

Donnybrooks Thing of Past in 18th

by James Doherty Southwest Apr 3, 1960

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(Another in a series of articles on recent political history of Chicago's wards by James Doherty, retired Tribune reporter.)

BY JAMES DOHERTY

One of the most pleasant residential sections of the city is that area known as the 18th ward.

Ald. James C. Murray, 2912 W. 83d street, a former congressman, said it is principally a residential section with families in the middle and higher income brackets, and "Irish is the predominant nationality with some Italian and some Dutch."

The Irish of the 18th ward are peace loving. They go about their political affairs with decorum, The days of Donnybrook fairs at election time are long since past in the 18th ward.

Last spring Ald. Frank J. McGrath, 7939 Elizabeth st., just refused to run for re-election. He scolded no one and no one scolded him. He had no complaints; there were no explanations. No crowds gathered to praise him or to bury him.

Kennelly Helps

Four years earlier he had been elected as a Republican with the help of Democrats supporting Mayor Martin Kennelly. He won in a mild contest with Ald. Thomas A. Corcoran, and the main issue was the closing of a street.

Murray had little or no difficulty being elected last February, and there wasn't much in the way of issues involved. He almost received a ticket to return to Washington as a congressman. Emmett Byrne, a popular and well known lawyer who lived at 9036 Pleasant av. in the 19th ward, had defeated him in 1956 by a vote of 92,907 to 87,677.

Six Democratic ward committees in caucus as the 1958 congressional nominations were under consideration. They were John Duffy, 19th; William Lake, 17th; William T. Murphy, 17th; Paul Sheridan, 16th; Michael H. McDermott, 13th; and Kenneth Campbell, 20th. The 3d congressional district contains the 17th, 18th and 19th wards, parts of the 16th and 13th, and one precinct of the 20th ward.

In general, it was explained recently, each Democratic caucus makes its own rules. But in this instance, according to the reports, it was decided in advance that each committeeman should have one vote-and that the vote of Committeeman Campbell, whose ward had only one precinct in the congressional district, had the same weight as that of Duffy of the 19th ward.

Murray vs. Murphy

The caucus was dead-locked. Duffy, Lake and Sheridan voted for Murray. McDermott and Campbell voted for Murphy, and Murphy who was 17th ward alderman as well as ward commander and a protégé of County Board President Dan Ryan, voted for Murphy. It was 3 to 3.

So the downtown organization took it out of the hands of the committee, it was explained, and gave the indorsement to Murphy. Of course, it was said, Murray could run in the primary against Murphy, and with the support of the big wards, could possibly beat "the organization."

But the "peace loving

McGrath [left] and Murray

Irish" prevailed and Murray was slated for the city council seat of Aid. McGrath. Murphy beat Congressman Byrne and went to Washington. Murray went to the city hall and he said he is glad to live here and be with his family and friends at all times.

Another one of the "beautifully friendly" contests involving the 18th ward was that staged in 1954 by the present state senator, Edmund G. Sweeney, 7928 California av., and Joseph P. Griffin of the 16th ward for the unsalaried post of Democratic state central committeeman for the 3rd district.

Under the Wire

The Democratic committeemen of those same six wards indorsed Griffin for election as state central coinman. But some time later, according to Sweeney, Committeeman John Lee of the 18th ward asked him to run against Griffin. At the last possible minute Sweeney's petitions were filed in Springfield.

One explanation was that Griffin was to be punished for having remained loyal to former Secretary of State Edward J. Barrett [now county clerk] who made a great effort to win the nomination for governor in 1952. Gov. Stevenson had been nominated but resigned the nomination after the Democratic national convention made him its candidate for President.

The Democratic state central committee was the agency established by law to name a new candidate. Griffin had been a member of it since 1946. Lt. Gov. Sherwood Dixon was Barrett's principal opponent. Griffin had worked in Barrett's office as an attorney, and he voted for Barrett until the last roll call, on which Dixon was the winner. The Chicago Democrats had received instructions from "the Cook county organization" to switch to Dixon but Griffin and three others didn't do so.

All this was recalled when Sweeney filed against Griffin. For the next few months the whole south side was aware that two men were running for an office about which few people had ever heard. Few knew anything about the duties or opportunities of a state central committeeman, and, actually, few people knew either Griffin, young lawyer who had been in the army, or Sweeney, who had a county job.

Griffin Wins

What followed was described as "a battle over principle with no one knowing the principals."

Great interest was aroused. On election night, the election commissioners' office was swamped with calls asking who had won.

It was Griffin, 16,881 to 14,711.

However, Sweeney had earned some reward by race. So, the next time he was given the Democratic nomination for state senator in the newly established 12th district. Albert George Preibis, an independent ran against him in the primary but the vote was Sweeney, 11,540; Preibis, 3,816.

In the fall campaign Sweeney faced a powerful opponent, William A. Cunnea, Republican committee-man of the 13th ward. The election was close, 35,340 for Sweeney, 33,566 for Cunnea.

Cunnea protested to the Senate, which is the sole judge of its own membership, against the seating of Sweeney, even after a recount showed Sweeney the unquestioned victor. The point was raised that Sweeney had been ineligible to run in that district - consequently his election was void.

Sweeney Saved

"I had lived in what became the 15th district at 7908 Hermitage av. until April 27, 1955, when I moved to my present address at 7928 California av which is in the newly created 12th Senate district," said Sweeney.

The Senate let me sweat

out the six month session and then decided to let me remain a senator."

The ruling was that, actually, Sweeney was not a qualified candidate when he was nominated because he had not lived in the district for two years - as is required by law.

But the Senate, under the control of a Republican majority, felt that ousting Sweeney would make him a political martyr. The ruling was that Cunnea, the Republican, could not be seated. The senators, too, said they were sure that if they ousted Sweeney he would be easily reelected.

Allen a Business Man

The 18th ward Republicans are under the leadership of John P. Allen, 7928 Justine st., who was named acting committeeman after the death of Committeeman William J. Morgensen of 7803 Marshfield, on May 19, 1958. The appointment was made by the new Republican county chairman, Francis X. Connell, who had taken that job two weeks earlier.

Allen is employed by Connell, who is also clerk of the Circuit court. The new 18th ward committeeman was assigned by Connell to be chief clerk at the Family court at Ogden avenue and Roosevelt road, and he retains that position.

Allen was a business man of many years standing who had thought of retiring in 1952, just before his friend, Connell, was elected to the county office. In his younger days Allen had considerable experience with politics and politicians. In 1927 he had been an aldermanic candidate against Ald. Patrick F.

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Geniality Is New Order in 18th Ward

Donnybrooks at

Election Are

in Past

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Ryan and lost by 118 votes after a recount.

Friend of Top G. o. P.s

In those days he was a friend of the top Republican leaders and he had been asked to act as city campaign manager for John Jaranowski, a county commissioner from the suburbs who was nominated for recorder.

"Then Recorder Joseph Haas died and it was the duty of the Republican controlled county board to appoint someone immediately to take his place." Allen recalled. "As a member of the board, Jaranowski could not be appointed. So the appointment was offered to me."

"I declined and then the important office was given to Jaranowski's wife, Salomea. It was arranged that I would run it for her, and I did so. From March until December I was in charge. However, Jaranowski was defeated. Clayton Smith, now a county commissioner, was elected to the office and when he took charge I returned to my export business, the Packing Craft corporation."

For many years the 18th ward Republican affairs were under the supervision of George M. Fisher, who became Superior court judge in 1946, and placed Morgensen in charge. In 1950 and in 1956 Morgensen was elected to the state legislature and held two jobs, legislator, and commissioner, until his death last year when Allen was named committeeman.

Dies on Election Night

In 1956 two Republicans had been elected from the 26th legislative district, into which Morgensen had been placed thru the redistricting. Originally he had been elected in the 11th district.

Morgensen's first nomination came about when State Rep. David I. Swanson died primary night, April 11, 1950, as he listened to election returns which showed he was nominated along with Walter McAvoy of the 15th ward.

The district's senatorial committee, an office since abolished by the legislature, was called into session to name someone in place of Swanson. The chairman of the committee of three members, who had been elected at the same primary, was Elmer W. Schroeder, 6315 S. Troy street, and the meeting was held in his home.

Schroeder and Walter R. Thiem, 7601 Wood street, voted for Morgensen. The other member, Fred R. Goering, 3235 61st place, voted for Albin A. Peters who was defeated in the primary by Swanson and McAvoy. That year, 1950, the Republicans

elected two members in this district, and the Democrats one, A. L. [Whitey] Cronin, of the 19th ward, now a state senator in the 15th district.

Election Result

In 1952 Morgensen was reelected when the district chose two Republicans and only one Democrat. The vote was: McAvoy, 168,694; Morgensen, 149,551; Michael Han. [Democrat of the 16th ward], 148,006; Cronin [the loser], 147,671.

In 1954 Morgensen was defeated, the election going to two Democrats, Hannigan, 134,012, and Michael McDermott [13th ward committee-man], 134,836; and one Republican, McAvoy, whose vote was 106,146. Cronin, at that election, won for senator, defeating Senator Arthur E. Larson of the 19th ward by a vote of 91,373 to 64,107.

However, in 1956, in the new 26th district, Morgensen and another Republican, George F. Stasny of the 19th ward, were elected. They had defeated former Senator Larson who sought reelection to the House in the primary contest. The one Democrat elected with them was John P. Downes of the 19th ward.

John Al. Daley, 8158 Talman av., a distant relative of

Mayor Daley, was the one loser but he came back as a winner two years later, 1958, when the Democrats won two seats and Stasny was the one Republican elected. William F. Brundage, 8448 Wood st., who had been nominated to replace Morgensen, ran fourth.

Walls Open, Then Close

Morgensen, committeeman and state representative, had an insurance brokerage office at 7803 Marshfield av. When McGrath was elected alderman in 1955 he opened a real estate office next door and 30 days later the wall was broken and an opening made between the two offices. However, after another 30 days, the opening was closed and the wall sealed.

Morgensen was dead and Allen was in charge when McGrath's term was coming to a close. Judge Fisher was still on the bench but had made an arrangement with Gov. Stratton to resign and have Burton Bergstrom, son of the Republican committee-man of the 16th ward and nephew of Judge Fisher's wife, appointed in his place -which was done Feb. 15, 1959.

It wasn't a very popular move. Young Bergstrom was defeated at the November election. The Democrats insisted that if Gov. Stratton had named a Democrat to one of three vacancies he had the power to fill in 1959, they would have agreed to a coalition.

It was recalled that Judge Fisher had been nominated both as a Democrat and as a Republican a dozen years earlier. Some Republicans thought he should not have accepted such an arrangement because he was chairman of the Republican county committee, but in general the party was pleased that he was rewarded.

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