

THE HISTORY OF THE PARTIES

FROM HAROLD "THE BOY GOVERNOR" STASSEN
TO JESSE "THE BODY" VENTURA, MINNESOTA HAS
A LEGACY OF ELECTING BOLD, BRILLIANT AND
SOMETIMES QUIRKY POLITICIANS.

By Adam Wahlberg

Predicting Minnesota elections is like counting snowflakes—kind of fun to do but ultimately impossible.

Here in the North Star State, anything can happen. A farmer's wife can defy her party and her husband and escape to Congress. An excitable lefty professor can get on a broken-down green bus and drive it all the

way to Washington. A pro wrestler can become governor.

It makes for some pretty interesting election nights.

And once in office, Minnesota politicians tend to do some amazing things. Ignite a civil rights movement. Further international diplomacy. Shorten a war. Heady stuff.

The political figures who have broken through to icon status here have all had one thing in common: They were risk-takers, either in how they won office or what they did while in it. To them, we pay our highest compliment: We talk about them Garrison Keillor-style, telling nostalgic, familiar tales of our good folk.



FLOYD B. OLSON: THE "RADICAL" NEW DEAL GOVERNOR

A charismatic Huey Long-style populist, Floyd B. Olson was elected governor in 1930 from the third-party Farmer-Labor Party (which later merged with the Democratic Party to create the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party). He emerged as a man of courage when he went after the Ku Klux Klan as Hennepin County attorney. He had a genius for lifting the spirits of voters with his inspiring, hopeful oratory, which became a valuable skill when the Great Depression hit Minnesota. Olson didn't shy away from a major

expansionist role for government to help people in their time of need. He told voters, "I am not a liberal, I am what I want to be—I am a radical." He won the race for governor with nearly 60 percent of the vote. Once in office, his programs were pure New Deal: He implemented a progressive income tax in 1933, created a social security program for the elderly, and passed collective bargaining and minimum wage legislation. He was larger than life and on the short list for president before dying in office from stomach cancer in 1936.

ANDY'S HOTEL



Before entering politics, Coya Knutson helped her husband, Andy, run Andy's Hotel in Oklee, Minn.

COYA KNUTSON: AN UNCONVENTIONAL CANDIDATE

Unlike Olson, Coya Knutson didn't die in office—unless you're talking politically. The deathblow came in the form of a public letter allegedly sent by her estranged alcoholic husband, Andy, who begged her to return to Minnesota. "Coya, come home," the subsequent newspaper headline read, and those three words became her political epitaph.

The fact that Knutson made it to Congress at all was a wonder. Minnesota had never elected a woman to Congress, and even her own party

didn't want her to run. But the plainspoken Knutson didn't care. In 1954, she traveled her district in central Minnesota, rolling up her sleeves and milking cows with her neighbors. She won the primary over the party's endorsed candidate, then took the general election. Even after winning, party leaders resented her. She wouldn't fall in line. So when Knutson supported Estes Kefauver for president in 1956 over the party-supported Adlai Stevenson, party leaders allegedly put Andy up to sending

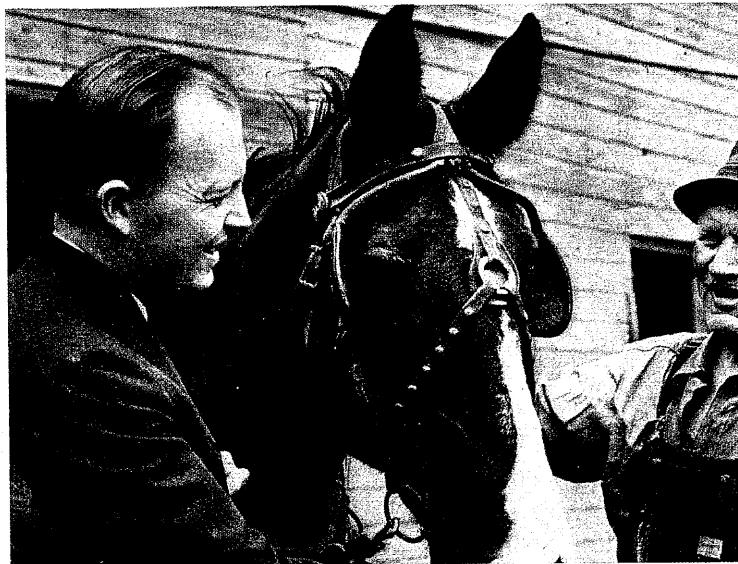
the letter to Knutson. It read: "Coya, I want you to tell the people of the 9th District this Sunday that you are through in politics. That you want to go home and make a home for your husband and son. As your husband I compel you to do this. I'm tired of being torn apart from my family. I'm sick and tired of having you run around with other men all the time and not your husband. I love you, honey." The letter was made public, and her political career was over. But Minnesotans never forgot her.

HAROLD STASSEN: THE BOY GOVERNOR

Harold Stassen became the youngest governor in the history of the country when Minnesotans elected him at age 31 in 1938. The "Boy Governor" quickly became a rising star nationally, delivering the keynote address at the 1940 Republican National Convention. A national role was his for the taking if he was willing to bide his time, but that wasn't Stassen's style. He was too adventurous and patriotic. He resigned from office in 1943 to serve as an officer in the United States Navy during World War II. When he returned he went on to head the University of Pennsylvania and serve as a delegate at the conference that established the United Nations. But he never again held public office, although he did run for president a whopping nine times between 1948 and 1992, often while wearing a really bad toupee.

EUGENE McCARTHY: A MAN OF PRINCIPLE AND POETRY

Dashing and distinguished, with poetry on his tongue and steel in his spine, Eugene McCarthy was born to be a senator. He was elected to Congress in 1948, graduating to the Senate in 1959. He was a champion of reasoned policymaking and wasn't particularly controversial until in 1968, over the issue of Vietnam, he challenged the sitting president of his own party. After nearly winning the New Hampshire primary, he drove President Lyndon B. Johnson from the race. McCarthy went on to engage in a bitter struggle against Robert F. Kennedy and was nosed out for the nomination by fellow Minnesotan Hubert H. Humphrey at the riot-marred Democratic National Convention in Chicago. He retired from the Senate in 1971 and ran for president several times. And he never stopped writing; at his death in 2005 he had authored nearly 30 books of poetry, criticism and fiction.



HAROLD STASSEN RAN FOR PRESIDENT A WHOPPING NINE TIMES BETWEEN 1948 AND 1992.





Walter Mondale (left) with Hubert H. Humphrey

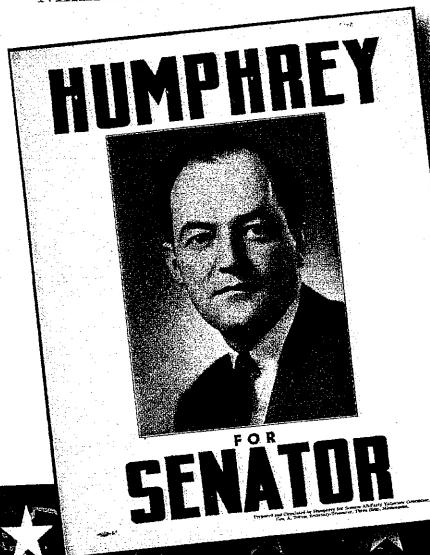
HUBERT H. HUMPHREY: MINNESOTA'S GREAT ORATOR

There is a statue of Hubert Horatio Humphrey Jr. outside Minneapolis City Hall showing him doing what he did best: talking. The man was born with the gift of gab. He just loved to campaign. And if he met you once, he would remember your name forever. Humphrey started his political career as the mayor of Minneapolis from 1945 to 1949. He earned a speaking slot at the 1948 Democratic National Convention and used the opportunity to draw a line in the sand on civil rights, a stance that didn't make him a lot of friends among Southern Democrats but ignited a movement that led to the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. In that speech he exhorted the convention to

"get out of the shadow of states' rights and walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of human rights." He walked forthrightly into the U.S. Senate, the vice presidency (to Lyndon B. Johnson) and the hearts of Minnesotans.

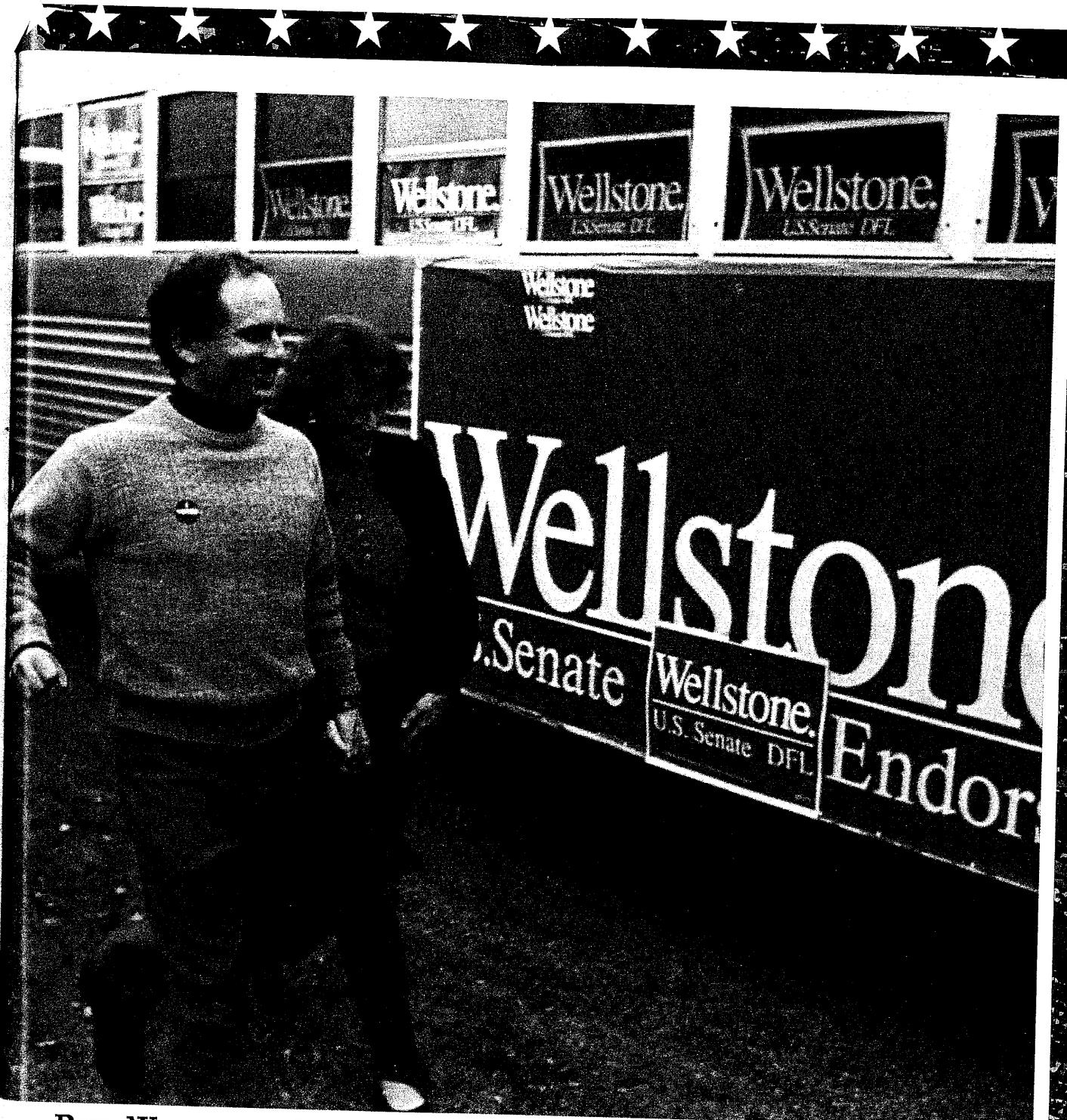
WALTER MONDALE: A FORMER VP WITH A FEW BOLD MOVES

Walter "Fritz" Mondale served smartly in the Senate from 1964 to 1976 and was a solid vice president to Jimmy Carter from 1976 to 1980. But it was when he got the chance to run for the big job in 1984 that he really showed the maverick behind his mild manners. For one, he told the country in his convention acceptance speech that he would raise their taxes. Now, rule No. 1 in politics: Don't tell people you're going to raise their taxes. A young James Carville must have spit his soup across the room when he heard that. But Fritz thought that was what was best for the country, and he said so, and Minnesotans respect that kind of thing. Second, he nominated a woman, Geraldine Ferraro, to be his vice president. It wasn't the safe thing to do politically, but Fritz thought it was time. He ended up getting crushed in the fall (the only state he won was his home state), but Minnesotans remember the surprising boldness Fritz showed that year.



Mondale / Ferraro: for the Family of America

CHOOSING A FEMALE RUNNING MATE
WASN'T THE SAFE THING TO DO POLITICALLY
BUT MONDALE THOUGHT IT WAS TIME.



PAUL WELLSTONE: THE LIBERAL WITH A BEAT-UP GREEN BUS

Paul Wellstone seemed born to be anything but a senator. A lefty political science professor, maybe. Which is exactly what he was for many years at Carleton College in Northfield, Minn. When he jumped in the race for Senate in 1990, he had no money, no name recognition and no chance. Just inexhaustible energy and a beat-up green bus. When he spoke he'd get so excited that spittle would fly from his lips. When he

appeared in parades he wouldn't ride down the middle of the street in a car; he would run left to right to try to shake every hand. His TV commercials were irreverent—one was called "Fast-Paced Paul," in which he announced that since he didn't have much money he'd have to move fast. The tape then sped up to show him racing through events, which frankly didn't take much in the way of video manipulation. He pulled off the upset

of the political season that year, beating well-funded Republican incumbent Rudy Boschwitz. After he arrived in the Senate, Sen. Fritz Hollings of South Carolina paid him the ultimate compliment: "You remind me of Hubert Humphrey. You talk too much." Wellstone won re-election in 1996 and was ahead in the polls when he died in a plane crash 11 days before the 2002 election. *(Continued on page 80)*

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RUDY PERPICH: A MAN OF IDEAS

Rudy Perpich served two stints as governor, from 1976 to 1978 and 1982 to 1990. He was the consummate idea man, although some of his ideas were a bit unconventional. He once donated his \$25,000 pay raise to promote the sport of bocce ball. He thought a chopstick factory should be built in northern Minnesota. And he suggested selling the governor's mansion to save the state money. But many other ideas were great. Perpich helped bring the NBA Timberwolves to the state, as well as the 1992 Super Bowl. His biggest idea, and most lasting achievement, came from a Bugsy Siegel Las Vegas-like epiphany, when he imagined building a shopping mecca in the middle of nowhere, a place that would be the size of a city, offer hundreds of shops, restaurants and rides, and attract consumers from all over the world. It seemed like just another offbeat Rudy idea at the time. Now it's the Mall of America.



JESSE VENTURA: A PRO WRESTLER IN THE GOVERNOR'S MANSION

No one saw Jesse "The Body" Ventura coming. But they should have. It wasn't as if he was new to politics; he had served as mayor of Brooklyn Park, the sixth largest city in the state. He hosted a statewide public-affairs call-in show on AM radio. And of course he was a known quantity from his days as a professional wrestler and announcer—not to mention his roles in movies such as "Predator," which starred Arnold Schwarzenegger. Ventura got into the 1998 governor's race as a Reform

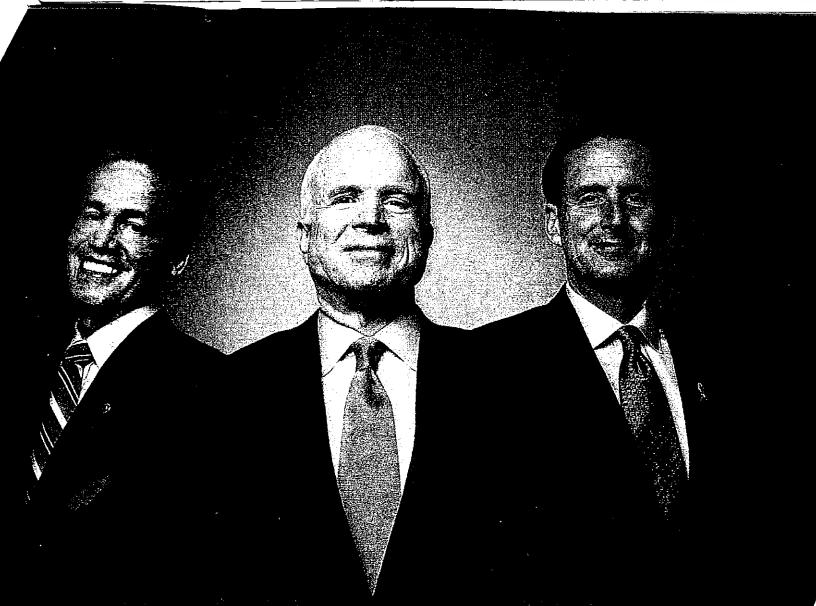
Party candidate on a bit of a lark, but once he got in and participated in the debates, he did well. He had common-sense responses to policy questions and seemed like the relatable guy compared with his overly programmed major-party opponents. Ventura rode his "Don't Vote for Politics as Usual" theme to a win with 37 percent of the vote. As governor, he developed a Nixonian resentment of the media and ultimately decided not to run for a second term. Since then, he's kept himself busy with all

manner of activities, including hosting a cable television show, teaching at Harvard, writing a book that hints variously at presidential or senatorial runs, moving to Mexico and growing distinctively odd facial hair. ▼

Adam Wahlberg is the executive editor of *Minnesota Law & Politics*, whose tagline is "Only Our Name Is Boring."



VENTURA RODE HIS "DON'T VOTE FOR POLITICS AS USUAL" THEME TO A WIN WITH 37 PERCENT OF THE VOTE.



When John McCain visited Minneapolis/St. Paul in June, he met up with two prominent Minnesota leaders—Gov. Tim Pawlenty and Sen. Norm Coleman. Here's a quick rundown of the men on this month's cover.

Office: Senior senator from Minnesota

Family: Wife, Laurie, and two children

Political profile: He was a prosecutor in the Minnesota attorney general's office for 17 years before serving as mayor of St. Paul from 1994 to 2002. He switched parties in 1996 to run as a Republican for governor in 1998, a race he didn't win. Four years later, he won a tight contest for the U.S. Senate in 2002.

Fun fact: He's a Harry Potter fanatic. Quiz him—his kids did—and he'll know in which book Dumbledore dies.

Office: Senior senator from Arizona

Family: Wife, Cindy, seven children and four grandchildren

Political profile: He has been a member of Congress since 1982, starting in the House before moving to the Senate in 1987. Legendary for his candor, he invented the term "Straight Talk Express."

Fun fact: Sen. McCain is a fan of the television shows "24," "Lost" and "The Office," and he enjoys the music of John Rich (of Big & Rich).

Office: Governor of Minnesota

Family: Wife, Mary, and two children

Political profile: He was elected to the state House of Representatives in 1992. He rose to majority leader in 1999 and won the governor's office on his first try in 2002. He was re-elected in 2006, and his star has risen nationally in GOP circles for his ability to govern without raising taxes.

Fun fact: He plays hockey—a good hobby to have in hockey-crazy Minnesota. —Adam Wahlberg

Number of
bloggers expected
to attend the
convention:

200

collective hard work, commitment and passion of a lot of people. That's one of the best things about Minnesota. While people can have strongly held positions and convictions, Minnesotans recognize that putting those differences aside to focus on our common good makes our state a better place for all people."

Larson calls the convention a "a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" to showcase Minneapolis/St. Paul as a great place to live, do business, hold conventions and spend tourism dollars. It's a sentiment that has often been repeated since the Republicans picked the cities in 2006.

"By the time the convention attendees and media have packed up and gone home, the whole world will have seen our beautiful state and what we can do," Pawlenty says.

If, as the governor has noted, Minnesota is like a dog that's too shy to wag its own tail, it doesn't seem to be much of a hang-up these days. The legendary humility has been replaced with boosterish enthusiasm, and Minnesota tails—including corporate ones—are barking harder than bass drums.

The Minneapolis/St. Paul host committee set its convention budget goal at \$60 million, counting on about half of that from out-of-state donors and half from businesses and individuals in Minnesota. The state's corporations quickly stepped up to the plate.

"Target is proud to help the Twin Cities put on a spectacular event in our headquarters' home state," says Nate Garvis, vice president of government affairs at Target, just one of the state's Fortune 500 companies that has pitched in. He says the company "believes that strong civic participation is an important element to the

Money convention
visitors are
expected to spend:

\$64.6
million