

# Michigan Political History Society NEWS

Vol. 5, No. 1

Spring 1998

## Coleman Alexander Young, 1918-1997

by Bob Berg



Coleman Young

Covering the life and accomplishments of **Coleman Alexander Young** in a few hundred words is a daunting assignment. He was a man of such varied experience and achievement that there are many different ways to look at his life.

For instance, you can look at some of the more memorable firsts he achieved in his 79 years:

- first black bombardier in the U.S. Army Air Corps.
- first black officer of the Wayne County CIO.
- head of the organization, the National Negro Labor Council, that persuaded Sears, Roebuck & Co. to integrate their sales staff.
- first black member of the Democratic National Committee.
- first black Mayor and longer serving Mayor in Detroit history.

You can, of course, look at his achievements as Mayor of Detroit, often accomplished against the opposition of naysayers protesting they either couldn't or shouldn't be done:

- persuading General Motors and Chrysler to build state-of-the-art assembly plants in the city, then clearing a couple of square mile of land to provide the space.
- transforming the Police Department from a white army of occupation in the black community into a department that reflected and was a part of the community it serves and integrating the city work force.
- starting the rebirth of Detroit's riverfront.
- persuading the Detroit Red Wings to remain in

Detroit after they had announced their departure.

- doubling the size of Cobo Hall.
- building Detroit's first new subdivision in more than 40 years.
- persuading Detroiters to raise their city income tax by 50 percent in 1981 in the midst of a national tax revolt.
- completing such projects as the People Mover and a \$500 million trash to energy incinerator which will serve the city well into the next century.

Those who knew him have their favorite Coleman Young quotations. A few examples:

- "You don't grow b----. Either you got 'em or you don't."
- "You have me mixed up with a stool pigeon."
- "You can just revolution your ass right out of here."
- "Ed Koch is full of s----."
- "The last man who tried that (racial separatism) was **Jeff Davis**. He had an army and everything and still didn't win."

There is also the remarkable fact that he spent his adult life, from 1941 until his death, with the Federal Bureau of Investigation constantly monitoring his activities and accumulating enormous files on him. One entry in his FBI file from 1952 declared "this man is a dangerous individual and should be one of the first to be picked up in an emergency and one of the first to be considered for future prosecution." It typified the bureau's attitude through the years toward this man and many others who had the audacity to fight for equality for African Americans.

In the final analysis, what made Coleman Young such an exceptional man was a unique combination of intelligence, vision, personal charm, wit, and courage combined with a continued optimism that things could be changed for the

*Continued on page 3*

# MPHS Board of Directors

Following is the current roster of the Board of Directors of the Michigan Political History Society, including those elected at the annual meeting on February 28, with their expiration years:

## 1999

*Gary Buckberry*  
*Dennis Cawthorne*  
*Thomas Cleary*

*Elizabeth Homer*  
*Peter Kuhnmuensch* —  
*Secretary-Treasurer*  
*Andrew Lott*  
*Nancy McKeague*  
*Barbara Sawyer-Koch*

## 2000

*Mary Brown*

*Charles Harmon*  
*Kevin A. Kelly*  
*Robert LaBrant* —  
*Vice President*  
*Sharman Moore* —  
*President*

*Mark Murray*  
*John J.H. Schwarz*

## 2001

*Robert Danhof*  
*James Epolito*  
*Thomas Farrell*  
*James Haveman*  
*Laura Paige*  
*Sharon Peters*  
*Clifford Taylor*

## 1998 Member Meeting Held

The 1998 annual membership meeting of the Michigan Political History Society was held on February 28 at the offices of the Michigan State Medical Society. President **Sharman Moore** presided at the meeting.

Elected as a new member of the society's board of directors for a three-year term was **Robert Danhof**, retired chief judge of the Michigan Court of Appeals and a member of the Michigan Historical Commission.

Re-elected to the board were **Tom Farrell, James Haveman, James Epolito, Laura Paige, Sharon Peters,** and Justice **Clifford Taylor.**

The members voted to name Governor **John Engler** and former Governors **William Milliken** and **James Blanchard** honorary life members of the society.

Secretary-Treasurer **Peter Kuhnmuensch** reported that the society's membership had reached

200, including 51 life members; 144 regular members; and five student members, and continues to grow. He also reported a sound financial balance in the treasury.

President Moore presented a list of 12 main goals for the society for 1998. One is to seek major funding to help cover costs of continued video taping of key Michigan political figures. Sponsors will be asked to underwrite upcoming tapings with former Governor Milliken, Attorney General **Frank Kelley, Lt. Governor Connie Binsfeld,** former Speaker **Robert Waldron,** and former Judge **Glenn Allen.**

She also reported that possible forthcoming special events in the planning stages include tributes to Kelley and Binsfeld, a retrospective on the Diggs' family, a review of an upcoming book on the state legislature, and one covering Michigan's involvement in the Watergate events of 1973-74.



### Michigan Political History News

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**President**  
Sharman Moore

**Vice President**  
Robert LaBrant

**Secretary-Treasurer**  
Peter Kuhnmuensch

**Editor**  
Charles E. Harmon

better.

Coleman Young had an unsurpassed ability to read situations and determine how to accomplish what needed to be accomplished. And he was not afraid to put his neck on the line for what he believed in.

It is hard in 1998 to recall the level of hysteria that existed in this country in the early 1950s as a result of the red-baiting activities of Senator **Joseph McCarthy**, the House Un-American Activities Committee, and others. Thus, it is hard to understand the extraordinary nature of Coleman Young's defiant appearance before the committee in February 1952.

One of the most well known exchanges was between Young and Committee Counsel **Frank Tavenner** of Virginia.

"You have told us that you were the executive secretary of the National Niggra Congress..." Tavenner began.

"That word is Negro," Young interrupted. "You said Niggra."

"I think you're mistaken," Tavenner drawled.

"Well, I hope you'll speak more clearly," Young retorted.

Committee member **John Wood** of Georgia jumped in to say, "I'll appreciate it if you'll not argue with counsel."

"It's not my purpose to argue," Young replied angrily. "As a Negro, I resent the slurring of the name of my race."

There was a tremendous risk involved, and a price to be paid, for confronting the committee so directly, but Young was undeterred. And he did pay a price for decades.

Some 25 years later, as he ran for a second term as Mayor, he was attempting to convince the Red Wings to remain in Detroit, even after they had announced they were leaving for Oakland County. As part of this attempt, he had begun to build a new arena, now known as Joe Louis Arena, even though he had no commitment from the Red Wings, no architectural plans for the arena, and no funds to com-

plete it. As a result, he was taking a tremendous public relations beating in the Detroit media.

**Bill Ciluffo**, who was the staff member heading up the arena effort, got a call one day telling him the latest polls showed the public was unhappy with what was happening and that the arena controversy might cost the Mayor the election later that year. He went in to share the news of the poll with the Mayor.

The Mayor asked if Bill thought they were doing the right thing in pushing ahead with the arena. Bill replied that, yes, he thought the future well being of the City made it critical to keep the Red Wings.

"Then f--- the poll," the Mayor replied.

The arena was built and the Red Wings stayed.

His career is studded with similar stories. No one ever accused Coleman Young of equivocating, or being wishy-washy, or of being afraid to stand up for what he believed in.

Coleman Young's primary concern wasn't about being popular. His concern was bringing about change in a society that for far too long had denied people of color equality of opportunity. And he could be very impatient.

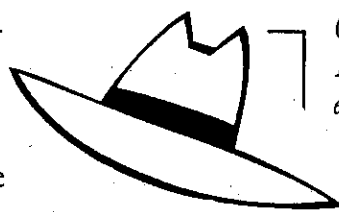
He was a battler right up to the end of his remarkable life. Even as the end approached, he amazed the doctors with his repeated recoveries from the brink, just as he had amazed so many before with his ability to hang in there.

His favorite quotation was from **Frederick Douglass**: "If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters."

His life was one of struggle, and of progress.

He died last November 29 at the age of 79.

*Editor's Note: Bob Berg was Coleman Young's press secretary in 1983-93 and prior to that served as executive assistant for public affairs to Governor William G. Milliken. He now runs a public relations firm in Detroit.*



## A tip of the hat

Each issue we recognize those who have made special contributions to the newsletter.

Special thanks go to those who took the time to furnish articles—**Bob Berg** for the **Coleman Young** retrospective, **Tom Downs** for his recount anecdote, and **Kevin Kelly** for the piece on the **Milo Radulovich** event.

**Jim Epolito** and his talented

associates at the Accident Fund Company—

**Betsy Alles**, **Sharon Bulger**, and **Bridget Barratt**—really make this newsletter happen. So does **Joyce Crum**, who puts together the member roster and mails the newsletter.

A tip of the hat to all of you.

# Thanks for the use of the hall



Presenter Robert Perrin (r) with Tom and Betty Downs.

Michigan politics has had its fair share of unusual personalities and events. Few will equal **Patrick McNamara**, a man who ran essentially "for the hell of it" and ended up serving a distinguished 12 years in the United States Senate.

No one knew him better politically than **Robert Perrin**, his chief aide for most of his senatorial career. Perrin brought him to life in a presentation held March 4 at Beggar's Banquet in East Lansing, another in the series of special programs sponsored by the Michigan Political History Society.

McNamara jumped into the 1954 Democratic primary for the U.S. Senate against the favorite of the party's leadership, **Blair Moody, Sr.** Perrin, then a Detroit Free Press writer, said McNamara entered the race for several reasons, "possibly reflecting the AFL's resentment of the power of the UAW, and also for the hell of it." Two weeks before the primary, on July 20, Moody died and McNamara was the nominee. He went on to defeat the incumbent, Republican **Homer Ferguson**, by some 40,000 votes.

The pipe fitter and contractor was born in 1894 in Massachusetts, eldest of eight in an Irish Catholic family. He dropped out of school at age 14 to go to work. After coming to

Michigan, he became involved in Detroit governmental affairs but had never run for statewide office until 1954.

"He was an unconventional and remarkable man," said Perrin, who was his chief aide in 1955-65. Other words used by Perrin to describe him were blunt, outspoken, intuitive, stubborn. "He even admitted to being a liberal," he said.

It was a different political time. "In those days, a Senator could be a statesman for four years and a politician for two, unlike today," Perrin said. "In today's atmosphere of obscene political spending, McNamara wouldn't have survived."

McNamara's maiden Senate speech, in 1955, was on an education bill with just one hour's notice. He served on the committee investigating organized labor, partly to protect labor, and turned his attention in the late 1950s to health care as the first chair of the Senate Committee on Aging. He was also to chair the Senate Public Works Committee.

The list of landmark legislation he either sponsored or floor managed in his career is legendary—President **Lyndon Johnson's** Economic Opportunity Act which created the Office of Economic Opportunity, the Job Corps, and Head Start, among many steps aimed at combating poverty; equal pay for women, federal aid to education, civil rights and minimum wage; and Medicare in 1965. "It was an interesting and satisfying period," said Perrin in a moment of great understatement.

McNamara was re-elected in 1960, without primary opposition. He had battled cancer but recovered to begin his campaign on Labor Day.

He defeated **Alvin Bentley** by some 117,000 votes in November, "no longer the accidental senator."

Conscious of the fact he was reaching 70 years of age, he decided in late 1964 not to run again in 1966. "I'm going to say, 'Thanks for the use of the hall,' and retire," he advised Perrin. They kept the decision under wraps until February 1966. Soon afterwards he was hospitalized, and he died on April 30, 1966, at the age of 71. (**Soapy Williams** and **Jerry Cavanagh** fought for the right to succeed him on the Democratic ticket; Williams won and then lost to **Robert Griffin**, who had been appointed to fill the vacancy brought by McNamara's death.)

Perrin went on to become deputy director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, vice president of Michigan State University, vice chancellor of the State University of New York system, and executive vice president of a major higher education pension fund, retiring in 1992.

He obviously loved and admired **Senator McNamara**, and those who heard his presentation were the privileged recipients of a special evening of sharing.



Among those attending the McNamara event were Lt. Governor Connie Binsfeld and former House Speaker Robert Waldron.

From the Editor's Desk:

# The passing political scene



Emerson suggested that there "is creative reading as well as creative writing." It is for that reason that I read as much good writing in the political and historical fields as I can get my hands on. It is a definite reward of retirement. And it is one of the reasons why I subscribe to and read from cover-to-cover "Michigan History Magazine."

We'll admit at the start that there is some bias in our liking for the magazine. It has seen fit to publish this writer twice in the past two years and apparently is going to at least once or twice more. If you're really interested, the articles are "A Matter of Civil Rights," about the 1964 national political conventions and the Michigan delegations to those conventions (May-June 1996), and "From San Juan to the Pentagon," about Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox (November-December 1997).

"Michigan History" is a joy to read. It is well-edited and designed by a professional staff headed by its editor, Dr. Roger Rosentreter. It is published bimonthly and includes in each issue articles covering a variety of historical subjects. The January-February 1998 issue includes, for example, articles on Coleman Young ("Detroit's Big Daddy"), the Keweenaw Peninsula, the Chelsea Milling Company (Jiffy Mix), the World War II experiences of a Lansing-area priest, and forest fires of the last century.

"Michigan History" began as "Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections" in 1874. It became "Michigan History Magazine," then a quarterly academic journal, in 1917. In 1978, under the aegis of the Michigan Historical Commission in

the Department of State, it progressed to a larger magazine format with color and photos.

At about that time, Dr. Rosentreter, a Civil War historian, joined the magazine staff and became its editor in 1980, succeeding Sandra Sageser Clark, who now heads the History Bureau. The magazine continues to grow in scope, eye appeal, and subscribers as well.

Political history has always received some attention in the magazine. We've dug back at times and enjoyed pieces on the 1938 gubernatorial election, U.S. Senator Arthur Vandenberg, Chase Osborn's 1910 campaign, state political party chairmen, Frank Murphy, various tax battles in the state legislature, early 1930's politics, etc.

But the current editor will admit that political history has not always been a top contents' item. That's changing, and we're glad to be a part of it.

A year's subscription will cost you \$12.95. That will be your best investment today.

\* \* \*



George Edwards

George Edwards." We read it to learn more about the life of Judge Edwards, and while the book concentrates on his relatively brief tenure as Jerry Cavanagh's police commissioner,

it also satisfied our curiosity about a complex man.

Edwards came to Detroit in 1936, an avowed Socialist, by way of Texas and Harvard. He became a United Auto Workers organizer and confederate of Walter Reuther. He served on the Detroit Common Council and as its president in the 1940s, then ran for mayor in 1949 and was defeated by Albert Cobo. In 1951, he was considered for appointment to fill the U.S. Senate seat left open by Arthur Vandenberg's death and was named instead by Soapy Williams to the Wayne County Probate Court bench. In 1954, he went on the circuit bench, and in 1956, he was named by Soapy to the Michigan Supreme Court (appointments were obviously his mother's milk).

He resigned from the Supreme Court in 1962 to become Detroit's police commissioner and stayed for two years. In late 1963, he was named to the Sixth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. He retired from the federal bench in 1990 and died five years later at age 80.

The author, Mary M. Stolberg, is enamored with her subject and thus loses some of the objectivity that would have helped the book immensely. And we are told very little about the author, an occasional failing of university presses. But we're still glad to have it a part of our growing Michigan political history library.

— Chuck Harmon

# Michigan Political History Society

## 1998 MPHS Membership

Membership in the Michigan Political History Society continues to grow. As of April 1, there were 236 members, including 56 life members, 177 regular members, and three student members.

If your newsletter contains an orange sticker, that means that your membership is not up to date and,

unfortunately, this will be your final newsletter until your dues are paid. A form is enclosed.

Following is the list of current members in good standing. Those with an "L" after their names are life members, and those with an "S" are student members.

Robert Adler - L	Gary Buckberry	Bette Downs - L	Debbie Guenther
Glenn S. Allen	William Byl	Peter Duhamel	Margaret Halava
Bruce Ambrose - L	David Camp - L	Nancy Dunn	Beverly Hammerstrom
Fred Anderson	Reginald Carter	Douglas Earle	Charles Harmon - L
Anne Armstrong - L	Dennis Cawthorne	Peter Eckstein	Rat Harrington
Denise Arnold - L	Deborah Cherry	Vernon Ehlers	Jim Hareman
Gregory Brown	Eric Cholack	Doug Ellinger	Gary Heidel
John Brundel	Hoyd Clack	Susan Elder	Kenneth Heiminger
Bruce Ashley	Thomas Cleary - L	James Epolite - L	Maureen Herstek - L
Sharon Ashley	Avern Cohn	Gene Farnum	George Herstek - L
Richard Austin - L	Richard Cole	Tom Farrell	Raul Hillegonds
Glen Bachelder	Carol Com	Michael Farrell	Tom Hoisington - L
Laura Baird - L	Jerry Coomes - L	Gerald Fairman - L	Elizabeth Homer - L
David Balas	Mark Cousens	Amy Jensen	Jude Huetteman
William Ballenger	Kirk Curtis	David Fink	Mitch Irwin - L
Karl Benghauser	John Czarniecki	Mary Anne Ford	Mildred Jeffrey
Cemie Binsfield	Robert Danhof	Carol Frank	Richardson Johnson
Rebecca Blake	William G. Davis	Robert Geake - L	Jeffrey Jones - L
Joyce Blaney	Michael DeGruar	Tom George - L	Lynn Joubald
Roy Boudreau	John Dempsey	Dennis Gilliland	Bill Jovett
Barbara Bradford	Tom Derezinski	Don Gilmer	Douglas Kelley
James Brickley	Frank DeRose	Linda Gotler	Frank Kelley
Mary Brown	Bryce Decheerty	Patricia Godchaux	Kevin Kelly - L
Lynette Brown	Jean Dorker - S	Nancy Gram - L	Jannie Kelly - L
Robert Browning	Mice Downs	Charles Greenleaf	Lee Kennedy
John Bruff	Tom Downs - L	George Griffiths	Lawrence Westebaum

James Kiefer	Richard McLellan - L	Sharon Peters	Tom Swine - L
William King	Tom McLellan	Edward Pierce	Marc Speiser - L
Larry Kish - L	Colleen McNamara	Tom Plasman - L	Roberta Stanley
Bernard Klein	Paul McNamara - L	Lana Pollack	H. James Starr
Peter Kobrak	Peter McPherson	Charles Press	Jeffrey Stornid
Barbara Koch	Hank Meijer - L	Kirk Profit - L	Regina Stout
Monica Kostielney - L	Anne Merrenne	Allen Rice	David Stout
Nell Kuhnmuensch - L	Larry Meyer	Claude Richards	Joe Suttan
Peter Kuhnmuensch - L	Ben Miller - S	Wallace Riley - L	Anne Swift
Robert LaBran	William G. Milliken	Dorothy Comstock Riley	Theodore Swift
Beverly Lang	Keith Melin	Dale Robertson	Betty Tabbeman
David Lang	Sharon Moore - L	David Rogers	Clifford Taylor
John LaRose	Dennis Muchmore - L	Lawrence Rubin	Darrell Tennis - L
Mel Larsen	David Murley	Craig Ruff	John Thedis - L
Jerry Lawler	Mark Murray - L	Phillip Runkel	Donald Thurber
David Letentou	Dan Musser, Jr. - L	Mary Runkel	Richard Tompkins
Louis Legg	Dan Musser, J.J. - L	William Ryan	Gail Torwano
Peter Levine	Georgina Nelson	Norm Saari	Jerry Vanderreem - L
William Liebold	Theodora Nelson	Robert Sacco	Patrick M. Vaughan
James Lincoln	Kris Nicholeff	Susan Safford	Harold Voorhees
Paul A. Long - L	Ken Nysseu	Scott Schraeger	Robert Waldron
William Long - L	Alexander O'Dell - S	John Schwarz - L	Eugene Wanger - L
John Mackie	William O'Brien	Pamela Shaheen	Elizabeth Weaver
William Madigan - L	Raymond O'Malley	Raul Shaheen	Willah Wedden
Marge Malarue	George Orban	Thomas Shaurer	George Weeks
Hugh Masterson	Debra Orr - L	Tom Shields	Betsy Weidl
Olyria Maynard	Laura Paige - L	Michael Shipice	Stephanie Whitbeck
Pat McCarthy	Jim Papas - L	Sam Singh	William Whitbeck
Patrick McCollough	Fred Parks	Jon Smalley	Richard Wiener - L
Marian McCracken	James Patton - L	Corwin Smith	Raj Wiener
Catherine McNish	Thomas Payne - L	Vernon Smith	Ed Wyszynski
Nancy McKeague	Robert Perrin	Hilary Snell	Deborah Zannoth
Kevin McKinney	William Perrone	Marshall Solomon	Monica Zuchowski

# Looking back at Michigan political history

*48 years ago*

It was 1950, and **G. Mennen Williams** was in his second year as Michigan's governor. The year's events could fill a book, highlighted by the gubernatorial election. **Soapy Williams** had decided to seek re-election, and the GOP was convinced he was beatable, that his election two years before was a fluke. There was a four-way race in the Republican primary, and former two-term governor **Harry F. Kelly** emerged as Williams' foe. When the general election polls had closed and the returns tallied, Kelly was believed the victor by about 3,800 votes. In fact, the Detroit News the next day said he had won. By Friday the News' headline read, "Kelly's Lead Fades," and by the following Monday it had Soapy leading by 558. Needless to say, a recount followed, and Williams won by 1,154 votes—the closest Michigan gubernatorial election of the 20th century. All other state administrative board slots went to Republicans, including two whom Soapy had brought to the Democrat side two years before. Among some familiar names to win freshman seats in the State Legislature that year were **Frank Beadle**, **Edward Hutchinson**, **Allison Green**, **T. John Lesinski**, **Lawrence Lindemer**, **Don Pears**, and **George Van Peurse**. And **Ruth Thompson**, of Muskegon, was the first woman elected to Congress from Michigan.

*36 years ago*

It was 1962, and **John Burley Swainson** was finishing his second—and last—year as Governor at age 37. There are at least two reasons why John Swainson lasted only one term after a successful, whirlwind political career. One was the Bowman bill, sponsored by Macomb County lawmaker **John Bowman**, which would have prohibited the imposition of a Detroit city income tax on non-residents. Swainson vetoed the bill, incurring the wrath of suburban voters. The other was **George Romney**, a well-known business and public leader who led Swainson through the entire campaign, defeating him by 80,573 votes and returning the front office to the Republican Party for the first time in 14 years. Romney did not have immediate coattails, however, and the rest of the offices stayed in Democrat hands. In addition, onetime Democratic State Chairman **Neil Staebler** beat former Congressman **Alvin Bentley** by about 100,000 votes for a brief tenure as congressman-at-large, resulting from an inability to redistrict a new 19th district. And the Constitutional Convention, of

which Romney had been a vice chair, finished its work and prepared to take it to the voters. But that's another story.

*24 years ago*

It was 1974, and **William Milliken** was in his sixth year as Governor and preparing to run again. Watergate overshadowed everything political that year, setting the stage for major Democratic victories. In a preview of what was to come, Democrat **Richard VanderVeen** captured the congressional seat relinquished by **Gerald Ford** when he became vice president, beating State Senate majority leader **Robert VanderLaan** in a February special election and winning again in November, the first Democrat to win the seat since 1910. In the old 8th Congressional District (Saginaw-Bay City), Republican **James Harvey** stepped down to become a federal judge and Democrat **J. Robert Traxler** won the April special election, the first Dem to hold that seat in 40 years. When the general election dust had settled in November, the Democrats had won just about everything. The 19-member congressional delegation had gone from a 12-7 GOP margin to a 12-7 Democratic margin; the Democrats captured 24 of 38 State Senate seats and 66 of 110 State House seats, and they controlled the Supreme Court and the university boards. But—they did not win what they wanted the most, the governorship. Gov. Milliken was opposed for the second time by **Sander Levin**, former state senator and state party chief who had soundly defeated ex-Detroit Mayor **Jerome Cavanagh** in the primary. A main ballot issue was whether to repeal the state sales tax on food and drugs. Levin favored repeal; Milliken opposed it. Repeal won, but so did Milliken, by some 114,000 votes in a hard-fought, down-to-the-wire contest. Michigan voters had once again exemplified their ticket-spitting abilities.

*12 years ago*

It was 1986, and **James Blanchard** was running for a second term as Governor of Michigan. In 1983, his first year in office, Blanchard and a Democratic-controlled Legislature had enacted a 38-percent temporary increase in the state income tax. The result was the recall of two Democratic senators, **Phillip Mastin** of Dearborn and **David Serotkin** of Mt. Clemens. There are some who agree with governors' historian **George Weeks** that had Michigan still had two-year terms for governors, Blanchard would not have been re-elected. But the extra time helped,



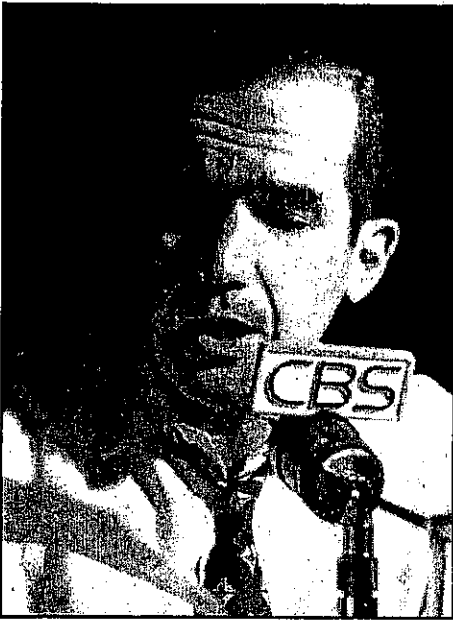
as did a divided GOP. Wayne County executive **William Lucas** won a four-person primary and was then trounced by Blanchard by some 878,000 votes. Re-elected as lieutenant governor was venerable Martha **Griffiths**, then 74 (Blanchard was 44). The GOP held onto control of the

Senate while the Dems broadened their control of the House. **John Engler** was Senate majority leader, while **Gary Owen** was House speaker. Elected to first terms on the Supreme Court were **Robert P. Griffin** and **Dennis Archer**.

— C. Harmon

## Anthem for a common man

By Kevin Kelly



Edward Murrow

Last December 1, the Michigan Political History Society turned to an unpleasant page in America's history, the dark days of Senator **Joseph McCarthy** and the "ism" forever attached to his name. The billing at Lansing's Boarshead Theater read, "A Night with **Edward R. Murrow**, **Milo Radulovich** and **Michael Ranville**." But the real focus, as Murrow intoned 44 years earlier, was "to examine, insofar as we can, the case of Lieutenant **Milo Radulovich**."

The theme of the 90-minute presentation, that history turns on the eloquence of the common man, could have been snatched from the headlines of almost any era. The recent book on Milo Radulovich, "**To Strike at a King: The Turning Point in the**

**McCarthy Witch-Hunts**," served as a foundation for the evening's discussion. The author and presenter was our old Lansing friend, Mike Ranville.

Beginning with film clips of Boston Attorney **Joseph Welch's** haunting admonition to Sen. McCarthy—"at long last Senator, have you no sense of decency, have you no shame?"—the presentation moved into the historic nature of Air Force Lieutenant Milo Radulovich's confrontation with the United States Air Force. In the summer of 1953, Milo was ordered discharged from the military, not for any lack of loyalty on his part but for the alleged activities of his father and sister. Through a sham hearing at Selfridge Field in Mt. Clemens, the Dexter, Michigan, resident and Detroit native fought an enemy he could not confront and charges he was not allowed to see.

That same summer, news legend Murrow and his partner **Fred W. Friendly** were feeling anything but legendary. Visited regularly by civil liberty groups and respected journalistic colleagues, all wanted to know when Murrow and Friendly would take on Joe McCarthy. Some wondered aloud if Murrow had become too comfortable, had begun reading his own reviews.

Speculation surrounding Murrow's courage and personal comfort came to an abrupt halt on a Tuesday evening in

late October 1953. Shortly after 10:30 p.m., he turned in his chair and announced to a national television audience, "tonight we propose to examine, insofar as we can, the case of Lt. Milo Radulovich."

Historians consider a program on McCarthy, broadcast five months later, to be pivotal in the Senator's demise. Both Murrow and Friendly believed that without the Milo Radulovich program they never could have aired the McCarthy show. Both also felt "The Case Against Lt. Radulovich" to be one of the finest things they'd ever done.

At program's end, the calls started from across the country, but especially in New York, Philadelphia, and Washington. The overworked switchboard at CBS in New York stopped counting at a thousand calls.

For Milo Radulovich there was never any question that he had to fight the charges brought against him; the honor of his family name was at stake. While he has spent his life quietly trying to forget those 95 days in 1953, he emerges as a true American hero. Milo's case, as **Dan Rather** points out on the jacket of "To Strike at a King" . . . , "underscores that humanity lies at the heart of all history."

On December 1, patrons of the Michigan Political History Society rose to give Milo Radulovich the standing ovation he had earned 44 years earlier.

# Faces from the political past



*State Administrative Board—1966.*



*If you can't identify these Democratic leaders from the 1960s, you're reading the wrong newsletter. (Photo courtesy of Bentley Historical Library)*



*Soapy and Nancy campaigning in Detroit—1950. (Photo courtesy of Bentley Historical Library)*



*Some more Democrats, circa 1980s or 1990.*



*Romney press conference following 1962 TV debate with John Swainson. Reporters at the table, left to right, are Gene Schroeder of Associated Press, Glenn Engle of the Detroit News, and Chuck Harmon of the Booth Papers. (Photo courtesy of Bentley Historical Library)*

# Watergate revisited Part One

Twenty-five years ago this spring, a series of events occurred that would culminate in the resignation of President **Richard M. Nixon** some 15 months later. On March 23, 1973, Judge **John J. Sirica** read in open court a letter from Watergate burglar **James W. McCord, Jr.**, suggesting that perjury had been committed in the original Watergate trial and that others were involved. On April 30, 1973, the President announced the resignations of key aides **H.R. Haldeman** and **John D. Erlichman** and Attorney General **Richard Kleindienst** and the dismissal of **John Dean**.

In the words of recent Watergate historian **Stanley L. Kutler**, by that time, "the presidency of Richard Nixon was over," even though it had some 15 months to go. Many from Michigan would play key roles in the unfolding drama, including President-to-be **Gerald Ford**, Senator **Robert Griffin**, House Judiciary Committee members **John Conyers** and **Edward Hutchinson**, and Ford aides **Jerry Ter Horst**, **Philip Buchen**, and **L. William Seidman**. It would have a major impact in the 1974 elections (see Looking Back).

Beginning late last year, we decided to refresh our memory about that period, one of the darkest periods in our nation's history. Armed with much bicarbonate of soda, we worked our way through ten books about Watergate, covering every conceivable angle. On the theory that misery loves company, we present herein brief reviews of the first five in chronological order. We'll present the others next issue.

**ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN**, **Carl Bernstein** and **Bob Woodward**, Simon and Schuster, 1974. The

first—and still the most readable—of the Watergate books. The authors were partly responsible for unraveling the Watergate cover-up, earning the Washington Post a Pulitzer Prize in 1973, and this book describes the investigation through mid-1974. "All the President's Men" reached #1 on the New York Times best-seller list five weeks before Nixon's resignation and was there for 20 weeks. The book will give you part of the story but not all of it.

**WASHINGTON JOURNAL: THE EVENTS OF 1973-1974**, **Elizabeth Drew**, Random House, 1974-75. Ms. Drew is the Washington correspondent for The New Yorker and has written several books over the past two decades about American politics. This was her first.

It covers the period from the fall of 1973 until the day of Nixon's resignation—August 9, 1974. She captures, as the dust cover claims, "just how important the issues at stake were, and how close our country came to the brink." Especially incisive is her coverage of the House Judiciary Committee as it struggled to come to grips with impeaching a President of the United States. **Conyers** and **Hutchinson** are among those highlighted in this book.

**BREACH OF FAITH**, **Theodore White**, Atheneum, 1975. Another N.Y. Times best seller. White, most famous for his "Making of the President" books, is a mixed read in this one; sometimes informative, especially in his excellent characterizations, and sometimes preachy. His concluding chapter is a 20-page lecture on what it all meant and what to expect, little of which was borne out by the last 25 years.

White had taken lots of heat for

being too friendly to Nixon in his 1968 and 1972 campaign coverages, and he seemed to try to make amends to his critics in this one. We love and admire White, a pioneer of campaign coverage. We didn't like this one.

**THE FINAL DAYS**, Woodward and Bernstein, Simon and Schuster, 1976. This is the controversial sequel to *All the President's Men* and another N.Y. Times #1 book. Originally planned as a view of Nixon's impeachment as seen through the eyes of six Senators, it covered instead the final weeks of the Nixon administration and gives detail to the last days in office. It gives lots of play to the pressures from family, staff, attorneys, and congressional leaders on whether Nixon should resign or do battle in the Senate.

It is extremely melodramatic, especially some scenes which reputedly played out in the family quarters, and was attacked as not factual.

**WITH NIXON**, **Raymond Price**, Viking Press, 1977. This is probably the most credible book from Nixon loyalists. Price was Nixon's speech writer and wrote the resignation speech; he was not implicated in Watergate, and his views are from the sidelines.

He attacks the heavy bias and unfairness on the other side in that period—the press, the Democratic-controlled Congress, and especially the special prosecutor's office, with its staff filled with Kennedy loyalists. When I read this part, I heard the outcries against the Starr office—in reverse.

We continue to be reminded that situations rarely change, only the names and dates do.

— C. Harmon

# The 1950 recount in Wayne County

*(MPHS Legal Counsel and member Tom Downs, a renowned elections' attorney, worked on the 1950 gubernatorial election recount for the Michigan Democrats. This is his recollection of that unique experience.)*

"FRAUD, FRAUD, FRAUD," gleefully cried the **Harry Kelly** challengers when they found a seal number that didn't correspond with the poll books. And they found it in Hamtramck, already suspect because of its overwhelming support for **Governor Williams**.

The seal number was something like 18086809. On close examination it was found the seal number had simply been read upside down. The metal embossed number—when read right side up—was 60898081—and was correctly recorded in the poll book! That was the only charge of fraud made in the Williams-Kelly recount of 1950.

The recount showed the voters of Hamtramck, largely first and second generation Poles, voted more accurately than the Grosse Pointers.

There were only paper ballots in Wayne County in the 1950 recount, no punch cards or voting machines.

Thousands upon thousands, upon thousands! Each ballot had to be counted to see it was in a sealed ballot box, properly wrapped, tied and sealed, marked properly for the candidate, no distinguishing mark on the ballot, and the initials of an election worker on the back of the ballot.

The recount was exciting, not boring; hour after hour the lead ebbed and flowed...

Finally, the recount, which began on December 2, was concluded on December 12—and Williams won.

The Democrats in Wayne County celebrated by giving **Adelaide Hart**, Wayne County leader, a pair of soft bedroom slippers because of her aching feet from walking the hard floors of the county building. A school teacher by day, she was from 4:00 p.m. to midnight at the recount.

Another celebrant was the matron at the women's washroom used by Democratic volunteers. A strong Williams supporter, upon hearing of the Williams' victory, she opened all the stalls in the washroom and announced, "THEY ARE FREE."

So ended the recount.

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