



THE MONDAY BRIEFING / Gover.

2 - 8 - 92 STJ

By Dane Smith
Staff Writer



Way downstream near the dirtier end of the Mississippi River, the town of Winnfield, La., last week opened a dubious new tourist attraction called the "Louisiana Political Hall of Fame."

Among the charter inductees was Huey Long, the notorious former governor and senator of the 1930s who has become a symbol in U.S. politics of demagoguery and good intentions spoiled by abuses of power.

Another inductee was the present governor, Edwin Edwards, who staged a comeback last year despite a checkered past, including an indictment on corruption charges. Edwards expressed surprise at his induction, saying, "I'm still alive, and creating problems, and doing damage."

The creation of this institution raises two compelling questions.

First, wouldn't a "Hall of Shame" be more appropriate for Louisiana?

And second, why doesn't Minnesota, just as rich in political figures and oh-so-much-more politically correct, have its own Political Hall of Fame?

Both states are rather famous for their politics, but in very different ways.

Louisianans take a certain pride in their unsavory but fun-loving politicians. There's a saying that the only thing that could get a Louisiana politician in trouble with voters would be to be found in bed with a dead girl or a live boy.



Minnesotans, by contrast, take a more prudish pride in the cleanliness and seriousness and national impact of their politicians.



Harold Stassen

politicians, especially in this century.

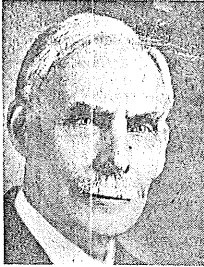
From reform governors such as John A. Johnson, Floyd B. Olson and Harold Stassen, to vice presidents Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale, and today's rising stars such as conservative Republican strategist Vin Weber, Minnesota has produced a steady stream of major-league talent.

It has churned out not only politicians but ideas and policies that have been copied by other states. Innovations include the progressive income tax, no-smoking sections in public places, open meetings and open government records, easy access to the voting booth and efforts to spread the wealth between rich and poor school districts.

Neal Peirce, a leading authority on the political culture of states, wrote in "The Book of America" that Minnesota leaders "have played a role in national life, far out of proportion to their state's modest 2 percent of the national population." And no state, Peirce said, "has offered as close a model to the ideal of the successful society as Minnesota."

Louisiana opened a Political Hall of Fame last week to honor its well-known heroes. Consider who might be inducted into the

MINNESOTA POLITICAL HALL OF FAME



Andrew Volstead

years.

Clara Hampson Ueland, a Minneapolis woman and a leading advocate of women's suffrage.

Forrest Harris, a pivotal behind-the-scenes leader of the liberal wing of the DFL Party.

became the leader of the Communist Party in the United States.

Congressman Andrew Volstead of Granite Falls, the so-called "Father of Prohibition" whose constitutional amendment dried up the nation for 14

While discussions of whether Elmer L. Anderson deserves to be inducted may never generate the same passion as the Pete Rose question, at least one institution may be interested in furthering the Political Hall of Fame notion.

Bill Handley, director of news and public affairs for KTCA-TV, Channel 2, said the "Almanac" show might ask viewers about who should be in a hall of fame. One of the show's more popular features is a weekly trivia test, often focusing on Minnesota political history. (Leave it to public television to get on board...)

Even if the concept never gets off the ground, Minnesota's political junkies can have a lot of fun speculating on who should



Hubert Humphrey

and should not be inducted into a hypothetical Hall of Fame. Humphrey, considered by some historians to be among the most important U.S. politicians never to be president, would undoubtedly occupy a place of special honor. Olson, Stassen and Mondale also would be charter members.

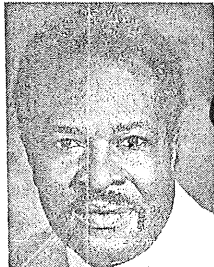
An unofficial trio of consultants, consulted by the Star Tribune, offered some intriguing, lesser-known nominees. The consultants are Debbie Miller, head of research for the Minnesota Historical Society; Hy Berman, a history professor at the University of Minnesota, and David Lebedoff, a former University of Minnesota regent and an author who has written extensively about modern politics and politicians.

These are some of their potential hall-of-famers, in no particular order:

Joseph Rolette, the territorial legislator who disappeared with the bill that would have established the state capital in southern Minnesota, thus preventing St. Peter from robbing St. Paul.

U.S. Sen. Eugene McCarthy, whose antiwar candidacy in 1968 convinced President Lyndon Johnson not to run for reelection.

Gus Hall, the native Minnesotan who



B. Robert Lewis

Labor leaders Bob Hess and Dave Roe

B. Robert Lewis and Ray Pleasant, a Republican and a DFLer both elected in 1972, the first blacks sent to the Minnesota Legislature in the 20th century.



Nellie Stone Johnson

Little Crow, the Dakota leader who unwillingly led his people in 1862 in a hopeless final war to drive whites from Minnesota.

Nellie Stone Johnson of Minneapolis, a pioneer of the civil rights movement and a DFL leader for 50 years.

leader for 50 years.

Congressman Charles Lindbergh Sr., father of the famous aviator, and a much abused opponent of U.S. entry into World War I.

Congresswoman Coya Knutson, the woman whose husband ordered her in the 1950s to "come home" to domestic life and ruined her political career.

Gov. Rudy Perpich, the state's longest serving governor, and who might demand that two spots be reserved since he served two interrupted terms.



Susie Stageberg

Susie Stageberg, a Red Wing teacher and feminist active in both the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Farmer-Labor Party.

Reprinted by permission of the Star Tribune (Minneapolis, MN).