

Informative. Insightful. Interesting.

- Walter Cronkite explains why he would never run for President
- Benny Goodman picks some all-time performers
- Two legendary Indiana politicians have a 10-second encounter
- Birch Bayh tells the author he will not seek the Presidency again
- A day in the Sinai Desert in the wake of the 1973 Yom Kippur War
- A trip along London's Kings Road
- Grassroots politics in Indiana, where blood sometimes flows
- The multi-faceted life of the Panama Canal treaty's chief negotiator
- William Ruckelshaus talks about Watergate
- Wendell Willkie's steamy return to Elwood
- An optometrist's defense of Bobby Knight
- A renowned opera singer proves you can go home again
- A steel firm's dynamic CEO

These pieces and lots more from a Hall of Fame journalist



RAYMOND MOSCOWITZ is a life-long journalist, serving as a reporter, managing editor, editor, publisher and corporate editorial director for more than a dozen newspapers in Indiana and Ohio. During almost three decades with Nixon Newspapers, Inc., he mentored hundreds of young reporters and editors, many of whom call themselves graduates of "The Ray Moscowitz School of Journalism." Moscowitz is a 2002 inductee of the Indiana Journalism Hall of Fame. He is the author of "Stuffy: The Life of Newspaper Pioneer Basil 'Stuffy' Walters" (1982), "Small School, Giant Dream: A Year of

Hoosier High School Hoopla" (1990), and "Small School, Giant Dream 20 Years Later: Life After Indiana High School Basketball" (2009).

A JOURNALIST'S JOURNEY

WRITINGS OF A HALL OF FAME NEWSPAPERMAN



RAYMOND MOSCOWITZ

A JOURNALIST'S JOURNEY

WRITINGS OF A HALL OF FAME NEWSPAPERMAN



RAYMOND MOSCOWITZ

Dedication

To the memory of Basil L. "Stuffy" Walters,
who paved the way.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any way or by any means without the express written permission of the publisher.

Copyright ©2013 by Raymond Moscovitz

Published by:
Life Sentences Publishing
434 Kentucky Avenue
Tipton, Indiana 46072
LifeSentencesPublishing@aol.com
(765) 437-0149

Acknowledgements

Permission to reprint the news stories, features, editorials and columns in this book has been granted from these newspaper companies:

- Paxton Media Group of Paducah, Ky., which acquired Nixon Newspapers, Inc. in 1998.
- Cox Ohio Publishing, based in Dayton, Ohio.
- The Journal Gazette of Fort Wayne, Ind.

The manuscript was prepared for publication by Janis Thornton of Life Sentences Publishing, based in Tipton, Ind.

This book would not have been possible without the work of the author's wife, Barbara Moscowitz, who preserved copies of everything he wrote during his career.

Contents

Preface.....	1
1. GOP senatorial candidate charges 'fear campaign'.....	5
2. Reporter tells ordeal on emergency vehicle	8
3. Spiritual medicine turns junkie to man of faith	12
4. Blaze Destroys Burlap Plant.....	16
5. He Seeks Trouble, Usually Finds It	19
6. Ever Want To Join Circus? JH Reporter Did For Day.....	24
7. London action moves along Kings Road.....	27
8. Night callers	30
9. Love Nibbles at Dwindling Lithuanian Clan.....	34
10. Nolan, Zipperian contracts deny Kays 2 appointments	38
11. GOP blood flows in Clinton County	42
12. De facto secrecy	46
13. Lights dim, sounds blast — Matt rolls	48
14. Bowen, Bulen in 10-second drama	51
15. Gas strike not for him, but... ..	54
16. Egyptians stress impact of 'new' Suez Canal	57
17. HRC — people, love, rebirth	61
18. A Christmas that tops them all	64
19. 'America's most trusted man' speaks his mind	67
20. 'Music is endless,' Goodman says — and he should know ..	72
21. Sen. Bayh bids farewell to Oval Office goal	75
22. Life's facets no stranger to treaty negotiator	79
23. Is Dan Quayle the man to beat Bayh? He's not saying, but then again	83
24. Modern health care is real question	88
25. Remember Jim Neal, GOP party healer?	90
26. Road to SALT dotted with minefields	94

27. Ruckelshaus: We're still suffering from Watergate	98
28. Lugar tells executives he wants to hold SALT aces	102
29. Professor wary of warlike mood	106
30. Willkie's steamy return to Elwood	110
31. English professor wages battle on censorship	117
32. The Battle for Chicago	122
33. Bobby Knight is complex and misunderstood	138
34. Memories of pancakes, pot pies, simple joys	144
35. A little less arrogance, a little more credibility	147
36. Don't underestimate Richard Nixon's savvy, skill	151
37. GenCorp: A time to talk	156
38. Tragedy sears our senses, too	159
39. Learning the hard way	162
40. When a child grabs our hearts	164
41. Reflections emerge as 50 arrives	166
42. Buckeye Bound and Beyond	170
43. Consolidation: where we stand	180
44. Noble proves you can go home again	183
45. Highway of cooperation	189
46. Indy: The Most Adequate Spectacle in Racing?	195
47. Steel firm's dynamo	201
48. Cobbler is sole survivor	209
49. Debate rages as area jobs feel effects of widening economy	214
50. Bulldog rises from ashes with city's help	222

Preface

For more than 60 years I have been a news junkie, starting as a kid in St. Louis who thoroughly read the sports pages of the *Post-Dispatch* and the *Globe-Democrat* every day.

When I was 10, my family moved to Los Angeles. I began to read the L.A. papers — and not just sports — the *Times*, *Examiner*, *Herald*, *Mirror* and the *Daily News*. Eventually, the *Daily News* folded, the Chandler-owned *Mirror* was merged into the *Times*, and the Hearst-owned *Examiner* was merged into the *Herald*. There was still plenty of print to feast on.

As a 10th grader at Hamilton High School, I joined the weekly school newspaper, *The Federalist*, to cover sports. After a few weeks, the adviser told me I had writing ability, so I set a goal to become a sportswriter.

But my curiosity about life in general overwhelmed my love of sports. I decided that I wanted to become a general news reporter. I achieved that goal and much more as a newspaperman, which gave me the opportunity to write about a wide range of subjects and an eclectic collection of people.

That's the context for this book, the essence of which is to portray the evolution of a grassroots journalist over five decades.

After getting my degree in journalism at Los Angeles State College (now University), I spent 14 months as editor of a nationwide political monthly for college students. Then I moved on to my first job on a daily newspaper — a move that took me from Los Angeles, population around 2,000,000, to Frankfort, Ind., population 15,000. I was the only reporter on the five-person *Frankfort Morning Times* staff.

After 17 months, my journalistic godfather, Basil L. “Stuffy”

Walters, arranged interviews for me at larger newspapers. Walters had retired to his native Frankfort after a highly acclaimed newspaper career that included being editor of the *Chicago Daily News* and of Knight Newspapers.

Through Stuffy, I accepted a position in a management program with the *Dayton Journal Herald* in 1965. That program exposed me to all facets of the newsroom. After almost two years, I became an assistant city editor. Government, politics, education, health care, and people became uppermost in mind, both professionally and personally.

In 1969, the *Frankfort Morning Times* was sold to the Nixon family, whose small group of newspapers was based in Wabash, Ind. Tom Heth, who represented the Fowler family that owned the paper, put me in contact with Joe Nixon, who was president of Nixon Newspapers Associates at the time.

After being interviewed by Joe and the paper's new associate publisher, John Mitchell, I was hired as managing editor. It would be the start of a 29-year career with what would become Nixon Newspapers, Inc. (NNI), before I retired in June 1998.

After retiring, I taught classes at Indiana University-Kokomo, worked as a writing coach, consulted for newspapers and wrote freelance articles, primarily for the Fort Wayne *Journal Gazette*.

That evolution as an observer of events occurred smoothly and naturally for me, in large part because of tremendous opportunities I received during almost three decades with Nixon Newspapers, Inc.

Joe Nixon and his younger half-brother, John, who eventually became CEO, loved newspapers. So did John Mitchell, who eventually became NNI's executive vice president and chief operating officer. They believed in newspapers as public trusts. And they thought big, which afforded me and others who worked for NNI to report and write about major issues. The Nixons and Mitchell made sure that NNI earned a healthy profit. Without it, idealism overtakes realism. But they were not driven by profit; they were driven by quality, which, in the final analysis, drives profit.

I later became the editor of NNI's flagship newspaper, the *News Dispatch*, in Michigan City, Ind., and, at the same time, served as

executive editor of NNI's 12 newspapers. After Michigan City, I had rewarding stints as publisher of the *Wabash Plain Dealer* and the *Peru Tribune*. I spent the last 10 years at NNI as editorial director, overseeing the news departments of the company's 12 newspapers. Along the way, I wrote two books. I have never stopped writing from the time I became seriously engaged at Hamilton High School.

THERE'S A SENSE OF HISTORY in *A Journalist's Journey* — a natural byproduct, rather than a primary goal in selecting 50 pieces of writing from several hundred.

There's a feature on how Carnaby Street in London, which was the rage in cultural circles in the mid 1960s, appeared to be giving way to King's Road as signs of class disintegration in England were becoming apparent. The feature story was part of a 14-piece series I wrote in 1967 for the *Dayton Journal Herald*.

There's a column on spiking gas prices in the early 1970s causing economic hardship, bringing to mind the old expression, "The more things change, the more they stay the same." (Actually, that expression comes to mind often while reading these pieces.) I wrote the column on gas prices as managing editor in Frankfort.

There's a story about Egypt in the wake of the 1973 October War, written from Cairo. The piece is part of a 14-part series I wrote for Nixon Newspapers, which sent me to the Middle East in the spring of 1974 as part of a press tour sponsored by several media organizations.

There's background and insight on the Panama Canal treaties in a profile on chief negotiator Sol Linowitz. I wrote that piece for the Nixon Hoosier Feature Service that I had created.

There's light shed on the Watergate scandal in an interview with Hoosier William Ruckelshaus, who was one of the victims of the "Saturday Night Massacre." That, too, was syndicated by the Nixon feature service.

There's a chapter from my first book, a biography of Basil Walters. And there's a chapter from my second book, *Small School, Giant Dream: A Year of Hoosier High School Hoopla*, the true story of a small Indiana high school.

There are editorials on important issues that occurred in Frankfort, Wabash and Peru, three of the four towns in which I served NNI as editor and/or publisher.

There's an in-depth exploration of how globalization was inexorably changing the world's economies as a new century was unfolding. I wrote the piece as part of a series for the Fort Wayne *Journal Gazette*.

There's an emphasis on government and politics, because they were central to my career as a reporter, editor and corporate editorial director. But there are several pieces on people, some major figures at times, others every-day folk who were interesting and fascinating in their own ways.

You will note that there are different styles in dates, addresses, titles, and related matters. I chose to replicate the original text as closely as I could. Many pieces were published in more than one newspaper. I used the headline in the newspaper where the piece originated. And you will note that the *Frankfort Morning Times* becomes the *Frankfort Times*, which occurred in the spring of 1971, when the newspaper switched to afternoon publication.

Journalism has been described as "the first rough draft of history." I hope that *A Journalist's Journey* makes a small contribution.

Ray Moscovitz
Bloomington, Indiana
August 2013

GOP senatorial candidate charges 'fear campaign'

Frankfort Morning Times, Sept. 22, 1964

A Journalist's Journey unfolds with this story — a rather routine piece on a U.S. Senate candidate giving a stump speech — because the story became a turning point in my young career. I wrote this story in about 45 minutes on deadline.

The piece drew lavish praise from Basil "Stuffy" Walters, who, after retiring from Knight Newspapers, had settled in at the Clinton County farm on which he had been raised. Walters wrote:

"Dear Ray: You certainly did a splendid objective reporting job on the Bontrager speech. And you proved that objective political reporting can be interesting. If all the reporting in this campaign throughout the nation were equally conscientious, I would not worry about the critics of the press. By such standards, I would award you, sir, with A plus. Best, Stuffy."

That led to a Sunday dinner at Stuffy's home, which turned into a friendship that would play a major role in my career until his death in 1975. I became his biographer in 1982, when the Iowa State University Press published *Stuffy: The Life of Newspaper Pioneer Basil "Stuffy" Walters*.

A weary-appearing D. Russell Bontrager, the Republicans' U.S. Senate nominee, Monday night stung his incumbent foe and claimed the Johnson administration was conducting a campaign of fear in an effort to maintain bureaucratic control.

Speaking before a gathering of 200 people in the auditorium of the Senior High School, Bontrager said the Democrats are "scaring the wits out of you and me so that citizens will lose their objectivity in casting their ballots."

Bontrager, who earlier in the day had delivered about 20 "short

talks” in and around Indianapolis, said the present campaign would become the “filthiest, dirtiest campaign of them all.”

He cited television commercials which denote that Barry Goldwater is a man of war, not peace, and that the food Americans eat in the future will be safe from Strontium-90, thanks to the test ban treaty, which Goldwater voted against.

The Elkhart attorney called the current Democrat campaign tactics a “most diabolically vicious thing,” and he compared the Democrats’ methods with that of Hitler in overthrowing the Reichstag.

“Are we going to rip the cloak off these people and expose them for the tyrants they are? Are we going to do that?” Bontrager asked. There was a sprinkling of “yesses” from the audience.

The administration, Bontrager continued, has deeply imbedded fear into the Social Security recipient by saying Goldwater is against the present system. In actuality, the GOP nominee said, Goldwater only wants the system to be more stable.

Bontrager attacked the government’s “constant spiraling of debt leading to inflation.” The U.S. owes \$28 billion more than all of the other nations in the world combined, he said, and as an example he used the purchasing of a bond he bought for his son 22 years ago to show how inflation has cut into the value of the dollar.

Of the current \$311.5 billion debt, the Federal government lost \$31 billion in grain storage, Bontrager said, pointing out that the farmers’ parity is the lowest it has been since 1939.

“Farmers know how to farm,” the Republican candidate said, “bureaucrats don’t.” The government, he added, must phase itself out of the “farming business.”

Still on the subject of farming, Bontrager said that in the recently passed poverty bill there was a section — which was eventually deleted — that called for the government buying 200,000 acres and reselling them to 25,000 families in 80-acre sections. If the families couldn’t make a go of it, the Federal treasury would pick up the tab, the provision called for.

Bontrager, as lieutenant governor aspirant John M. Ryan mentioned recently at a GOP breakfast, said it is imperative to re-elect

Republicans Walter Sprinkle and Roy Conrad to the State General Assembly for 1965, because, under reapportionment rulings handed down by the Supreme Court, the Democrats “will gerrymander us to death” if they get control of the Indiana legislature.

The nominee closed his talk by castigating his opponent, Sen. Vance Hartke, who he referred to as “vacillating Vance from Vanderburgh.” Hartke “is nothing more than a White House puppet who will completely reverse himself when the White House pulls his string,” Bontrager said.

“If it were not for Senator Hartke,” Bontrager said, “the women of Indiana — and the entire nation — no longer would be paying federal excise taxes (on cosmetics, jewelry, furs, etc.).

“And now, only seven months after he voted against repeal of the taxes, he is prancing all over Indiana waving about a campaign brochure in which he promises beginning next January ‘to start the battle against these onerous and unfair luxury taxes.’

“He goes on to say in that pamphlet that ‘we promised to repeal after the war but we have ignored the obligation.’

“What gall! What double-talk! What just plain lying!”

Hartke, Bontrager said, in a speech on the floor of the Senate, called for abolition of secrecy in government. In that speech, the GOP nominee said, Hartke remarked: “What we are talking about is the right of the individual citizen to have accurate and freely available information about the government.”

But on Sept. 10 of this year, when the Senate voted to reopen the Bobby Baker investigation, “the senator must have forgotten his high-sounding words of six months before because he voted — as the administration demanded — against opening the hearing to the public.”

Bontrager concluded: “We must seek freedom under the law, not dictatorial bureaucracy.”

Ever Want To Join Circus? JH Reporter Did For Day

Dayton *Journal Herald*, March 25, 1966

Tony Svet, the assistant city editor I mentioned earlier, approached my desk one day shortly after I reported for work at 2 p.m. "Now, don't take this the wrong way," he said, "but we'd like you to be a clown at the circus and write a first-person piece."

I smiled. "Great idea," I said.

Svet smiled back and said, "Doty will meet you at the fairgrounds," meaning chief photographer Bob Doty.

My story ran with four photos on the local news section page the next day. A Page 1 "tickler" photo of me about to kiss a woman on the cheek also ran.

There were myriad days when I loved being a journalist. That day was one of them.

Tiny tots with dancing eyes — their mommies' and daddies' dancing too — and cotton candy and greasepaint and animals — and clowns.

I was apart of it all yesterday afternoon, even to the point of being called "Mosco the Clown."

Behind the facade of a ludicrous face — red nose, and all — and a bear-fur coat that swam on my five-foot frame, I joined six other clowns for the opening of the Shrine circus, the 24th annual Antioch Temple extravaganza.

Youngsters, some bewildered, some old hands, began to march into the Fairgrounds Coliseum shortly after 3:30 p.m., and backstage I was being converted into a clown by a veteran of the business.

His name was Harold Simmons, from Australia, and he stood a foot shorter than me.

"Damn bloody 'ard to make up someone else," he said, applying greasepaint and white powder.

The final touch was a battered brown derby, which sat snugly on my head while my arms and hands became lost somewhere in the heavy fur coat.

I walked without assurance, as if in never-never land, toward the grandstand, and an elderly woman tugged at her grandchild and said, "See, Bobby, see the clown!"

Suddenly I was no longer Ray Moscowitz, general assignment reporter. He was now a man of the past.

"Hi, Bobby," I said in a funny little voice. "I'm Mosco the Clown." And I believed it.

And suddenly again I felt a tingle of joy shoot through me, because while a newspaperman — often called cynical — was behind that greasepaint, on the surface was a funny, happy man who possessed a unique power to explode laughter.

And in front of him were happy people.

Some of the kiddies were afraid to shake my hand or sit on my lap, and they cuddled close to Mommy. But for the most part, their eyes stared in awe, and their popcorn was forgotten and their world was now me.

And I loved it, and I found myself bounding around the coliseum like a kid in a candy store, not knowing what crazy antics to perform next, not knowing where to stop next, not knowing where to extract my own joy by oozing joy.

Vietnam? NATO? Never heard of them.

Finally, the actual show was about to unfold, and Gene Randow, the top-billed clown, and Simmons moved under the make-believe Big Top to warm up the fast-filling house.

Now the acts began ... the Four Kelroys and Welde's Bears, and the Shrine band, under the direction of Paul Blagg, matched the atmosphere to perfection.

I went downstairs to the dressing quarters.

"When do we go on?" I asked for the fifth or sixth time. And when someone said after Stebbing's Boxer Dogs — a great act, incidentally

— I said, “Yeah, I see the schedule here, and I felt somehow like a veteran after my initial 30-minute stint.

And then the boxers ran off and the spotlight blazed front and center — and for the first time, my heart went thumpity-thump-thump.

We ran — Hal Simmons, Rocko, Larry Benner, L’il Jimmy Armstrong and Frenchie — behind Randow, shouting and acting nuttier than peanut brittle.

Oh, it was fun, and I was not aware of a thousand eyes being out there — only people, people like me, laughing and eating and drinking ... and then the firecracker Randow lighted boomed out, and I ran like a frightened idiot ... and then suddenly it was over ...

“You’re silly!” a little girl shouted, and I shouted back, “You’re a thilly-dilly, too,” and I poked out my tongue.

Now I was downstairs again, and as I scrubbed the makeup from my face, I asked Randow how long he had been a clown.

“Third generation. My father died backstage one night as he was taking off his makeup. Clowning is all I know — and if there were no circuses, I don’t know what I’d do — but then if there was no circuses, what would kids do?”

I chatted a few minutes with the six men who had been my fellow clowns — then left them talking about the circus.

Outside, a cold blast of the final vestiges of winter hit me, blowing away the last of my façade — and the tiny tots and the animals and cotton candy were no more.

And I thought, as a seal barked in the distance, God bless the world for little boys and girls and circuses and clowns — and in that order.

London Action Moves Along Kings Road

Dayton *Journal Herald*, July 21, 1967

In 1967, I asked the *Journal Herald* for a six-week leave of absence to tour Europe. The JH not only granted it, but offered to pay me to write a series of articles on European life. The reporting experience was extremely valuable, and the money I received helped finance my trip. Here’s the editor’s note that the JH ran before each of the 14 articles I wrote.

(EDITOR’S NOTE: Raymond Moscowitz, Journal Herald copy editor, is touring Europe this summer. This is another in a series of articles he will write on European life as he finds it.)

LONDON — Hippies making the India scene, marijuana, young debs dressed in ruffles and lace, psychedelic music, a turned-on frivolity racing through the pubs — this is Kings Road.

It is London’s latest “in” — a two-and-a-half mile sliver of fashion houses, restaurants, shops, pubs and markets in the chic Chelsea section.

The four-year reign of Carnaby Street, which relied solely on mod clothes to attract the “in crowd,” died about six months ago, people on the street agree — and so now it’s The World’s End and Chelsea Potter for brew and Sidney Smith’s and Dandy Fashions for clothes.

The in crowd is an odd mixture consisting of young swingers with respectable jobs, do-nothings, pot-smoking hippies and the young, rich in royalty debutantes. Such a kind of combination frequenting one area

points up the current disintegration of class in England.

Dave Newble, a 21-year-old paint salesman from Crawley, an “overspill” town of 100,000 30 miles south of London, sat opposite an NCR cash register at the Potter bar and described Carnaby Street as “sort of a one-night affair” compared with Kings Road.

At Sidney Smith’s, one of the 30 clothing establishments crammed along the two-and-a-half miles, Monty Barak said essentially the same thing, asserting that “people got fed up with Carnaby because it’s all the same.”

Barak, 24, a salesman in the store, and David Millman, 27, another salesman, talked of Kings Road as an area where cocktail affairs have been replaced by “kinky” (way out) parties featuring love-ins, where the drug scene is prominent — from hippies to the debs — and where the latest fashion trends are set, and where, as Millman called it, a “transformation of the sexes in taking place — unfortunately.”

LSD? It’s just starting to make its way onto the scene, Millman said, and it will give Kings Road extra impetus.

The long hair and the Beatles came before Kings Road’s “time,” but Barak noted that “long hair was here before God.”

The Beatles have scored with the Kings Road crowd, says Mick Burke, a 19-year-old salesman at Strickland’s Record shop, but, he notes, psychedelic music—free form, loud guitars and organs, electrical gimmicks — is big, too.

Fashion-wise, there are differences. Aside from their extremely long hair and pathetic appearance, the hippies can be spotted by beads and bells hanging from their clothes, possibly from a shaggy belt holding up plain, bell bottom white trousers, or a dirt-splotched miniskirt.

Meanwhile, the rich young debs — Millman referred to them as “the honorables” — rely on the Dandy Shop, where they buy clothes from the Regency period — ruffled and lace shirts and blouses, items made of velvet.

Mixed in between are young swingers who still prefer the wide, flat paisley ties and paisley shirts. But, Millman says, the preferences are American Levi pants, made of corduroy and available in an

assortment of colors from beige to maroon.

Chelsea Potter, the World’s End and Colville — the latter is headquarters for the gay set — are the most popular of about 10 pubs, but no one, including the people who go to these places, seems to know exactly why.

Derek Asprill, 34, an electrical engineer from Crawley, sipped some warm ale as he brewed a thought and then said: “Everybody goes there (to the in pubs) because somebody goes there first.”

A 26-year-old writer from Liverpool, Lyle Jones, came up with the bromidic “it’s where the action is, I guess.”

Newble said he felt it was simply a “happy atmosphere” at Potter’s which attracted people, as formality — and old ways — are brushed aside by an ale-sogged bar, cheese and crackers, sandwiches and sausages.

And then he said — out of nowhere — “You know, you Americans ought to get out of Vietnam.”

Lights dim, sounds blast — Matt rolls

Frankfort *Times*, June 21, 1972

Senate and gubernatorial candidates in Indiana formerly were chosen in party conventions — exciting, boisterous, wheeling-and-dealing affairs. *Times* publisher John E. Mitchell had been a state representative and had worked for former governors Matt Welsh and Roger Branigin. Mitchell, who had the best political mind of anyone I have known, suggested that I cover the Democrat and Republican conventions for Nixon Newspapers.

After sitting out eight years (governors were limited to one term in those days), Welsh decided to run for a second term. Here's my news/analysis piece on his winning the nomination.

INDIANAPOLIS — Suddenly, the lights went low and the sound system was captured.

Matt Welsh was on his way.

There weren't supposed to be any jazzed-up demonstrations at this year's Democratic State Convention, and for a while, it looked as if the Welsh forces would comply.

Through the opening, humdrum hours, Larry Conrad seemed to be gaining ground in a final desperation drive for the gubernatorial nomination.

But while the huge Conrad signs overshadowed the Welsh placards in the gallery, the Welsh lieutenants were keeping it all together on the floor — and it is on the floor, where the delegates are, that nominations are won. Conrad's demonstration was brief, enthusiastic, lively, noisy, rather impressive in light of the low-key activity that had preceded it.

Then South Bend Mayor Jerry Miller nominated Welsh, and, as

his final word was spoken, the lights dimmed and the powerful sound system in the convention hall blasted forth with "Happy Days Are Here Again."

The delegates on the floor responded, their flying hands and arms making movable shadows, and across the way, a high school band, complete with a pom-pon chorus, went into melodic action.

"We want Matt! We want Matt! We want Matt!"

Conrad forces against the far wall of the building tried to respond with "We want Larry!" — but this was former Governor Welsh's time, and neither gavel pounding nor Conrad backers were about to steal it.

The Welsh extravaganza over, the gallery gang settled back to pretzels, beef sandwiches, popcorn, apples, potato chips, sausage sandwiches and soft drinks, punctuating bites with words of disgust for the service.

Indications were that it was taking up to one hour to get waited on, and a woman from Martinsville wanted to know why vendors couldn't circulate through the bleachers, like they do at ballgames.

Others, too impatient or too tired to wait in line, read newspapers or went visiting as the nominations for attorney general got underway.

One woman dipped into her "Matt Pack," a plastic bag that contained a referee's whistle, a newspaper hat, a balloon and various pieces of literature. Out came the balloon in exchange for the whistle that she had earlier given to her young son.

The fireworks for Matt were over — and who needs shrill whistles all day?

Meanwhile, for others, it was a time for people-watching — and one strange sight for Clinton and Boone County Democrats was to see Republican John Donaldson of Lebanon, who represents both counties in the House, stroll by the fringes of the area.

Donaldson, wisely, was not wearing a pair of pants he often sports, the pair bedecked with tiny elephants.

Then came a first — the reading of partial returns as they began to flow to the speaker's rostrum after being tallied by the State Board of Accounts.

In the past, it was sudden death for the candidate who didn't make

it — but now it would be slow death for Conrad. Welsh's final margin was 497 — 1,318 to 821 — and while there might have been some Welsh backers who figured on a larger spread, sadness was hard to spot on the faces of people who wore Welsh badges.

A short time later, history. Theodore Wilson, the attorney general hopeful, beat his three opponents on the first ballot to become the first Black nominated for a state office.

Later, as the cigar smoke thickened and apple cores could be spotted here and there among the debris, Welsh and Conrad came down the center aisle together, front and center.

Said Conrad, who still has a job as secretary of state, "I found out I could take a lickin' and keep on tickin'."

A teenager in the gallery, who wore a Welsh straw hat, carried a Conrad placard and had cheered loudly for the black Mr. Wilson, smiled broadly.

Then it was Welsh — in trim blue suit, blue shirt, red, white and blue-stripped tie — and while the words brought no great huzzahs, the response was solid, true, and you could sense the confidence in the sparkling new hall.

So the Democrats had their man, the custodians a huge room to clean and the Republicans a few hours left before they get to do their thing.

Bowen, Bulen in 10-second drama

Frankfort *Times*, June 24, 1972

A few days after the Democrat convention, the Republicans met to nominate a gubernatorial candidate among five men, including Speaker of the House Dr. Otis Bowen. He was favored, even though Keith Bulen, the National Committeeman from Indiana and the state's most powerful political operative, was backing Judge William Sharp.

After Bowen was nominated on the first ballot, I wandered to the rear of the stage just in time to see Bowen say farewell to a few well-wishers. His back was to me as he bent into a squatting position. Bulen was facing me as he approached Bowen.

I was right next to Bowen's right side and essentially alone with the two men when I caught their brief exchange. It was a telling moment in Indiana politics — one that some readers didn't believe. A few weeks after the convention, I received a signed photo from Bulen showing Bowen, himself and me. Bulen signed the photo and praised my story. I now had proof if I needed it. I never did.

INDIANAPOLIS — Dr. Otis Bowen sat on his haunches, his body balanced on the balls of the his feet, and greeted a tiny knot of well-wishers.

The scene was a back corner edge of the stage that fronted the convention hall, where a few minutes earlier Bowen had won a rousing first-ballot victory for the Republican gubernatorial nomination.

A handshake here, a handshake there, lots of smiles, and words of appreciation flowed from the Bremen physician.

Then, out of nowhere, a familiar face appeared, tired and taut.

It belonged to a man named Keith Bulen.

"Good luck and congratulations," Bulen said softly.

"Thank you," Bowen said, just as softly.

Bulen quickly moved on, the 10-second drama over.

The reception had not been jovial — but it was far from cool.

Otis Bowen and Keith Bulen know that they need each other — and so do the Republican pros who want to keep the governor's chair come November.

Although Bulen never directly endorsed one of the four governor candidates, it was openly known that he did not favor Bowen and leaned toward Judge William Sharp of Owen County.

But Bowen is a strange combination of a man — for a politician. He is gentle and not vindictive, and he knows what must be done to win.

He knows he needs Marion County big in November, to offset the strong Democrat vote in Lake County — and he knows Keith Bulen can deliver Marion County better than anyone.

Bowen also knows that while Bulen suffered a rare defeat, Bulen is still a strong political force in the Hoosier GOP.

Others on the floor of the center knew it, too.

One county chairman put it this way: "He just couldn't get a combination working for him."

And another political veteran added: "Bulen sacrificed his own vanity and image, because he couldn't get on the Bowen bandwagon. He knew all along Doc was in, but there was always (governor) Whitcomb breathing down his neck."

Still another pro defended Bulen by attacking Whitcomb's closest confidante, attorney Don Tabbert. The man said:

"Tabbert wants to control, Bulen just wants to have you listen, and there's a difference. Keith is still the smartest when it comes to maneuvering."

Then Clinton County Chairman James T. "Tom" Robison, a state representative who did not seek re-election, put in the final glowing words for Bulen:

"Keith got caught in a candidate sandwich. You can't 'operate' every year. But the important thing is, he did something for the party awhile back that few people know about and understand. He got the

party back together."

A reporter asked Robison to explain, and he did.

"I sat in the home of a prominent Frankfort farmer one night with Keith, and he told how John Mitchell, when he was still attorney general, told him to get Indiana back together again.

"You'll remember, there was all that fighting among John Snyder — he was chairman then — and Whitcomb and Tabbert and the others.

"Well, Keith did it. He got the mess straightened out."

And so will Bulen now work hard for Bowen?

"Sure," Robison replied. "He and J.B. King, Doc's campaign manager, have never stopped talking. And they've been friends for a long time."

The brief Bowen-Bulen meeting at the back of the stage might not have been jovial, but apparently there was warmth and meaning in it — and both men understood it.

Gas strike not for him, but ...

Frankfort *Times*, September 18, 1973

As this book was being put together, gas prices were soaring, causing economic hardship throughout the country. It's not the first time gas prices have been a major issue.

In June 1973, President Richard Nixon ordered Phase IV price controls designed to control inflation. He said, "Phase 4 measures will stabilize both the prices at the retail level of food and the price of gasoline at your service station."

Prices had increased so sharply at some service stations, operators were threatened with violence, which prompted this column about one station who was trying to hold down prices. The station owner asked not to be identified, for obvious reasons.

If it comes down to the gun or the knife or the rock or the tire iron — he'll close.

He operates a service station.

And like fellow operators throughout the nation, he doesn't like living these days with Phase 4 price controls.

But he will stay open in Frankfort, and he thinks most other stations will, too.

He is worried about the current state of gasoline affairs, but he takes a common sense and rather calm attitude about the situation.

"I can't see any reason to close," he says, flicking ashes off his cigarette. "I don't think that is the way to go about this thing."

But if the threat of violence from other operators rears its ugly head, he will close.

"I'm not going to hassle with anybody if they start threatening me," he says evenly.

And he says he won't fight with his oil company — one of the major

ones — if it decides to boost its prices again. The last time was in May, and he's been "able to live with it so far."

The sale of gasoline, he notes, never has been a money-making venture.

"It's about a break-even proposition," he says. "I mean, when you start figuring the paper towels for wiping down the windows, the electricity used, the labor — these guys get around \$3 an hour — the air for tires, the insurance ...

"I would say that 75 percent of all my insurance is for the driveway. You have traffic moving in and out all day long. You have to have the protection."

The profit in the service station business comes from the inside work — lubes, oil changes, mechanical repair — and accessories.

But despite the break-even aspect of pumping gas, he says he wants to keep right on doing it. And he worries about talk of a nationwide shutdown of stations.

"Do you realize what it could do to the country?" he asks, lighting another cigarette.

"A major shutdown could break the country. If you don't get gas, you don't go — let's face it.

"And I would bet that service stations as a whole account for the largest tax bite in the country. Eight cents comes off every gallon to the state and another four cents goes to the federal government. On top of that, there's the four-cent sales tax in Indiana."

He took a pen from his pocket and began scribbling figures on a carton that encased cans of motor oil.

"If you figure the average station around here pumps 60,000 gallons a month, and there are about 15 stations, and 14 cents in taxes off each gallon ..." His hand flew, putting down the figures. "That's about \$126,000 a month in taxes just in this small community alone."

He dragged on the cigarette. "What are we talking about in dollars when we talk about Indianapolis?"

He rolled on: "And what about all the unemployment that would be created? How would people get to work out of town, to Lafayette and Indianapolis and Kokomo?"

“If the stations in this country closed for 30 days, the government would be broken.”

What can be done?

“Well,” and there is a faint smile, “we should get rid of Nixon and all those people around him. It’s not just gas. It’s meat and the farming situation. He’s had bad advisors. I’m not a Republican or a Democrat; I vote for the man, and I voted for Nixon last time, but ...”

He gets off politics: “It’s hard to manipulate the price of gas and the allocation of gas at the same time. You have to have a certain percentage of markup or you can’t make it. I’ll bet there are some guys working like dogs and making about a \$1 a hour after all their overhead is taken care of. I’m doing OK for now, but there are others getting hurt.”

After more than 30 minutes of discussion he still talks evenly, sensibly and a note of optimism tumbles from his mouth:

“It will all straighten itself out. I’ve been with this company for 12 years. The oil companies can’t afford to put stations out of business. We’re worth money to them, whether we sell the gasoline or not. Once they have unloaded it to us, they’ve made money.”

And so he will keep pumping gas — and he will try to serve his customers the best way he can. He won’t charge for wiping windows or putting in air or checking the oil — like some dealers have warned.

But if he is threatened with violence, then he will close. And:

“If I close, it will be for good.”

Egyptians stress impact of ‘new’ Suez Canal

Nixon Newspapers, June 1974

In the spring of 1974, a New York travel agent with ties to the Middle East organized what she called The First Editorial Conference on the Middle East. This was shortly after the October 1973 War. Thirty press groups sponsored the tour, whose general theme was “Prospects of Peace in the Middle East.”

Nixon Newspapers sent me on the tour. I represented the smallest newspapers among the 90 journalists, which included a few from broadcast media. (My roommate was a producer for NBC.) I wrote a 14-part series that — to my relief, more than satisfaction — won significant praise.

This story chronicles an incredible day in Egypt.

ALONG THE SUEZ CANAL—Overhead, an American helicopter breezes above the clear blue waters of the Suez Canal, periodically sending up an explosive spray after electronically detecting and then detonating a mine.

Below, an Egyptian general’s remarks to a group of American journalists — perhaps the first to enter an area where fierce fighting took place only a few months ago — are occasionally drowned out by the chopper.

The action in the sky is part of Operation Nimbus Star, designed to clean the canal and restore traffic in one of the world’s most important waterways.

The action below, under a tent that protects the journalists from 100-degree heat but not attacking flies, can be called Operation Public Relations.

Both are important to the Egyptians as they try to take advantage

of their surprise showing in the 1973 October War.

Clearing the canal, shut down since the 1967 war, could mean as much as \$250 million annually to Egypt, much needed cash as Cairo plans new economic growth.

The importance to the world is even more staggering. A United Nations report estimates \$10 billion has been lost to higher shipping costs and lost trade since the Canal's closure.

Reopening the Suez, which is expected to take another 18 months, will mean that a third of the world's tanker fleet can shorten the distance from Persian Gulf petroleum fields to Mediterranean ports by at least two weeks.

The United States is playing a major role in clearing the waterway by providing \$25 million and some 500 demolition and naval experts — despite the fact that Russia will benefit tremendously by the reopening. The Soviet navy's supply lines from Black Sea bases to the Straits of Malacca, door to the Pacific and Japan, will be reduced from more than 10,000 miles to about 2,200.

Israel, too, would benefit from the canal reopening — but when Egyptian officials were asked whether Israel will be allowed passage, they would only say it is an "international waterway" and make no commitment.

Egyptian leaders would rather talk about their plans for the "new" canal. Cairo hopes to widen and deepen the waterway — which runs 103 miles from Port Said to Port Tawfik — so that super tankers will be able to pass through. Prior to 1967, only ships up to 70,000 tons were able to navigate it.

By improving the canal, Egypt could double what was earned before the '67 war closed traffic.

Reopening the canal is crucial to a broader picture of general development, including the reconstruction of such important towns as Port Said, Suez City and Ismailia. Billions of dollars will be needed to accomplish the job.

After being briefed on the 1973 October War, the journalists were led from the tent back to buses to visit the war zone and canal cities, in ruins since 1967. On the way to Al Kantarah, on the canal's east

bank, they had time to reflect on what had been said by Egyptian generals:

— That from a military point of view, the Egyptians knew Israel had three key strengths — rapid mobilization power, a strong air force and good armor.

— That Egypt felt it had to achieve surprise — and succeeded by striking on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish year.

— That Israeli strongpoints would be attacked first by Egyptian soldiers coming across by boat — after artillery had wiped out mines — to battle Israeli tanks on foot while bridgeheads for tanks were being built between the strongpoints. By boat, it takes only seven minutes to cross the 400-foot canal.

It was an impressive public relations effort. It showed that Egypt had planned for months to attack and how. It showed, too, that Egypt had achieved much success. And the American journalists couldn't avoid being impressed — despite the Egyptians refusing to say how many men they lost, despite the generals admitting that Israeli forces along the canal were outnumbered 80,000 to 12,000 and despite the generals saying only, "That's another question," when asked why they didn't go deeper into the Sinai Desert.

Soon the bus reached Al Kantarah, which had 50,000 people before Israel mutilated it in 1967. The Egyptians regained it in October, in the process of killing some 300 Israeli reserves, after sweeping past the initial 70 men stationed at four strongpoints along the canal, near the city.

Al Kantarah's destruction seems less imposing compared with the damage inflicted on the larger "twin cities" of Suez and Port Tawfik to the south.

Buildings in those two cities were more modern. The journalists saw that every structure had been hit — starting with the '67 war, continuing with the war of attrition '67 to '70 and culminating last October.

The sight reminds one of tornado havoc in an Indiana community — only much worse.

Slowly the rubble is being removed and life is beginning to creep

back to normalcy. Hundreds of people were killed in the 1967 war; those who survived were evacuated to other Egyptian cities and villages. Now some people have returned, and they watch with deep interest as the journalists walk through the dust and debris to a building safe enough for occupancy.

Inside, the public relations effort continues. It is late and the journalists are hot, tired and thirsty. The Egyptians' Third Army commander smiles and explains that the buses have run out of gas and need to be refueled. Huge bottles of cold beer are brought out.

The army commander asks the journalists their opinion on political matters, but an Indiana newsman says politely, "General, we only report the news, not make it." The general laughs, understands.

Three hours later, after seeing acre after acre of sand, the journalists return to Cairo at 9:30. They have been gone since 7:30 a.m.

Most are struck by many things after spending four days in Egypt: a lack of arrogance from government and military chiefs, a sincere sense of friendship from the man in the street, a noticeable effort to improve U.S. relations as a major step toward economic growth, a solid job of public relations — and a reminder that war is hell.

HRC — people, love, rebirth

Frankfort *Times*, Nov. 7, 1974

I believe that this column is one of the best I ever wrote. Actually, the piece wrote itself.

Your eyes get wet and there isn't anything you can do about it.

But so what — they're tears of joy.

They sat at long tables, eating the baked steak, cooked carrots, bread, mashed potatoes and cottage cheese with peaches — and as you watched them, getting the nutrition they need while slicing away a piece of loneliness from their lives, it made your day.

The Paul Phillippe Human Resource Center.

Before going through the food line, about 60 senior citizens heard Rev. Charles Burgen, the center's director, say grace.

"We pray that today will be a good day for us and a good day for you, God," the minister said.

Simple words, but so meaningful, the kind of words He hears and does something with. Go to the center some day and ask the people who have found new lives there.

"You know," Chuck Burgen said as the line began moving forward, "this is not just a place for welfare people and the destitute. People have to understand this. This is a place for people. Lonely people."

He spoke the truth.

A man in a spiffy blue suit joked with a woman in front of him — and you got the feeling that the man always came to the center neat and clean and dressed nicely, that this was not some special occasion for him.

It wasn't a special occasion for anyone. It was just another day in the week when senior citizens could come to the center and eat the kind of food essential to their bodies — instead of making do at home with a bowl of cereal or a peanut butter sandwich.

You wonder where all these people spent their time before the center got rolling earlier this year. You ask, and the answer is simple.

"They spent their time at home, watching television and dying," said Aileen Ford, one of the assistant directors.

For some of them, the center has become more than just a place to visit with friends, to get a solid meal, to have fun, to spend their years without life's little worries and fears nagging them.

Go visit some day and ask about the center's 73-year-old cook, a woman who baked for thousands of Purdue students for years, before beginning to fade into bad health and senility. Go ask and be surprised.

Others help their less fortunate peers by taking food to them.

A woman in her 70s tells about how a woman in a wheel chair pulled her down and hugged her and kissed her when a hot meal was brought to the home.

Said the woman in her 70s: "We have to help them. Some day we'll be old." There was only a half-smile on her face and her words were not totally in jest.

You had to laugh — and almost reach for your handkerchief.

"Oh, we had fun here yesterday," the woman continued. "We had a Halloween party."

Earlier, Aileen Ford and Rev. Burgen's wife, Ann, talked about the party, relating how some people even kept their faces hidden behind their masks while they ate. "They would just lift up the mask enough to get the food into their mouth," Aileen Ford chuckled.

It is clear that Aileen Ford, a registered nurse who specializes in health services, and Kay Metzger, the other assistant director, who specializes in social activities, get something special from their jobs. How can they and others who work there miss?

How can they when, on the day the center celebrates birthdays, they watch the "birthday boy" or "birthday girl" get up and take a minute to talk about their life?

They can't — because before them is a human being, and for once, other human beings, who understand all too well, are listening, giving their undivided attention.

Hey, I'm sorry if I wore it on my sleeve today.

But listen, drop over to South Second Street. See for yourself.

Bulldog rises from ashes with city's help

Journal Gazette (Fort Wayne), Oct. 8, 2006

Business and government need to work together to achieve win-win outcomes. I watched this occur with a company in Wabash and suggested this piece to the *Journal Gazette*.

Before the smoke had cleared, there stood Jerry Ault, president of Francis Slocum Bank, asking John Dawkins what he needed.

His mind jumbled, surveying the smoldering aftermath of a blaze that destroyed his downtown factory, Dawkins had no idea.

All Dawkins knew, in the waning days of 1987, was that the manufacturing plant he built in 1985 — Bulldog Battery — was gone, the victim of a blaze apparently caused by a compound pot being left on accidentally at 400 degrees over a weekend.

But nine months later — with insurance money, a loan from Francis Slocum and a low-interest loan the city arranged through a state program — Bulldog would rise again to become what it is today: a prime example for how government and industry can work together to achieve a win-win situation.

Bulldog manufactures industrial batteries that are distributed throughout the United States and exported to Canada, Puerto Rico, Hong Kong and South America.

Sales have grown to \$40 million annually, and yearly gains have stabilized at 25 percent, according to company President Norman Benjamin.

But on the night of Dec. 26, 1987 — Benjamin's 39th birthday —

Dawkins wasn't sure a new factory would be built.

Benjamin recalled: "Basically, John said, 'We can walk away from it, leave it as it is, or we can get back in business. It's your call.'

"I said, 'We're here. Let's get it done. Let's build it.' And that's exactly what we did."

Benjamin cobbled together operations inside an unused building in Urbana, just north of Wabash, to keep Bulldog alive until it could fully recover.

Now, almost 20 years later, the city and Bulldog have just struck another deal in a continuing series of agreements that have given the company economic sustenance, added to the tax rolls and created jobs.

In August, Bulldog received two 10-year tax abatements from the city, solidifying the jobs of 148 employees with a combined payroll of more than \$4 million. The employees—85 percent to 90 percent of whom live in Wabash County — have an average hourly salary of \$13 and can take part in profit-sharing, 401(k) and health and life insurance plans.

One 10-year abatement will be for construction of a 27,000-square-foot addition to Precision Battery Fabrication, a 54,000-square-foot entity that began operations in 2003 in the industrial park on Wabash's north side. In return, Bulldog has agreed to create and maintain 15 new jobs through the end of 2010.

The addition, projected to open next August at a cost of \$625,000, will make tire racks used to transport product in tire factories. The racks evolved from Bulldog's manufacturing of trays that house batteries.

The city has also given Bulldog 1.8 acres for the expansion.

The other 10-year abatement is for equipment being added to the downtown factory that opened in September 1988 after the fire.

The birth and rebirth of Bulldog Battery — and its subsequent rock-solid relationship with Wabash — was made possible by a former mayor, the late Dallas Winchester, and Dawkins, who began his career in the battery industry at General Motors in 1954.

After eight years with GM, Dawkins moved around the industry as an executive for the largest battery companies — Exide, Gould and

C and D. As he worked in different areas of the country, he observed employees.

"I knew about Indiana people from the work I did in Attica for C and D," Dawkins, 78 and still involved in Bulldog, recalled in an interview from his home in Dallas. "What impressed me was the employees were a cut above people I saw anywhere else."

So when Dawkins, who had established Bulldog in a small Chicago plant in 1977, needed to expand his company, he looked to Indiana.

He had read an article in a Chicago newspaper that "showcased Indiana under (then) Lt. Gov. (John) Mutz," Dawkins related.

"What caught my eye was that there were industrial fairs (known as Hoosier Hospitality Days)," Dawkins said. "They had a nice program to attract industry to the state."

Dawkins drove to a fair in Indianapolis and checked into a hotel room — compliments of the state — knowing he didn't want to locate in a large city.

"I liked the working conditions in small towns," Dawkins said.

Winchester, a Democrat, was elected mayor in 1984 after a career on the fire department that included a long stint as chief. He did not meet Dawkins at the industrial fair, but he heard about Dawkins' scouting trip.

A likable, folksy, savvy guy, Winchester pounced. He called Dawkins.

"I went to Wabash and met Dallas, and I looked at the (former DataVue) building," Dawkins recalled. "We did some negotiating. We worked out some very favorable terms. They gave me a good mortgage. So I personally bought the building (68,000 square feet of manufacturing space) from the city, which had acquired it, and leased it to Bulldog Battery."

The city punctuated the deal by removing an abandoned railroad line and repaving the road, which made a dock more accessible.

And the city paved a backyard it was using to park municipal vehicles. Dawkins moved to Marion and brought in Benjamin, whose background was in engineering, to oversee the day-to-day operations.

Benjamin has been president the past 12 years. A native of

Kankakee, Ill., he and Dawkins met when Benjamin was a consultant in the battery industry and Dawkins worked for Gould Battery.

Dawkins and Benjamin developed a strong relationship, which has, by all accounts, manifested itself into a powerful connection between Wabash and Bulldog.

Unlike some alliances between cities and businesses that sour after incentives kick in, the partnership between Wabash and Bulldog got sweeter as the company recovered from the '87 fire.

After recapitalizing, the company became profitable again in March 1990, 18 months after the fire, Dawkins recalled.

Growing steadily, Bulldog requested and was granted a 10-year abatement in the fall of 1992 for a 7,800-square-foot warehouse on Water Street, near the downtown plant. The warehouse was estimated to cost \$105,600 and add five jobs to the company's then-35-person roster.

That project was dwarfed in May 1997, when the city granted another 10-year abatement for a 50,000-square-foot warehouse on Water Street.

The facility was estimated to cost \$500,000 and add six more jobs. By now, Bulldog had grown to 52 employees.

Six years later, Wabash and Bulldog consummated the deal on Precision Battery Fabrication with an economic package that cemented the company's future in the city.

According to Benjamin, a 2003 economic package included:

- A 10-year abatement on the 54,000-square-foot building.
- The city giving Bulldog five-plus acres in the industrial park.
- A \$250,000 city incentive that would be applied to buying state-of-the-art equipment worth \$500,000. (Wabash had received a refund of County Economic Development Income Tax money from an Anderson company that left the city.)

In return, Bulldog signed an agreement to stay in Wabash for 10 years, said Joel Stein, the company's Wabash attorney.

Benjamin recalled that then-mayor Arvin Copeland came to him with an offer of 16 acres for Bulldog to build Precision Battery Fabrication.

"I said, 'Well, I need to have the fabricating, but I don't need quite that much real estate. I'd rather see you make better economic use of the land.'" "

This "made a world of difference," Benjamin volunteered. "That building was put up, and we put in the operations for the battery trays and chargers before the tire racks (evolved). We had (then) approximately a million dollars in that building and the equipment."

Benjamin said the cost of the project would have been considerably greater if Bulldog had to buy the land.

Precision Battery Fabrication added 25 new jobs per the agreement. Employment has since grown to 80.

In a news release the city issued after the agreement, Copeland — elected in 2000 as an independent before declaring himself a Democrat — said: "We offered an attractive package to Bulldog that I'm sure influenced their decision to build a new facility here. Bulldog has been good for Wabash, and Wabash has been good for Bulldog."

Copeland said in a telephone interview he knew Bulldog needed to expand. "I actually sought him (Benjamin) out," Copeland confirmed. "We offered the 16 acres not knowing what (Bulldog) needed. He said, 'this is what we need.'"

Copeland said the Precision Battery Fabrication deal was one of his top two achievements in economic development.

"Norm is definitely a business guy," he said. "We worked very well together."

That relationship helped secure another crucial part of the 2003 economic package: The city approved closing a portion of Water Street, which Bulldog said was necessary for future expansion downtown.

"Closing Water Street was the first step to grow Bulldog Battery in Wabash and maintain the corporate headquarters," Stein said.

Bulldog's downtown plant was hemmed in — partly because of limits on some operations — as opposed to its sister plant, PowerFlow Systems in Terrell, Texas, where land was plentiful, Stein explained. Acquired in 1999, PowerFlow, situated just outside Dallas, was suitable to become Bulldog's headquarters.

"No new significant jobs have been created in Terrell since then,"

Stein said. "All the growth has been in Wabash, and future growth will be in Wabash."

Bob Vanlandingham, a Republican city councilman who defeated Copeland for mayor in 2004, supported Bulldog's latest requests for city assistance.

Vanlandingham, who retired after 31 years in elementary education, the past 26 as a principal, said he took office knowing "we better work our fannies off and retain what (business) we have. We want new industry, of course, but we don't want to lose anything."

He noted that the city has generously helped other firms, too, including long-entrenched GDH, formerly known as General Tire.

"The city has to be competitive," Vanlandingham said. "You have to always be aware of companies' needs. If you don't work together, the community loses. There's got to be give and take on both sides so the citizens benefit."

Like Copeland, Vanlandingham praises Benjamin: "Working with Norm has been great. He dots his I's and crosses his T's and gets everything in order before he moves. If he tells you he's going to do something, he does it."

"This has been an ongoing relationship," Stein said. "And we've always gone out of our way to inform (the city) of what the future holds. We never surprise anybody."

The future holds promise, Benjamin said. "We will grow (the downtown plant) to be over 200,000 square feet under one roof before it's all done. Right now we're 133,000 square feet, to give you an idea."

Plans are being developed for a new oxide mill that will be built over the portion of Water Street that was closed. And, Benjamin said, the company has bought land next to the downtown plant for future expansion.

Bulldog will ask for additional abatements as plans for more buildings and equipment are finalized, Benjamin said. And the company will continue to be active in supporting the community.

"We've been more active in the community in recent years, the last, probably, 15," Benjamin responded when asked. "We support a lot of activities, like the Honeywell Center. ... We contribute to the

animal shelter, things like that. John (Dawkins) is a big animal lover. So we donated money to help get a new facility put up here.”

The company is a “Gold Level” member — among the largest financial contributors — to the Chamber of Commerce, Stein said.

Cash is nice, but from a Chamber of Commerce perspective, it appears that Bulldog Battery’s alliance with Wabash has been worth much more than money to the county-seat town of 11,000 people.