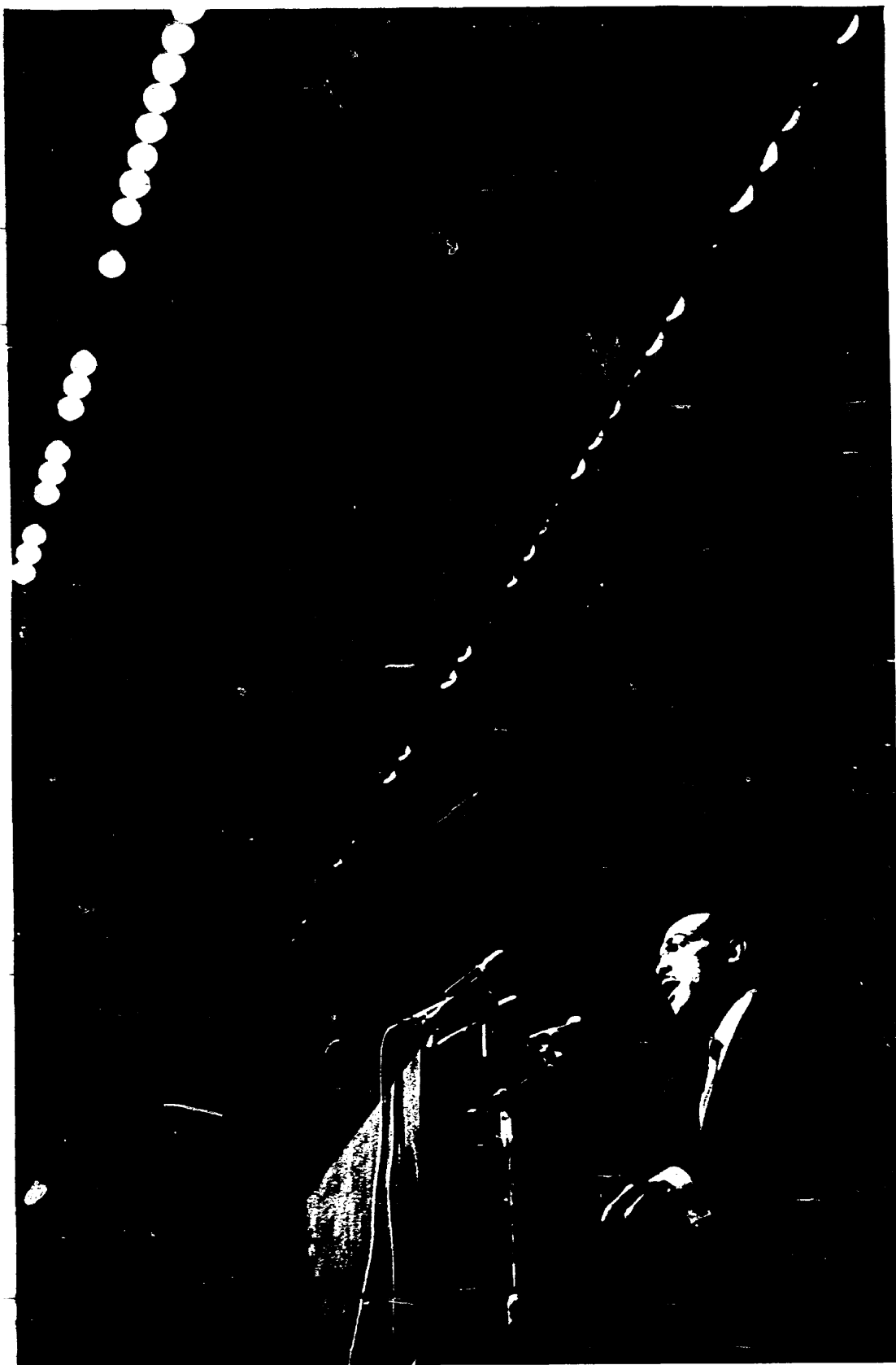
8 p.m.—The count from the Board of Elections gave Taft 31,445, Stokes 21,643.

Immediately, a myriad of rumors circulated through both camps. Early vote projections were said to have shown Taft the winner.

8:15 p.m.—The count now showed Taft, 39,277. . . . Stokes 31,833.

A group of Stokes workers emerged from the counting room and spoke in hushed tones to friends. Some said they were shaking their heads. "There are some long faces around here,"

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Photos by MICHAEL EVANS

THE MAKING
OF A MAYOR
CONTINUED



Photos by MICHAEL EVANS

Hugh Danaceau, the newsman from Channnel 5 said. "It's going to be a long night."

8:45 p.m.—Taft, 40,164. . . . Stokes, 40, 162. Nobody could figure it out.

Anne Eaton, the wife of industrialist Cyrus Eaton was brought into the Stokes headquarters in her wheelchair. The Eatons helped Stokes throughout the campaign and though there was official word from the Stokes people that Cyrus Eaton was not a large financial contributor, many were unwilling to accept the statement.

8:50 p.m.—Al Ostrow emerged from the back room with nothing but terse comments: "We're winning, we're slightly ahead by our projection. No, no, I can't give you any figures."

The only results available to the press at the Stokes headquarters came from the television monitors. Ostrow was heard to say: "There are some things you can't change." Speculation and rumor flashed through the press corps over the comment. Did it mean Stokes was on his way to defeat?

Inside the counting room, Councilman George Forbes and Marvin Chernoff, who had predicted the primary with incredible accuracy and said Stokes would win by 46,000 votes this night, were helping to assemble the count from their precinct workers who called in results. Later, someone made a mistake midway through the count, confusing the tally so badly that it had to be started over again.

Meanwhile, in Room 242, Stokes sat on a wooden-backed chair, calm and apparently unshaken by the count which at the moment was beginning again to favor Taft.

"I don't feel so good, Carl," a minister in the room said. "I just can't keep any food down. I'm worried."

"Ah, now everything will be fine, Reverend,"

Stokes soothed. The count went on and downstairs a band began to play "What Now My Love." It was drawing near 10 p.m.

At the Sheraton-Cleveland, Taft and his family watched television and gauged the results, talking them over with close associates, Jim Howard, from Ed Howard & Co., and Silverman. Across Public Square in the Cuyahoga Building, the Taft headquarters continued to be jubilant and hospitable.

10 p.m.—Carl Stokes, amid the din of cheers and applause, appeared to make a statement to his faithful and the newsmen. There was nothing conclusive in the count, he said. It is close and we must wait, he said. Stokes looked reassuring to those who had weathered hundreds of rumors. He looked cheerful, anyway.

Ostrow and Silverman, through prior agreement, exchanged information about the count by telephone. Both candidates had earlier agreed that a sign of immediate unity must be shown as soon as a decision became apparent.

11:30 p.m. — Taft, 114,216. . . . Stokes, 98,823. The word now swept through the Stokes headquarters that Seth Taft was going to win.

Many adopted it as the truth and stared sadly at the television set that proclaimed the bad count. Inside the counting room, they had given up trying to project the vote. The mathematical foul-up was still trying to be righted.

The green chalk board at the Taft headquarters began to record a slow but serious change in the count. Stokes was picking up. The crowd there was no longer relaxed and easy.

Midnight — Taft, 122,447. . . . Stokes, 111, 630.

Many in the Stokes camp were predicting

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Sketched by EDWARD FRESKA

THE MAKING OF A MAYOR

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defeat. An error in calculation produced a series of predictions that showed Stokes losing by 6,000 votes. Only a few, Mrs. Eaton; Joseph Cole of Cole National, another Stokes backer; and Dr. Clement, doggedly held out and predicted victory. Jerry Herman, who provided the headquarters space in the Rockefeller Building, was saying, "He can't lose, there is an aura of success about this building, John D. Rockefeller and all. He won't lose."

The night became morning and Taft, too, had long since made a statement revealing little. The count progressed and NBC, Channel 3, reported on television that its computers had picked Stokes. Everyone smiled. NBC had picked Locher in the primary.

2 a.m.—Bill Silverman and Al Ostrow conversed on their hot line and Silverman said his people are urging Taft to make a victory statement.

"I don't know Bill," Ostrow said. "I think our people have gotten straightened out and it looks like we may pull it out. I wouldn't if I were you."

2:15 a.m.—Channel 8's Doug Adair announced that Stokes had taken the lead for the first time that night. . . . 127,011 to 126,719. A cheer erupted in the headquarters.

But a few minutes later Adair returned to announce there had been a mistake. The figures given had been reversed. Taft was still leading.

Inside the counting room, the projections were showing that Stokes would win by 1,500 votes, but with all the mistakes it was hard to conceive that this figure was right. They would have to wait upon the decision of the Board of Elections.

Confusion was rampant and never throughout the night was it better illustrated than at 2 a.m. when an official at the election board called Seth Taft's suite and informed him that he had a 5,000-vote lead with 39 precincts out, 19 of which were inhabited by white voters and could be considered Taft territory. He was going to win.

Taft rose and adjourned to another room where he took a victory speech from his pocket. It had been prepared the day before, with another speech for the other eventuality. He studied the speech, thinking about the cabinet and what decisions to make that would best help the city.

"Seth gave no indication of joy," Silverman said later. "He sat quietly reviewing the speech, looking to improve it."

Five minutes later Jim Howard opened the door to the room, stood in the frame and quietly announced:

"Seth, the board made a mistake. They're all Negro precincts."

There was a grating silence, a bolt of impossible disappointment.

"Well, I guess there's no sense in this for a while is there?" Taft said as he folded the speech and returned it to his pocket. His family sat quietly, speaking no derisive words, not once making a caustic or angry comment about fortune, or their opponent.

"They were very graceful about it," Silverman said. "I don't think I could have been that graceful."

An hour earlier Stokes had talked about concession. He said he was prepared to do it with grace and offer his full assistance to Taft. "Then," he said with a sigh, "we'll just have to go back and start all over again."

But those precincts, 10-11 would be the last of them, trickled in slowly because that is how they always do on the East Side. And as they trickled they brought the total higher for Stokes.

2:47 a.m. — Stokes, 128,937. . . . Taft, 127,215.

Andy Bass, a 22-year-old electronics expert in charge of the Stokes telephone system, slipped out of the headquarters and made his way to the Hotel Statler Hilton where Adjutant Gen. Edwin C. Hostetler was staying. It was Bass' job now to tell Hostetler that everything was fine and that the National Guard unit holding a "makeup" drill at Shaker Square could go home.

2:51 a.m. — Stokes, 129,225. . . . Taft, 127,263.

The chant began slowly, like his campaign had, it grew and flourished and reached up through two stories, up to 242, a resounding demand:

"WE WANT THE MAYOR, WE WANT THE MAYOR, WE WANT THE MAYOR!"

2:54 a.m.—WKYC says the Board of Elections announced Stokes the winner.

2:55 a.m. — "STOKES FOR PRESIDENT, STOKES FOR PRESIDENT!"

Upstairs in 242, Stokes asked for his wife, who was in another room with friends. The two of them stepped into a smaller room, alone, and spoke intimate words that belong only to them. Then they prepared to descend to the crowd. Someone ran up and said it would be a good idea to think of something very clever to say since it was a very historic moment. Stokes considered this and turned to Ostrow and Clement.

"Carl, just say what's in your heart," Ostrow said. "That'll be enough, emphasize that you don't feel any grudges and do one thing, huh, end it with 'God Bless America.'"

3:10 a.m.—Carl Stokes, the new mayor of Cleveland, his arm about his wife, made his first official statement since becoming mayor:

"This vindicates my faith in the people . . . This is an American dream."

4:45 a.m.—The official tally from Precinct 10-11 is brought to the Board of Elections. The great race is over.



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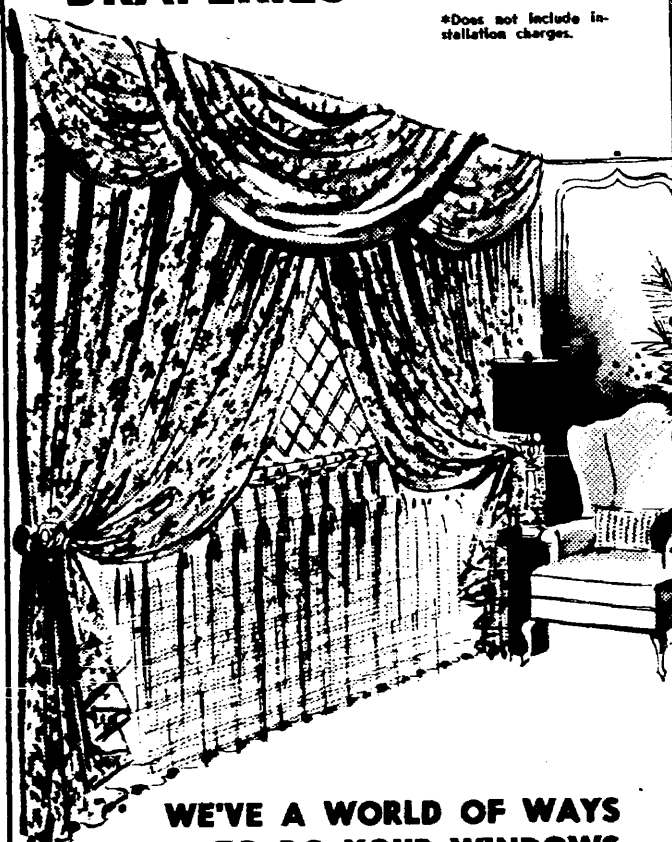
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