

TIE-DYED CANDIDATE:  
THE RUPERT FOR GOVERNOR CAMPAIGN 2012

A CREATIVE PROJECT  
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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Indiana native Rupert Frederick Boneham was a favorite for fans of the CBS hit television show *Survivor* from his first appearance on the opening night of Season 7, *Survivor: Pearl Islands* in 2003. In the reality-based TV show, sixteen adults were dropped off on deserted islands, this time near Panama, and divided into tribes to compete in a series of challenges to win rewards. The primary reward was immunity that protected the winner from being voted off the island and off the show (*Survivor Pearl Islands - The Complete Seventh Season* 2003).

On the deck of a small yacht, about a mile offshore from the island chain, contestants dressed formally for what they believed was their final group photo before entering the game. Instead, contestants learned the show was a pirate-themed adventure. The competition began right then. Show host Jeff Probst tossed their casual shoes - ideal for getting around a deserted island - over the side of the boat (along with a small raft, large enough to hold the shoes and keep them from sinking), and told the tribes to swim to shore and trade a small amount of money they were given and any belongings they had for supplies. Faced with no other option but to begin, the contestants jumped overboard and swam for the shore (*Survivor Pearl Islands - The Complete Seventh Season* 2003).

Once on shore, tired from the swim, Rupert volunteered to stay behind at the beach and watch the raft and other possessions his tribe left behind. The other tribe arrived a few moments later, and dropped their small raft off next to him, with their dress shoes still on the raft. Once they were out of sight, viewers could see Rupert moving the other team's dress shoes to his team's raft, and hurrying off to town. He explained later in the show that he did what any pirate would do in a pirate adventure — he stole the other team's shoes and traded them for more

supplies. This sneaky move made him an instant hit with fans. As the show progressed that season, his hefty stature and single-minded determination to succeed earned him the nickname “the Gentle Giant.” He was blindsided when his tribe turned against him and voted him out later in the game. He placed eighth overall that season, missing his chance at the \$1 million grand prize awarded to the winning contestant (*Survivor Pearl Islands - The Complete Seventh Season* 2003).

He was invited back the next season, *Survivor All-Stars* in 2004. Rupert placed fourth in that season (*Survivor All-Stars - The Complete Season* 2004). He returned again in 2008 for *Survivor: Heroes and Villains*, where he played as a hero despite breaking two of his toes on the first day of the competition (*Survivor 20: Heroes and Villains* 2012). During the final episode of *All-Stars*, after a fellow contestant had won the \$1 million grand prize, Probst announced that they were adding an additional episode, to be broadcast live three days later. American fans of the show, instead of the *Survivor* contestants, would vote for their favorite contestant. This fan favorite would win an additional \$1 million grand prize (*Survivor All-Stars - The Complete Season* 2004).

Three days later, the contestants met again on stage in New York City. In the final minutes of the show, Probst announced that Rupert had won America’s Tribal Council vote. Over 80 percent of the votes had been for Rupert. He had clearly become America’s favorite *Survivor* celebrity. Probst used Rupert’s back as a desk as he scrawled “Rupert Boneham” in the *Pay to* field of a check for \$1 million (*Survivor All-Stars - The Complete Season* 2004).

Rupert tells his fans that it took him only a few weeks to get his family out of debt, buy a new house, and then give back to his community in the form of \$177,000 to charitable causes in his community, and using \$100,000 to re-brand his fledgling teen mentoring program, Rupert’s

Kids (Boneham and Shane 2007, 124). This generous act of giving away about one quarter of his earnings, combined with his trademark strong-man pose - fists in the air, coupled with his bearded face snarling “Arrgh!” in a pirate yell - has made him a popular reality-show celebrity. His national popularity has also carried over into popularity across Indiana (Einhorn 2013).

In 2011, he considered ways to use his fame to make positive changes in his home state. He decided he wanted to run for governor, applying the lessons he’d learned from running his mentoring program for troubled teens to problems facing state government. He settled on three main issues: jobs, education, and correctional facilities. Although he raised more money in his campaign than any other Libertarian campaign in Indiana’s history, that amount was dwarfed by the two major-party candidates (Murray 2014). His celebrity status gave him name recognition among voters, yet the lack of funding parity created an enormous hurdle to overcome in the race (Murray 2014). This creative project is the story of that challenge.

His first obstacle was finding a political party he agreed with in principle and would support him through the campaign. He settled on the Libertarian Party, where he faced his first challenge: getting the nomination from the party. His image as the unkempt gentle giant clad in tie-dye was more of hindrance to a campaign than an asset. Rex Bell, long-time Libertarian Party member and well-respected perennial candidate for both state and federal offices on the Libertarian ticket, summed up well the initial reaction of many Libertarians on his blog: “I’ve always had a hard time taking somebody seriously if they didn’t seem to take themselves seriously. From a distance, and at least for me, Rupert’s wardrobe and coiffure seemed to put him in that category” (Bell 2014).

In this creative project, the researcher used literary journalistic techniques to write a narrative on the Rupert for Governor campaign of 2012 and its aftermath. Participant

observation, saturation research, and immersive reporting were used to provide a character study of the candidate and show the challenges he faced as he transitioned from celebrity life into the world of politics. The project also serves as a behind-the-scenes chronicle of a statewide political campaign.

This creative project utilizes first-hand accounts of the challenges and daily rigors of modern-day politics. The focus is on the developments in the campaign en route to the nomination, the campaign itself, and its impact on the candidate in subsequent months.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Historical Highlights of Literary Journalism

In the 1960s, Tom Wolfe coined the term “New Journalism” to describe the narrative-based reporting that he and his contemporaries were utilizing (Kramer 1995, 21). New Journalism writers such as Gay Talese, Truman Capote, and Joan Didion were expanding on a form of reportage that combined in-depth, fact-based immersive reporting with the literary techniques, such as characterization and dialogue, long used by fiction authors. In the mid-twentieth century nonfiction writers, including James Agee, Ernest Hemingway, Lillian Ross, and John Steinbeck built on techniques that writers such as Stephen Crane and Mark Twain had imported from fiction into works of reportage in narrative essays (Kramer, 1995, 21). Sims describes this style of reportage as “narratives focused on everyday events that bring out the hidden patterns of community life as tellingly as the spectacular stories that make newspaper headlines” (Sims 1995, 3).

Although Thomas B. Connery lists three major periods of literary journalism in his 1992 sourcebook on the style of reportage (Connery 1992, 19), the timeline of this literary style can be expanded into four eras spanning from the late 1800s to the present day, with the edition of the *New New Journalists* (Boynton 2005). The first era saw the birth of a new form of journalism, which blended techniques from fictional narrative writing with reportage. This new field included authors such as Stephen Crane, Mark Twain, Lincoln Steffens, Richard Harding Davis, and Julian Ralph (Connery 1992, xii-xiii). The new, more literary form of journalism that came of age with the likes of Crane, moved reportage outside of the traditional and narrowly defined style of reporting facts in non-imaginative prose. Instead, writers like Crane began writing facts

built scenes, and they used sensory and status imagery to create what are called felt details (Connery 2008, 6). These literary journalists raided the fiction-writer's toolbox, using impressions and subjective details in factual stories, in order to interpret events and news for their narratives (Connery 2008, 5–6).

Literary journalists began stepping outside of the traditional journalistic scope of reporting on the timely news of the day, and focusing their work on timeless scenes that were a slice of life (Connery 2008, 8). Crane was well known for building scenes around ordinary occurrences that would not normally be considered the meat of journalistic reporting, such as a wagon breaking down on a busy street in New York City, or a man suffering an epileptic seizure. He could use them to show aspects of human nature through interpretations of these scenes of everyday city life. He did so with literary techniques uncommon in traditional journalistic reportage, including contrast, dialogue, concrete description, detailed scene setting, careful word selection that built repetition of imagery, and irony (Connery 2008, 7).

The second era matured the field of literary journalism with writers such as Hemingway, Steinbeck, Ernie Pyle, and A. J. Liebling (Connery 1992, xii-xiii). Authors in this second wave expanded the sense of timelessness of the work by increasing the length of immersion in the story, as well as creating a stronger sense of the author's voice in their works. Hemmingway is a good example of this, illustrating the idea that “journalism was fleeting, while writing was permanent” (Weber 2008, 22). This idea moved literary journalism beyond Crane's slice-of-life idea, as literary journalists began deeper and longer immersions with their subjects.

Hemmingway's idea, as he told one of the bullfighters he was covering, was to create a “permanent record ... that would endure after they both were gone” (Hemingway qtd in Weber 2008, 22). Writers of this era moved toward a deeper immersion with their subjects, expanding

essays into book-length manuscripts. Hemingway's *Death in the Afternoon* serves as an example where the author immersed himself in the culture of bullfighting in Spain for six years, writing numerous articles on the subject before writing the book-length long-form reportage of the bullfighting culture (Weber 2008, 25).

The third wave of literary journalism began in what Tom Wolfe referred to as the New Journalism era. A new cadre of young writers emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, refining the literary journalism form even further than their predecessors. Although Wolfe wrote the essay on the literary journalism of his generation, he did not seem aware of the eras of the form that existed before his time (Sims 2008, 105). Writers of this era included the likes of Wolfe, Gay Talese, Truman Capote, and Joan Didion (Connery 1992, xii–xiii). If the first era of literary journalism was birth of the form, and the second era was growth of the form, this era was refinement of the form and characteristics of literary journalism.

In writing about New Journalism, Wolfe's proclaimed that narrative nonfiction would become "literature's main event" in the mid 1960s and 1970s (Boynton 2005, xi). Wolfe identified four characteristics about New Journalism that would connect the readers to the story beyond what a normal journalistic approach would provide: scene-by-scene construction, copious dialogue, status details, and a point of view that took the reader inside a character's mind (Wolfe 2007, 150–151).

Despite the ongoing refinement of the techniques in literary journalism, Wolfe concedes to fiction writers a technique that later literary journalists would further develop to expand the field yet again: "There are certain areas of life that journalism still cannot move into easily, particularly for reasons of invasions of privacy, and it is in this margin that the novel will grow" (Wolfe qtd in Boynton 2005, xiii). In contrast, Talese saw himself as reporting on private lives.

His methods included what he called “hanging around access,” which helped him understand real-life people by researching and building relationships. “You come to know them so well that they are like part of your private life” (Talese 2007, 7). Throughout this era the scope of Wolfe’s four characteristics of new journalism was expanded to include techniques Sims lists as “accuracy, voice, structure, responsibility and symbolic representation” (Sims 1995, 9).

Even though Wolfe and Talese have shown they were building on the techniques of the literary journalists before them, another element sets this era apart from the others: personal sense-making of the culture of the time (Kallan 1992, 252). Throughout several of his works, including *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* and *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, Wolfe mainstreamed the use of nonstandard punctuation and writing; “exclamation points, italics, and ellipses” as well as “long, fact-stuffed sentences that celebrated the adjective and the adverb,” in order to have his writing project an open, unassuming voice – intimate, like “personal letters” (Kallan 1992, 252). John J. Pauly notes a similar element that set the writers of this era apart from the earlier literary journalists: political activism in writers, “... of symbolic confrontation” (Pauly 2008, 110–111). Personal voice became one of hallmarks of this era, and Pauly details that many literary journalists of the era saw immersion and personal involvement in the story as “indispensable to an authentic, full-blooded account of experience” (Ibid, 114). This literary movement of the New Journalist era seems to be rooted in what Pauly calls the “politics of youth,” (Ibid, 116). He points out that of the notable names of this era’s literary journalists, a remarkable proportion of them are in their early twenties to mid thirties. Only a few notable names such as Capote, Norman Mailer, and George Plimpton were over thirty-six years old. This indicates to Pauly a generational identity in New Journalism of the 1960s and 1970s. (Ibid, 117)

A fourth era of literary journalism has emerged since Connery noted the first three eras in

his 1992 essay. Robert S. Boynton refers to this recently emerged generation of literary journalists as the “New New Journalists” in his work of the same name (Boynton 2005). This new generation of literary journalists has extended its contributions to the genre in a number of ways. This latest generation of literary journalists have not only experimented with the language and structure of their stories as Wolfe’s generation of new journalists did, but are making their mark on the literary journalism form by experimenting with their immersion techniques (Boynton 2005, xii–xiii). In contrast to Wolfe’s idea that the novel would excel over literary journalism in matters of private lives, journalists in the latest generation have shown that literary journalism is just as capable of telling stories from such a deep perspective. For example, Ted Conover worked as a corrections officer to report on the conditions of life within Sing Sing Prison. Earlier in his career, he rode the rails with two hobos to write a story from a participant’s viewpoint. Where Wolfe saw the deep immersion into private lives as the realm of the fiction writer, despite such immersion by Talese and others, Conover’s generation of literary journalists are pushing the immersion techniques even further. “Wolfe went inside his character’s heads;” writes Boynton, “the New New Journalists become part of their lives” (Boynton 2005, xiii).

### **Immersion and Voice**

The new journalists of the 1960s and 1970s – such as Talese, Wolfe and Didion – were able to build a genre of reportage and literature that was “significantly richer” and “broke most of the existing rules of what magazine reporting was supposed to be” using different styles to create work that “seemed to have the texture and originality of fiction” (Halberstam 2003, 282-3). The techniques of reportage that defined literary journalism in the modern era have many components, but it’s that deep immersion with their subjects that sets apart those at the top of their craft.

For a narrative nonfiction account, the literary journalist must be immersed in the lives of his sources. Literary journalism requires a level of connection often referred to as the level of felt life, the “level of informal comprehension that you have of your subject” (Kramer and Call 2007, 26). This immersive type of investigation allows literary journalists to focus on everyday events in ways that show the “hidden patterns of community life as tellingly as the spectacular stories that make newspaper headlines” (Sims 1995, 3). The level of immersion into the lives of those being reported on allows the literary journalist to work toward a “sustained candor usually accorded only spouses, business partners and dearest friends,” (Kramer 1995, 26) in order to gain insight into the characters of the individuals in the story in such a way the reader is aware of the person’s “difference, frailty, tenderness, nastiness, vanity, generosity, pomposity, humility in all proper proportion,” (Kramer 1995, 23).

As a result, literary journalists are able to provide both status and sensory details to reveal the character of the people and drama of the events. Talese explains his philosophy of reportage by developing trust and building relationships with his subjects. “You come to know them so well that they are like part of your private life. I respect these people even though I have written about gangsters and pornographers. I saw the world as they see it,” (Talese 2007, 7). Talese describes this as “hanging around access” as opposed to a traditional interview (Talese 2007, 9). According to Halberstam, Talese’s “work is great cinematic journalism. When you read his work, you can almost hear a little camera whirring away,” (Halberstam 2007, 13). Joe Nocera was given this “hanging around access” as he wrote about T. Boone Pickens’ takeover bid on another company. “You have to get people to let their hair down when you’re around, to be willing to forget about you as a reporter and to say things. They may end up hating you afterwards” (Sims 1995, 6).

The details and information gathered during this extended time may allow the literary journalist to tell the story more dramatically than traditional journalism, and in a style more like the novelist. “The narrative of literary journalism has a personality, is a whole person, intimate, frank, ironic, wry, puzzled, judgmental, even self-mocking – qualities academics and daily news reporters dutifully avoid as unprofessional and unobjective” (Kramer, 1995, 28). Hemingway used his deep immersion into the lives of his subjects to create in a first-person narrative as he wrote in what Weber calls a “noisily and aggressively” voice, which he refers to as “prickly and ironic, occasionally hectoring and long-winded” (Weber 2008, 25).

### **Seminal Works of Political Campaign Narrative**

When asked what makes a book a bestseller, Theodore “Ted” White, the reputed father of political-campaign narrative, replied: “A book burns in your belly – something that has to be written before you can go on to anything else,” (Halberstam 2003, 287). When White returned from Asia, where he had been reporting on the early history of the Cold War, he developed a passion for the changing political culture of the United States in the middle of the twentieth century. He pioneered the field of narrative reporting on the presidential election of 1960 between then Republican Vice President Richard Nixon and a charismatic young Democratic candidate, John F. Kennedy. The book that White wrote, *The Making of a President: 1960* was an instant bestseller and recognized as a revolution in covering political campaigns (Dallek 1961, xi).

James Reston, in the introduction to the 1988 re-release of White’s seminal work, explained that what made the work groundbreaking was that he “didn’t cover only the candidates, he covered America,” (Dallek 1961, xi). White describes his own approach in his Author’s Note as an attempt “to catch the mood and the strains, the weariness, elation and

uncertainties of the men who sought to lead America in the decade of the sixties,” (White 1961, xvii). White does this by painting vivid characterization of the two main candidates, their primary opponents, as well as the cadre of key figures around each of them. His definitive description of the two national political conventions that year, hold a key place in the historical record of that election. His narrative coverage of the Nixon-Kennedy debates, the inside look at the campaign strategies, as well as each side’s response to key issues – such as the civil rights struggle, and how that affected the vote among African-Americans – provide readers with vivid insights into one of the closest elections in modern U.S. history (Dallek 1961, xii).

However, one of the weaknesses of White’s narrative, according to Dallek, is his overly romantic description of the “knight in shining armor” image of Kennedy. “By the time of his election, White believed that Kennedy had ‘mastered all the power brokers and power forms that stir internal American politics,’” (Dallek 1961, xiii). White also portrayed Kennedy’s staff and advisers in this same heroic light: “... that when crisis happens all necessary information is instantly available, all alternate courses already plotted. Only rarely is there danger of major, irrevocable stupidity” (Dallek 1961, xiii).

The descriptions of the debates and television appearance of Kennedy and Nixon are among White’s most memorable within the work. Kennedy was “calm and nerveless in appearance” while Nixon “was tense, almost frightened, at turns glowering and, occasionally, haggard-looking to the point of sickness,” (Dallek 1961, xii).

Joe McGinnis – in the introduction to the 1988 reprint of his ground-breaking bestseller on the 1968 presidential campaign, *The Selling of a President* - pays homage to White (McGinnis 1988, xiv–xv). McGinnis was just four years out of college when he chronicled Nixon’s second presidential campaign. During a casual conversation with an advertising agency

vice president, McGinniss learned that likely Democratic Party nominee Hubert Humphrey had hired the ad agency to create a winning image for his campaign. Shortly after that meeting McGinniss happened to be meeting with a publisher to discuss ideas for a potential books. They realized together that “there might well be room for a more specialized, tightly focused treatment of what seemed a striking new phenomenon – the marketing of political candidates as if they were consumer products,” (McGinniss 1988, xiv-xv).

McGinniss echoes one of Kramer’s rules for literary journalists: “[They] work out implicit covenants about accuracy and candor with readers and with sources,” (Kramer 1995, 23). McGinniss clearly was not objective in the book, and much of his personal opinion is reflected in his writing. By declaring early on in his book that “politics and advertising have always been ‘con games’” he demonstrates Kramer’s rule on covenants and candor (Kramer 1995, 23). He asserts that television, “with its emphasis on style and disinterest in substance is particularly useful to politicians without ideas,” (Steiner 1992, 367–8).

McGinniss follows other tenets of literary journalism, including “spending immense amounts of time with the major characters, participating in both the intimate and dramatic moments of their lives,” (Steiner 1992, 371). However, he seems not “to develop or sustain affection for the people and cultures he describes. His intense negativism, if not hostility, brings him closer to the bleak worldview of some modern novelists and separates him from the more tolerant or even enthusiastic sensibility of literary journalists,” (Steiner 1992, 367).

McGinniss reinforces the awkward image of Nixon that White captured in the 1960 campaign. “Selling shows how the image of Richard Nixon – initially grumpy, aloof, and fearful of television – was transformed and promoted through television to audiences,” (Steiner 1992, 368). Unlike White, McGinniss doesn’t grow attached to the characters he is chronicling. He

often seems to find character flaws that he brings out in his writing. “[H]is people do themselves in, announce their own poignancy, crassness, lostness, and now and then, nobility,” and “Despite his studious avoidance of overstatement, some critics saw *Selling* as a hatchet job by a young know-it-all” (Steiner 1992, 367).

The next major advancement in the style of narrative reporting on political campaigns was the work of Richard Ben Cramer as he covered a wide range of candidates during the presidential campaigns of 1988. His book, *What It Takes*, portrays the candidates “... as multidimensional *people*, rather than ‘personalities’ or stand-ins for various ideologies or policies” (Boynton 2005, 33). Cramer writes in his author’s note: “I wanted to know not about the campaign, but about the campaigners” (Cramer 1993, xiii).

One of the weaknesses that Cramer found in other political reporting was an over-reliance on Washington insiders and unnamed sources. “I found that they didn’t really know these guys. They knew them in a kind of Washington way, but they didn’t know what was driving them onward or what was the real reason that they were climbing to the top of the pyramid,” (Boynton 2005, 33).

In gathering material for the book, Cramer abandoned the campaign trail in the early phase of the campaign season. Instead he began researching hometown connections and past histories of the candidates. “I went to the candidates’ hometowns. I talked to the people they played catch with when they were kids. I went to their high schools, their colleges, their next-door neighbors, and their first employers ... by the time I got *back* to the campaign trail, I wasn’t just the next journalist with a notebook who wanted a ten-minute interview. I was their *mama’s friend*, or I was the guy their *Aunty Sally* had called them about. I knew all about their life. I had met the people they were genuinely close to. I had taken the time to steep myself in their world.

And that made them look at me differently” (Boynton 2005, 33).

Cramer describes in another interview what he wanted to do differently with his characterizations. “The two questions I’m trying to answer about them are these: Number one, what kind of person can be president? How does this guy develop the will, the focus, the energy, the discipline and the faith in himself to say, ‘Yes, I ought to be president’? And number two... what happens to him? Not in the sense of how does he win and how does he lose, but in the sense of what the process does to him” (Williams 1988).

*What It Takes* is a large tome, with more than 1,000 pages of insightful writing about the men who campaigned to be president that year. Cramer covered Vice President George H. W. Bush and Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole vying for the Republican nomination, as well as Governor Michael Dukakis, Senator Joe Biden, former Senator Gary Hart and Representative Dick Gephardt on the Democratic side. “I want my books or articles to have the same impact a novel has on a reader: Something happens to the character in the story during when an emotional truth is revealed. That is a goal nonfiction and fiction can share. Both are capable of creating a life-changing experience for the reader,” (Boynton 2005, 35).

Cramer’s in-depth interviews and immersive journalistic techniques paralleled the “hanging around access” that Talese was known for. Cramer cites hanging around with candidates for several days without asking a lot of questions “... sooner or later, the candidate is going to get so comfortable with my being there that he will lean over to me after one of the interviews and say, ‘*Damn*, I fucked up that agriculture question *again!*’ ... And at that moment I’ve moved from my side of the desk to his side of the desk” (Boynton 2005, 38).

The narrative techniques Cramer used throughout to build the characterizations, through sensory detail and conversational dialogue, wasn’t well received by critics. *New York Times*

Columnist Maureen Dowd criticized Cramer's style:

With a prose style more irritating than entertaining, the author takes Wolfe's faded New Journalism technique and sends it into fifth gear—VRO-0-0-OM! VRO-0-0-OM!— dousing each page with italics, ellipses, exclamation points, sound effects, dashes, hyphens, capital letters, and cute spellings. It's never 'character cops' when it can be 'Karacter Kops.' Bob Dole rarely starts a sentence without an 'Aghh' or 'Gggaahh.' He even hums with a lot of consonants: 'Hnnghhhh gnngh hnnnnnnnggh. Dut dug duunnnnnnghh dghndughnnnnnnn! Yut dut dut dunggghhhh. . . .' He never smells victory when he can smell 'VICTORYYYY !'(Dowd 1992)

Ronald Brownstein of the *Los Angeles Times* was also taken aback by the sheer size of the book. He often found Cramer's own voice mixing with that of the characters in his reporting. Overall, however, Brownstein observed the influence of previous New Journalists in Cramer's writing.

Cramer has produced a work that should be put under glass: It's one of a kind, a hopped-up amalgam of Teddy White, Tom Wolfe and Norman Mailer – day-glo civics. Everything about this book is oversized: its ambition, its scope, its flaws, its energy. Presidential elections are the white whale of American journalism – and in Cramer they have found a manic Melville (Brownstein 1992).

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Approach**

This project is a fact-based narrative on Rupert Boneham's 2012 gubernatorial campaign as a third-party candidate. The story focuses on Boneham as the primary character. It also profiles key members of the campaign staff and party organization. This project documents the specific complication of the role of Boneham's celebrity image against his role as a serious political candidate.

The researcher served as a volunteer staff member in the campaign and wrote a chapter of nonfiction narrative about the campaign in a spring 2013 Journalism 614 Writing Literary Journalism class. In writing this earlier account, he relied on participant observation ethnographic methods.

Characterization of key persons was developed through the use of sensory and status details, as well as extended dialogue. Scenes detailing key events were reported through the use of first-hand observation by the researcher, or reconstructed through eyewitness accounts and photography of campaign events. These methods were also used in the extended narrative project, as two additional chapters were written documenting the pre- and post-election time periods.

The primary method for gathering new information for this project was through immersion and on-site access. As an unpaid media director for the campaign in 2012, the researcher continued to gather information on the campaign and its participants. Any individuals working with the campaign were informed of the dual role of the researcher as a literary

journalist who was both reporting on the campaign while serving as a campaign staff member.

### **Structure**

Robert Schmuhl summarizes Richard Ben Cramer's approach to reporting as "[k]eeping people rather than policies or personages at the forefront of his work" (Schmuhl, 1992, 331). The character of the candidate provides much of the drama for this report. Personalities of the other players also provide interesting sensory and status details to build scene and narrative action. Where these personalities interact often creates dramatic or pivotal scenes that are detailed in the project.

The original work for this project, written for the Journalism 614 class, focused on Boneham's initial outreach to several county parties. His goal was to win their support so he could secure the nomination as the Libertarian candidate for governor. This initial chapter introduced Boneham as a character in the narrative, developing his personality through sensory and status detail, dialogue, and other descriptive elements.

Additional narrative for this project was developed through primary and secondary research to cover several other aspects of the campaign and its aftermath. The first section is composed of background and narrative reconstruction of Boneham's initial contact with Libertarian Party officials, and their reaction to the celebrity's desire to run for office on their platform. This section expands on the major complication in the narrative of Boneham gaining acceptance from party members who were initially leery of his motivation, and their trepidation that his public image that was far removed from their idea of an acceptable candidate. This chapter also introduces and develops other key characters in the narrative, including the campaign manager and the Indiana Libertarian Party's executive director. Their daily involvement in the campaign made them prominent characters throughout much of the narrative.

The literary journalism project includes detailed information on the candidate's return to his personal and professional life after the campaign. This research includes details on how the campaign affected his financial ability as he struggled to continue his mentoring program, Rupert's Kids, in the months following the campaign. Boneham began this program prior to his appearance on *Survivor*, and continued to operate it while he ran for office. Boneham originally created his mentoring program to mentor teens who had run afoul of the law, and to help them get back on track by developing self respect. Boneham's program worked toward this goal by continuing their education in both academic and vocational arenas. Boneham's emphasis in the vocational area helped teach the participants work skills and work ethic. Boneham was the primary, and usually, the only mentor in the program.

Included in this final section of the narrative is background information and narrative on how Boneham's personal and professional life was affected by the campaign (e.g., financial impact). This includes coverage of a relocation of Boneham's mentoring program to neighboring Shelby County.

The researcher used ethnographic participant-observation as well as secondary research to build the narrative of the initial contacts between Shelbyville officials with Boneham. Community members who formed relationships with Boneham during campaign carried over after the election, and their support encouraged Boneham to move his charity to Shelbyville. Secondary interviews with the key individuals involved in these events allowed the researcher to coordinate information and create the narrative.

The researcher has conducted interviews with the participants in the story and attempted to accurately reconstruct the scenes presented here according to corroboration between the sources. To indicate where the researcher was not present and has reconstructed the dialogue or

monologues presented in these scenes, italics text has been used to show where such dialogue is presented. If the researcher was present to witness a scene, any dialogue or monologues have been recreated to the best ability of the researcher. The dialogue witnessed by the researcher is placed in quotation marks according to standard journalist practice.

The primary subject of the narrative, the candidate Rupert Boneham, was a well-known celebrity in Indiana, where the narrative takes place. Due to his celebrity status, he frequently makes appearances before audiences, or met with his fans in casual settings. During these interactions, he routinely tells stories of his experiences on the TV show *Survivor*, or about his life, including his development of his mentoring program, Rupert's Kids.

The researcher followed the celebrity-turned-candidate for most of a year leading up to the election, and for another year when he returned to his former routine of celebrity appearances. The researcher has been present numerous times for many of the monologues presented in this narrative. The researcher observed that while the monologues varied based on the type of audience present – e.g. youth or adult, and on time allotted – the central message of the story stayed consistent across the various presentations. Several recordings of many of these monologues have been made by the researcher. When a monologue by Rupert has been presented, it has been reconstructed from those sources.

Key parts of the narrative – where reconstruction of scene and dialogue/monolog was used – have been presented in written or oral form to the original participants for verification of information.

## CHAPTER 4

### BODY OF PROJECT

#### **Introduction – Meat-On-A-stick**

“That’s IT! That’s the meat-on-a-stick!” Our candidate was excited as he spied the food trailer on the south edge of the Indiana State Fair. The trailer was decorated in an Asian bamboo hut theme, and both the trailer and the adjacent canopy were covered in signs: Sati Babi and Egg Rolls ... Ice Cold Lemon Shake-Up. Food trailers swarmed along the roadways throughout the fairgrounds. Signs on many of them suggested that “ice cold lemon shake-ups” were very popular at the State Fair.

“Every time I asked for meat on a stick at one of those county fairs this summer, this is what I meant. I asked for that, and you guys brought me corn dogs.” The grinning man teased me and the other member of our crew.

That summer was one of Indiana’s hottest on record. We already had nineteen days straight of temps reaching over 90 degrees, and had one particularly miserable county fair week when temps hit triple digits. Our candidate never let it show, always campaigning, always smiling, always shaking hands.

Our candidate was a pretty easygoing guy. He’d push himself through the countless days at county fairs and events. He’d never show how beat down he was. But when he finally let the façade drop at the end of the day, he wanted comfort food. Being at a fair, he remembered his favorite fair-food: meat-on-a-stick. We had never found it, until now.

We hopped off the trolley at its next stop. “Come on,” our candidate said through his bushy black beard. “Let’s get some meat-on-a-stick.” The other campaign worker looked at me and smiled. We were used to being redirected by our candidate. We followed our candidate, who

wore slacks and a button-up shirt. Sweat patches were already appearing through his shirt. The other volunteer and I wore shorts due to the summer heat. Our candidate, however, was forced by convention to dress for the office he wanted to win.

With his heavy black beard, deep set eyes, curly untamed hair, and deeply rumbling voice, he was instantly recognized by Martin, the owner of the meat-on-a-stick trailer.

“These are great,” our candidate said loudly pointing at a couple dozen rows of skewered pork that sizzled on two long, trough-style grills. “My father brought us to the fair, probably forty years ago, and we loved your food!”

“Thirty-nine years,” Martin replied. “My Dad, Tony, had his first trailer here at the state fair thirty-nine years ago.”

“We’d come to fair each year, and search around just to get it,” our candidate said. “I remember asking my dad what kind of meat this was. ‘I don’t know’ he said. ‘But it’s GOOD!’”

Martin reached into the food trailer and grabbed two small paper trays full of the shish kebobs.

“It’s pork,” Martin explained as he handed them to our candidate. “Boston butt is the cut.”

Our candidate passed one of the trays to the other volunteer and held out a calloused hand to Martin in thanks. As they shook hands, Martin reached under his green apron and brought out his cell phone.

“Can we get a photo? Here in front of the booth?”

“Sure!”

Martin started to hold the phone out at arm’s length. “I can take it for you.” I’d been taking photos of the candidate with voters all summer long.

He passed the camera over. “Be sure to get the sign in it,” he commented. I nodded.

I took the photo with Martin’s camera, then I lifted my own digital camera. “One for our site?” the candidate asked.

“Sure!”

Again, I framed the image with the trailer and signs featured prominently. Click. That would be on the campaign’s social-media pages later in the day.

By now, people strolling past saw our candidate standing with the guy in the green apron.

“That’s Rupert!” someone said behind me. “That’s Rupert from *Survivor*.”

“Hey there!” Rupert rumbled loudly.

“Can we get a photo with you?”

“Sure!” He replied as Martin stepped away. The other volunteer retrieved the tray of shish kebobs from our candidate. Rupert, still holding a stick of meat, held his arms wide.

He gestured, waving the kebob my way. “Give your phone to Troy, he’ll take the photo.” The women, one pushing a stroller with a toddler in it, passed me their cell phone. Rupert held his arms wide. They stepped up, one on either side of the reality-television star.

Rupert’s campaign was full of these moments. He was well known as a character on a reality TV show, not as a politician. The challenges we faced in the campaign seemed daunting. Running a campaign as a third-party candidate, with little budget, impacted the entire campaign team. None of us, however, was affected more than the candidate himself.

Our story doesn’t start at the state fair. Nor does it begin when I joined the campaign earlier in the year, embedding as a journalist for a class project as I pursued a graduate degree. After that class, I took on an unpaid position as the campaign’s media director. But, with no money and a volunteer staff, each staffer took on whatever roles were needed. I spent most of

that year travelling with Rupert, taking photos and talking with the few journalists who covered our campaign. I witnessed the ups and downs of a campaign that some called doomed from the start.

The best place to begin the story is about a year and a half before I became involved with the campaign. Rupert had decided he wanted to make a difference. He wanted to change lives and correct problems he saw in “the system.” So he made a phone call.

## Part 1 – Life is Good – Changing the World

*Who is this Rupert?* Chris Spangle, executive director of the Indiana Libertarian Party, asked himself as he put down the phone. Spangle's thick fingers moved over his keyboard as he Googled the name of the man who wanted to run for governor of Indiana.

Spangle looked young – too young to be the executive director of Indiana's third-largest political party. Not yet thirty, he was a member of the millennial generation. His close-cropped ginger-colored hair and round boyish face suggested that he was fresh from high school, not a seasoned political veteran.

Members of Spangle's generation were more in touch with the stars of the hit MTV show *Jersey Shore* than politics. Spangle was just as familiar with Indiana's political elite as he was with the stars of the reality television. He knew as much about potential candidates for governor, as he did about that show's self-proclaimed party-hard girl Snooki.

The executive director title didn't come with a big paycheck. The Libertarian Party didn't have many elected politicians. Some scattered town council members, a town judge or two, and an odd state house representative were all the party could claim across the nation. That low-level political status didn't bring in the big-dollar donations the other two parties received. Still, the Libertarian Party in Indiana was doing well enough to afford a full-time executive director and a small office on the fourth floor of a building diagonally across from the City-County Building, Indianapolis' seat of government.

*Rupert ... Bone-ham ...* everyone tended to sound out the syllables in Rupert's last name as they typed or wrote them. Three-time contestant on *Survivor*, the TV show where people are dropped onto a "deserted island" to fend for themselves in groups – "tribes" as they were called

on the show – competing to be the one NOT voted off the island and off the show each week. Each season’s winner gets a million-dollar paycheck

Spangle looked at the photo on the celebrity’s Wikipedia page ... tie-dye ... scraggly beard and shaggy hair ... looks like a mountain man, not a politician. Spangle read through the information.

Rupert’s personality came across as gentle, strong, and sometimes, slow. He had developed a signature gesture of pumping both fists up by his head, flexing his biceps like a body builder, and yelling “Arrrrgh!” *Oh! THAT guy! He’s from Indiana? He wants to run for governor of Indiana? Really!*

Spangle looked again at the promo shot of the man with a scraggly beard and shaggy hair, wearing a tie-dyed tank top and flip-flops. Spangle couldn’t contain his sarcasm.

*Oh, good! We’re going to have another Snooki run for governor as a Libertarian!*

...

Spangle and fellow Libertarian activist Mark Rutherford drove out to meet with the man Spangle dubbed “Indiana’s version of Snooki.” August 2010 lived up to the typical hot and muggy Indiana summer reputation. Spangle, who usually wore shorts and a T-shirt, dressed in long pants and a polo shirt. Rutherford, an attorney, was in his usual office attire – khaki slacks with a dark-blue blazer. He skipped the tie in the August heat.

Neither of them knew what to expect as they walked toward the small building that Rupert used as his headquarters.

They had also been in contact with a more traditional candidate – a well-off local businessman with military experience. He was deciding between running as a Libertarian or as a Republican. Spangle was hopeful that the easy ballot access the Libertarian Party could give

would draw the other potential candidate to his party. If he showed any promise, Rupert could be nurtured and developed for a later race.

Dressed in tan cargo shorts, an unbuttoned camp shirt draped loosely over in a tie-dyed tank top, the bearded man smiled, showing white teeth framed by his scraggly black beard.

*Rupert Boneham*, he said to introduce himself, standing straight, looking each of his guests in the eye. He extended his hand in a firm motion that signaled both a welcome and that he expected a firm handshake in return.

They moved toward the large conference room just inside the main door of the office suite. A mix of ornate dining-room chairs and wheeled, padded office chairs circled a long, polished wood conference table.

One wall was covered in newspaper clippings, fan letters and postcards, and pictures – some hand-drawn – of Rupert. It seemed that any correspondence Rupert received since his first appearance on *Survivor* was stapled or tacked to that wall. *Survivor* memorabilia were scattered among cupboards and small tables covered with tie-dyed cloths. A large framed photograph of the contestants from his latest appearance on *Survivor* hung on the wall to the right.

Once basic pleasantries were done, Spangle and Rutherford began their standard candidate interview. They asked about life history, experiences, what makes Rupert tick?

RFB stood for Rupert Frederick Boneham. RFB Enterprises was the parent company for his celebrity appearances. In addition to the celebrity business, he and a business partner had formed an entertainment company with a record label. The popular band, The Dirty Heads, was their major act. Several months later, he would sell off his interest in this company and use that money to fund his campaign for several months.

Rupert, with two others partners, formed Tournament Towers. The company transported and operated field equipment at sporting events for broadcast-TV networks. Rupert had extensive experience working in this field prior to his notoriety on *Survivor*. He parlayed his experience in the field to a fleet of several semi-truck trailers and half-a-dozen crews working the fall and winter sports seasons.

Rupert's tone was much more serene as he described the history and people of Tournament Towers. He related how his two partners didn't always get along well, and one left the business, taking one of the trailers and forming a competing company. Billy, the other partner, was diagnosed with terminal cancer at about the same time. Billy had lost his battle a few months later.

When the two Libertarians inquired about how he won the million-dollar prize on *Survivor*, they heard a story that we campaign workers would hear many more times.

*I played that game three times, but never won, he explained. First in '03 on Survivor: Pearl Islands' and then in '04 on Survivor: All Stars. When I finished Pearl Islands, I came home and told my family I'm never doing that show again! It should be called 'Conniver' not Survivor for the way everyone lies and cheats.*

*Three days after I got home, he continued, the producers called me and asked if I wanted to play the game again.*

*That game almost killed me.* He explained that they told him that they were adding a zero to the dollar amounts they paid the contestants, because this was their all-star cast of past contestants.

*You mean if I get voted off first, I make \$25,000 instead of \$2,500? I can make as much for three days on your silly show as I made getting all the way to eighth place last time?*

*Yes.*

*Let me tell my family.*

His wife, Laura, and his daughter, Raya, were unhappy. But, go back he did. This time, on the *All Stars* show, he came in fourth overall. And then there was the \$1 million Fan Favorite prize. *We were all on stage for the live show, at the end of the broadcast of season eight. Jeff [Probst - the show's host] said, 'Stick around folks, we'll be back here for a second live show later this week, and you, America will get to choose YOUR favorite from these sixteen contestants.'*

Rupert's voice slides in and out of this baritone when he gets excited. He's told this story many, many times and plays up the excitement for his audience.

*They called it 'America's Tribal Council.' Fans got to vote for who their favorite contestant was. They built tension in that show by calling four of us down as finalists. During one of the commercial breaks, Boston Rob [another contestant] looked at the three of us, and says, 'Let's stop this here and each take \$250,000.'*

*I said, 'Heck NO! I'm winning this thing!' And I did. That was a great feeling when Jeff wrote that check on my back right there on stage. That's how I won. America saw me playing the game, twice, like how I live my life - with respect, and standing on my own. They rewarded me. That was a great feeling.*

The million dollars was the elephant in the room for Spangle and Rutherford. The Libertarian Party doesn't have donors with deep pockets or near as many donors as the other two parties. They asked what he did with his winnings.

*I gave it away. Three weeks after we got back here, we were back to zero.*

The details were a bit more involved, and it probably took longer than three weeks to get everything set and paid. But Spangle realized that three weeks after depositing the check, every dollar had been accounted for on Rupert's mental balance sheet.

*The government [state and federal] took about half in taxes, Rupert explained. My wife and I got ourselves back to zero and out of debt. We found a house up here on the north side, and moved out of 'the hood.' Then I got my mama out of debt, bought her a new car. Used, but new to her.*

*Whatever we had left – we gave it away. My wife picked the elderly, my daughter picked the animals, and I picked the kids. We found local charities and donated what we had left. We gave back to our community.*

*That's always been my motto, and I made it official when we formed Rupert's Kids: 'Life is good. Be You. Give back.' That's how I live my life, and how I teach the guys in the mentoring program to live theirs.*

Spangle and Rutherford were becoming impressed with this man. His conversation easily tied to political questions, such as taxes. Rupert wasn't skilled or knowledgeable about official Libertarian stances, yet he understood and lived the Libertarian philosophy of self-reliance.

...

As he sat across from the two Libertarians in his office, Rupert did what he'd done most of his life: prove himself to be more than his appearance suggested. The media attention and celebrity persona that had grown out of his time on *Survivor* had reinforced his gentle-giant stereotype – the kind yet gruff man who led a simple life.

He did what he always did to overcome people's resistance to his scraggly exterior. He told stories. He had a lot of stories. Most of the stories he would tell were about his time on the

show. But with this pair of Libertarians sitting across from him, he needed to show them the side of him that had helped him grow several businesses and a mentoring program for troubled youth. Now that they had asked about the program, Rupert's Kids, he did what he always did. He told them a story that showed who he was.

...

*I was working a couple jobs. Odd jobs during the day, and night manager for a bar in Broad Ripple. I was couch surfing – sleeping on the couch of a young, single mother who worked several jobs, including serving at the bar on the weekends. I was asleep by the time she got Jake, her thirteen-year-old son off to wherever he went during summer break.*

*On the first day of school, I heard a lot of noise and woke up to see Jake home before the school day was over. He had cussed out a teacher and got expelled. The next day, a couple of his buddies did the same thing at school. They were all going to hang out together. I was going to have three of them in that small house making noise when I was trying to sleep.*

*I said enough of that. If you're not going to school, you can learn how to work. I had a truck, some tools, and a mower. I normally spent the afternoons doing odd jobs: landscaping, renovations, whatever I could find. I talked with Jake's mom, and she loved the idea.*

*The next morning, Jake and I started working; usually cutting grass. A few weeks later, the mothers of the other two kids called to see if I would take their sons with me as well. I worked them hard, and I set the example. Even today, when I'm out with the guys in my mentoring program, I don't ask them to work any harder than I'm willing to work. So I push myself to teach them work ethic.*

*That's how the mentoring program got started. We reincorporated and renamed it as Rupert's Kids after I was on Survivor. It started with Jake and his buddies. I started teaching kids that if they weren't going to make it in education, they could make it in vocation.*

*Now we get the third-strikers, the tough cases, the last-timers, the repeat offenders. We used to get them before they got their first arrest, or right after. Now the guys we're working with are on their third, fourth, fifth incarceration. Instead of getting them turned around early, they've learned how to make an illegal living. They've reinforced those bad choices. Once they get their first felony, the system works against them, discriminates against them. No housing, no job, because they have that felony.*

*We teach them to respect others by respecting themselves. And that's hard when society tells you you're a loser. You can't even get an apartment because you've got felony on your record.*

Three and a half hours after they had entered the offices of RFB Enterprises, Spangle and Rutherford had learned a lot about the bearded TV celebrity. He wasn't another Snooki. Despite his unkempt appearance and public image as the "hairy-scary survivor," they realized that Rupert might just have the experience and charisma to make a serious run for office.

Despite Rupert not knowing about Libertarian philosophy or understanding the intricacies of the party's policy, he understood what it meant to be a Libertarian. He was a business owner, someone who had worked with enough sections of the state government and the juvenile-justice system, to speak with authority on the issues important to Libertarians. He had lived a life of self-reliance. He had built a mentoring program that, he claimed, had a success record of over 80 percent without taking a single taxpayer dollar.

Spangle realized that if Rupert got the Libertarian nomination to run for any office, he could bring attention to the party. Would he win? Still unlikely. But Rupert could help grow the party by showing a positive side of living life by Libertarian principles and why shrinking government helps the little guy.

Life is good. Be you. Give back. That was Rupert's official motto. As the interview ended, Rupert had no idea what he had just begun. Despite the recent tragedy of losing his friend and business partner Billy his life was good. Anyone looking at him knew he was being himself. The bushy black beard, unkempt hair, and casual tie-dyed attire were trademark Rupert. As for giving back ... he had been doing that with his mentoring program. He wanted to change the world. He had told that to Laura before she married him. He was going to start local and then grow his mentoring program to change world. This was his next step. With his celebrity status combined with the political know-how of people like Spangle and Rutherford, he was ready to help shape Indiana and change its criminal-justice system.

He believed that all he had to do was treat everybody right, work hard by making appearances and giving speeches, tell his stories of how he and Rupert's Kids had been changing lives in Indianapolis, and he would win. Indiana would win.

Then he could show the world how to change. He didn't realize it then, but he was thinking just like he had when he first played on *Survivor*. He could play the political game by being himself: Be kind to everyone, and he would win. He forgot, though, that on the show that first year, he had finished in eighth place.

...

Several months later, it was time to begin building potential campaigns for 2012. Spangle got the call that the businessman he and Rutherford had been courting had decided against

running as for governor as a Libertarian. With no other candidate in the works, Spangle turned to Indiana's Snooki – Rupert Boneham.

The Libertarian Party's state suite office also had a new tenant. Evan McMahon was a long-time political operative. He was now heading up the Atlas Liberty Political Action Committee, or PAC.

In a small group, like the Indiana Libertarian party, last names, such as "Spangle," and "Rutherford" were used for anyone with a common first name such as Chris or Mark. But more unique first names like Evan or Rupert were used when no other person with the same first name was in the group. Even to those in the larger Indiana political scene, Spangle was usually referred to in conversation by his last name, while Evan was referenced in the more familiar first name form.

Evan's political experience began at an early age. His family was friends with a Democrat who was running for a seat in the Indiana state Senate. He was a mere six-years-old when he went with his relatives to campaign events and quickly became the campaign's mascot. Little Evan joined them as they canvassed neighborhoods or passed out campaign literature at a local grocery. By the time he was fourteen, Evan had enough campaign experience, including organizing door-to-door canvassing teams, that he was asked to join a local campaign for a municipal race in Bloomington.

*But you're a Republican. I'm a Democrat,* he remembers telling the candidate.

*We're going to pay you.*

*Oh! Well, that's different.*

Over the next several years, Evan worked for several campaigns, mostly Republican. His political philosophy slowly shifted to independence, individual rights, and other positions that challenged his previous perceptions.

His new political philosophy hit a snag when Evan, openly gay since high school, realized that the Republican Party's stated support for individual rights didn't apply to him as a gay person. In 1996, the GOP was instrumental in pushing through the Defense of Marriage Act, which limited the rights of gay Americans. Even as a high-school student, Evan saw the act as clearly violating the Full Faith and Credit clause of the Constitution.

In the 2010 election cycle, he had been involved in several Republican campaigns. Both races he was involved with featured candidates more in line with Libertarian policies than Republican stances. He watched both candidates run afoul of the party machine.

Rutherford, who was serving as vice-chair of the national Libertarian Party and director of Atlas Liberty PAC, urged Evan to switch party affiliation. Atlas Liberty needed an executive director with political skills. Evan resisted. The GOP could win races. Libertarians were barely making a dent in election returns.

Election night in 2010 sealed the young activist's political fate. Like every other attendee, he brought along a date to the Marion County Republican Party victory celebration. He was used to being the token gay for the party. The Celebration area was divided into two rooms: a party room, with cocktails and entertainment for the party faithful, as well as a war room where party officials, candidates, and key political operatives worked the phones with field operatives, gathering data on voter turnout and election results. This area was supposed to be a no-go zone for those not directly involved in the campaigns. Evan entered and saw many spouses, dates, and friends mingling with party officials. He tried to bring in his male date, but was rebuffed by a

local party official. Later, seeing more non-essential people in the room, he tried again. Again, he was stopped. Being the token gay in a conservative party, he realized, only went so far.

The only tight race in the city that cycle happened to be the race Evan had worked on. The margin was coming down to a couple hundred votes, and the race was likely to be unresolved until the final votes were counted late in the evening. With the majority of the GOP races in a clearly Democratic county over, party officials moved to shut down the war room. Evan protested when another party official discussed throwing in the towel for his candidate. His candidate's race was going to come down to the wire. To the county party, however, the night was over. Evan's candidate had dared, four years before, to challenge the state party over a plan to consolidate multiple county offices into a single office. The bold candidate and the gay campaign staffer had become the county party's black sheep. That night, Evan finally had his fill of the party not following through on what the party said it stood for: individual liberty, smaller government, and standing by its principles.

The next day, Evan called Rutherford. A week later, he officially became executive director of the Atlas Liberty PAC. He set up shop in an empty room within the Libertarian Party's Indiana offices. He knew, with the switch, he would be expected to be a key advisor and head prime campaigns in the coming years.

The tiny three-room office was cramped. He and Spangle were opposites in many ways. Evan was thinner than Spangle, with longer, darker hair. Spangle rarely, if ever, drank alcohol. Evan – a recovering alcoholic who offset his addiction to alcohol with cigarettes and coffee in large amounts – routinely took smoke breaks on the sidewalk in front of the building. He kept a coffee maker in the office, yet several times a day he walked to the coffee shop a block away.

Spangle's desk sat perfectly square in orientation to the rest of the room. Papers were neatly organized and rarely out of place. Evan's office was unkempt, with piles of materials scattered around the room. His current coffee mug was white with a red Soviet star, complete with hammer and sickle, underscored by text that read "Socialist States of America." He liked to collect odd bits of political memorabilia and used them when they struck his fancy.

Spangle drifted over to Evan's small room in the office suite, and announced that their first choice for governor candidate, the businessman, had officially declined. Spangle told the veteran campaigner that there was another potential governor candidate. Evan began asking all the basic questions:

*Is he a business owner?*

Spangle replied: *Yep.*

*Will he put up his own money?*

*Some...*

*How long involved in the party?*

*Not long, but he's getting there...*

Evan saw enthusiasm on Spangle's youthful face. A look that said I can't wait to drop the bomb on you.

*What's this guy's claim to fame, what am I about to regret?* Evan finally asked.

*Well, he was on Survivor.*

Evan thought about it for a minute. Something wasn't right with that idea. Then it started to click in his mind.

*Is that the reality show where they drop people off on an island, and they have to live Lord of the Flies like?*

*Yeah.*

*Oh my God! It's the guy with the pirate beard and the tie-dye!*

*Yeah.*

Evan stood quickly, without backing up his chair, Socialist coffee mug still in his hand. His legs hit hard against the desk, which rocked forward and back.

Evan's mind pulled up an image he remembered of the *Survivor* star, tie-dyed tank top, yelling "Arrrgh!" as he flexed his arms over his head.

*No!* Evan slammed his coffee cup down on the desk, splitting it apart down the middle. Coffee sloshed out of the broken mug across the cluttered papers.

Evan's thoughts flashed to his future: *I just left a reasonably successful career with the GOP to join a party that was going to run this Rupert – the guy that looked like a homeless dude.*

Spangle shut the door and drifted back to his side of the office. Muffled expletives sounded from the other side of Evan's door.

Spangle's own first impression came back to him.

*We're going to run Indiana's version of Snooki for governor.*

Several minutes later, once Evan got over the initial shock, he called Rutherford. He railed at his friend for a few minutes. Rutherford responded patiently. Evan recognized the tone of calm sympathy Rutherford had developed from years as an attorney.

*Forget about his appearance. We can change all that. Do you know what his qualifications are?*

*He won a million bucks on a TV show! Call the other guy back. He doesn't look like a pirate!*

Again, Rutherford's calm voice urged him to view the entire picture. *Rupert is a successful business owner, and he runs a mentoring program that takes troubled youths, turns their lives around, and does it WITHOUT taxpayer money.*

*Oh. I remember something about that.*

After several more minutes of calming advice from Rutherford, they ended the call. Evan began pulling together information on Rupert. He was still reluctant, but willing to look at how to develop a gubernatorial campaign around the celebrity.

A few weeks later, at Spangle's urging, Rupert and Evan attended a Libertarian networking event at a local restaurant.

Rupert showed up wearing khaki cargo shorts, a tie-dyed tank top under a bowling shirt. His sunglasses were on top of his head, buried in his curly hair, and his tan work boots were covered with grass stains. Only Evan, Spangle, and a few party officials knew Rupert was thinking of running for office.

Other attendees were surprised that the local celebrity had turned out. He was peppered with questions about his celebrity status throughout the night. Evan listened closely, hearing how Rupert turned those questions around to frame his political ideals:

*How much did you win? What'd you do with the money you won?*

*I won a million dollars. The government took half of it and didn't even ask me how to spend it.* That answer stuck with Evan. Rupert continued on about giving away what was left of his winnings, after getting his family out of debt. Again, Evan heard him turn that statement to his political ideals: *We gave money away to local charities ... that's what we should be doing at the state and local levels. Teach people to stand up on their own, give them a hand up, not a hand out.*

Evan watched Rupert interact with both Libertarians and with restaurant patrons who recognized the celebrity. Evan saw him smile, and give his full attention to whoever approached him. Even untrained as a politician, this guy was connecting with everyone. Still, Evan struggled with the idea that he'd be running Rupert's campaign – the guy who looked like a homeless dude. He would have to first get the Libertarians in the state to accept Rupert as a genuine candidate. Once his candidate got the nomination of the party, he'd have to convince the political establishment, the media, and voters that Rupert was a serious candidate.

## Part 2: Be You – Campaigning

The football announcer’s voice thundered out across downtown Indianapolis. His words echoed off of the steel and limestone buildings that surround the heart of the city. “The next light show will begin in four minutes ...”

The Circle – the point where Market and Meridian streets collide and loop around a tall pillar of limestone, a monument to soldiers and sailors long since dead – was alive with people on this chilly February night. Revelers from around the world were out tonight to pay homage to the new monument that had arisen on the south edge of The Circle.

Standing at least twenty feet tall, resembling soldiers awaiting their orders, Roman numerals XLVI proclaimed that Super Bowl 46 was about to descend upon Indianapolis. A series of photographs were projected onto these unmoving sentinels. The letters reflected a myriad of color photographs and videos celebrating the sport of American football. Fans posed in front of the letters while their friends snapped photos with cameras and cell phones.

A well-known figure walked among the shifting masses of sightseers. He appeared oblivious to the chilly wind that whistled through the cold steel of the city. He wore only a simple dark sport coat over a tie-dyed T-shirt. During the past months, he’d begun the transition from reality-television personality to candidate for governor. I walked slowly behind him, clustered with several volunteers from his office down the street, who were there to help him as the need arose that night.

He quietly led his entourage through the bustling crowd. The candidate casually held the hand of his twelve-year-old daughter. His other hand occasionally raised a lit cigarette to bearded face. A gust of brisk wind quickly dispersed the odor of the smoke into the inky black sky.

“Rupert!” a male voice cried out. “Can we get a picture?”

“Sure,” his deep voice replied, drawing out the lone syllable. A young male campaign worker in a thick jacket slid in and discretely removed the cigarette from Rupert’s fingers. Rupert’s daughter released his hand, and thrust her hand back into her coat pocket to ward off the cold wind. She drifted quietly to the side, seemingly used to these public interruptions. She blended silently among the small crowd of campaign workers.

The man, wearing a blue parka emblazoned with the logo of the Indianapolis Colts football team, and two children with winter jackets drawn tight, stepped in close to Rupert. I stepped forward, my hand open. “I’ll take the photo for you.” The man passed his cell phone over to me, pointing excitedly to the button that would snap the photo.

Another campaign worker stepped quickly behind the group. He crouched down, and raised aloft a campaign sign right above Rupert’s head. “It’s our time!” the bright blue sign exclaimed. “Rupert for Governor.”

“Ready ... three ...two ...” I said as I held the cell phone and framed the group in the center of the screen. The father smiled brightly, while the boy and girl smiled awkwardly, as if they were not quite sure who the man was.

The electronic click of a cell-phone camera sounded, and the phone’s screen glowed with the new photo. The man retrieved his phone, beaming at the image on it, oblivious to the bright blue of the campaign sign peeking out at the top.

“I’m running for governor,” Rupert said, offering a business card to the father. He gave a short stump speech, then smiled and shook hands with the children. With quick well wishes, he moved away to continue his slow meandering tour of the Super Bowl festivities.

Rupert retrieved his still-smoking cigarette from the campaign worker. His daughter’s hand slid gently into his again. They turned as one and walked slowly through the crowd.

The ebb and flow of the sightseers brought a constantly changing crowd toward the large Roman numerals at the base of the monument, as the familiar recorded voice again bellowed, “The next light show will begin in three minutes ....”

...

The location Evan chose for Rupert’s campaign headquarters was a block and a half away from the circle. The blue carpeting in the large main lobby of the former bank and mortgage offices complemented the blue of the campaign signs taped to the glass doors at the front of the suite. The counter in the reception lobby is lined with bottles of liquor and soda. That Friday evening in January of 2012 was a special night. Rupert would be celebrating his forty-eighth birthday with his family the next day. Friday night, however, was the campaign’s fund-raising event.

The walk around the Circle, and this party was my first event with “celebrity Rupert” as I began covering his campaign. I was happy to lend a hand and my experience as a professional photographer, helping the fans get their photos taken with the celebrity. Being that close to the action, I was able to observe first hand how the celebrity process works and gained a perspective of what it entails being in the entourage of a celebrity. Eventually, this would lead to me joining the campaign staff and expanding on these duties. But this night, I was just along to see the celebrity-turned-politician in action.

About a dozen other people were scattered around the front reception area of the office suite. Most of them were Libertarians who had come to support the candidate and socialize. Evan drifted from person to person, chatting or refilling dry glasses. Several people asked him about the large windows that pierced the walls between each of the three small offices just off the reception area. Evan smiled and recalled: “That’s an interesting story.”

Thirty-five years before hosting Rupert's birthday party, the same suite of offices at 129 East Market Street was the scene of a nightmare for Richard O. Hall. He had a meeting on a blustery cold February morning. The mortgage banker was meeting with his client Tony Kiritsis. No one thought much about the long package Kiritsis carried with him into Hall's office in the back corner of the office suite. Staff members were horrified when Hall walked out of his office with the twin barrels of Kiritsis' shotgun wired around his neck. On the other end of the shotgun, Kiritsis had wired the trigger to a ring on his finger – creating a dead man trigger that would fire the gun if he dropped it due to being captured or killed.

Kiritsis eventually unwired Hall from the gun after receiving word that he was granted immunity from prosecution. Unfortunately, Evan explained, such promises were never recognized as valid when hostages were held. Kiritsis was found not guilty by reason of insanity, and served ten years in prison.

Evan adds that Hall had installed large windows between the small offices after his three-day hostage ordeal with Kiritsis. The managers could see each other's offices while sitting at their own desks, should another crisis occur. Evan points out a metal button set into the wall just below the height of a desk. Hall had an alarmed panic button installed in his office.

This office, in the heart of the power center of Indianapolis – a block away from Indianapolis' City-County building, and three blocks away from the governor's office in the Indiana Statehouse – was Evan's way to cast Rupert's campaign as a serious attempt by a serious candidate. Being able to finance a campaign with downtown offices was a calculated gamble by Evan to show that the campaign was more than just a celebrity seeking attention. It would take several months for him to appreciate the scope of the gamble, when rent payments collided with other expenses and left his candidate with a pile of bills after the election.

...

“There’s Rupert!” a shopper at the Boat, Sport and Travel show exclaimed, elbowing her companion in the ribs to get his attention. I was with Rupert and Evan that day, and I had brought along a camera to take photos of Rupert with his fans for the campaign’s social media. Even though Rupert’s little booth was tucked into an out-of-the-way area, squeezed between two long RVs at the back of the exhibition hall, he was already attracting attention. I realized I was going to have a very busy day photographing the candidate with his fans.

“How are you?” Rupert’s deep, gravelly voice bellowed as he waved. His wide, toothy smile was mostly hidden by his full, black beard. He turned back to the family that had just moved up to his table, seeking autographs from the celebrity-turned-governor-candidate.

“Can we get a picture?” the mother asked, juggling her jacket and a handful of RV brochures as she struggled to pull her camera from her large purse.

“Of course,” said Rupert cheerfully as he stood. His voice, deep like a bear’s rumbling growl, was friendly and excited. I gently took the woman’s camera from her, and motioned to a vacant spot on a nearby table where she could set her belongings.

“Here, I’ll stand in the middle,” Rupert said, spreading his arms wide inviting the family to join him. His blazer opened wider, showcasing his trademark tie-dyed shirt. The woman stepped in next to him. Her young teenage daughter and two blond-haired boys – about half the height of the girl – gathered around Rupert. The girl and her mother smiled casually, as their eyes sparkled with excitement. The boys smiled stiffly with their lips stretched wide, exposing teeth clamped together, as their eyes squinted tight against the impending flash of the camera.

The woman chuckled as she warned her boys, “Make sure you keep your shoes ...” She grinned at Rupert, referencing the time on *Survivor* when he stole the other team’s shoes.

“Oh, no!” Rupert said, playing along with the joke. “That was just in the game,” he added, dropping his normal baritone into a deeper bass. “We made sure we used them for trade to get supplies for everyone,” he explained, fudging the truth slightly to give the children a morality lesson. “We played the game as pirates.” His voice dropped even deeper, sounding like a grizzled sailor spinning yarns in a tavern. “I tried to be a good pirate.”

After I took the photos – one on their cell phone, and one with my camera for the campaign’s social media – Rupert sat back down at his stack of pictures. The two young boys were first up at the autograph table. Rupert extended his rough and calloused hand toward the smaller of the two. “What is your name?” he asked in a quick staccato manner. He held his hand out the few extra seconds it took the boy to realize he was supposed to extend his own hand. Rupert gently gripped the boy’s hand, but didn’t speak until the lad’s eyes moved up to meet his own.

“Evan,” the boy said excitedly.

“Nice to meet you Evan,” Rupert said, then turned to other boy, and offered his hand again. “And you are?”

“Wyatt,” said the youngster as his small hand was swallowed by Rupert’s large fingers. Again, Rupert waited until the boy met his gaze before his meaty hand shook the boy’s hand in a crisp, precise motion. “Nice to meet you Wyatt.” Rupert turned back to the first boy. “Evan, is that E – V – E - N?”

“E - V - A - N” the boy explained patiently.

“Oh WOW!” Rupert said excitedly. “Evan is my campaign manger’s name.” Rupert turned to a campaign helper “Do we have an Evan card?”

Evan, the campaign manager, a few feet away, pulled out one of his business cards and passed it to the campaign volunteer, who handed it to Rupert. He held the card out to Little Evan. “See that name on there? Evan is my campaign manager.”

The boy’s grin widened as he looked at the card. “I’m an Evan, too ...”

Rupert looked up at the boy’s mother. “He already thinks he’s my boss,” he said with a wink.

Little Evan interrupted. “Hey, do I get to keep this?”

“Sure! It has your name on it, doesn’t it?” Rupert replied with a wide grin. He turned to the other boy, standing patiently by the table. “And Wyatt. W – Y - A – T – T?” The boy nodded. Rupert’s black marker moved across the photo. “To: Wyatt – Arrrgh!” he said as he scrawled the pirate lingo under the boy’s name. “That’s Pirate for ‘Thank you.’” Rupert flashed him a toothy grin.

Off to the side, Tina, a campaign volunteer, and Big Evan were standing behind a table covered in red, white, and blue tie-dyed T-shirts emblazoned with the Team Rupert logo. Anyone who donated twenty dollars or more received a tie-dyed campaign shirt. The line to meet Rupert was moving briskly, and it continually stretched past their table. Donations for the shirts, Evan realized, were slow. But a few people dropped twenties in the donation jar from time to time, and the celebrity-turned-candidate autographed the shirts for them.

Another grade-school-aged boy with dark hair stepped boldly up to the table, seemingly ready to burst with excitement. Rupert extended his hand again, waiting to lock eyes with the boy. “And what is your name?” Rupert said in the familiar staccato baritone.

“EVAN!” The boy proclaimed loudly, obviously hoping for a similar reaction from Rupert.

Rupert's toothy grin again emerged from behind his wiry, dark beard as he announced. "I need an Evan card. We've got another Evan here."

...

Evan's move from Republican to Libertarian campaigns came with new challenges and opportunities with persuading candidates to run. Unlike candidates hoping to run as Republicans or Democrats, Rupert didn't have to run in Indiana's primary election.

The Libertarian Party, under state law, nominates its candidates at state or local conventions. Those candidates gain automatic access to the ballot in the general election.

Evan learned that Libertarian candidates, however, face a challenger that Republicans and Democrats don't face: "*none of the above*" or NOTA as Libertarians designate the disembodied, faceless option. Democratic and Republican parties allow unopposed candidates in a primary to advance to the general election. The Libertarian Party requires that all candidates, even the unopposed, receive a majority vote of delegates to get the party's nomination.

When Rupert won the viewer's choice contest on *Survivor*, he received the largest vote total in the history of the show. To win his party's nomination, however, he has to receive a majority of the Libertarian delegates' votes, signifying that they preferred him over NOTA.

Evan quickly learned that many Libertarians believed that Rupert's celebrity status and eccentric reputation could resonate badly with voters. Rupert had to convince enough delegates to support him, or the Libertarian Party would have no candidate in the high-profile race for governor.

...

A few weeks after his birthday celebration, Rupert, Evan, Spangle, and I climbed the two-dozen or so steps to main door of the Rush County Courthouse, a tall limestone structure in

the center of Rushville. Rupert was there to explain his ideas for managing Indiana, and hopefully sway that county's delegates to his side. So far, his only adversary for the nomination was NOTA. He and Evan knew that they needed to reach out to county parties to overcome the stigma of Rupert's celebrity status. Often they heard that party members were whispering that Rupert might be running merely to elevate his own celebrity status.

The leaders of the county party, Paul Morrell, and his wife, Joyce, warmly greeted them. Morrell was dressed in blue jeans, boots, and a button-up blue denim shirt with the Libertarian party logo embroidered above the left front pocket. His buzz-cut hair and closely trimmed beard, both with more gray than black, contrasted sharply to Rupert's deep black curly hair and shaggy beard. Both men had the rugged, creased faces of men who spend long hours outside.

Morrell directed them into a tiny wood-paneled meeting room on the first floor, with about thirty wooden folding chairs arranged five rows deep facing a small platform. Three large leather desk chairs sat behind the table. The room appeared to be used for smaller, official government meetings. That night, the twenty or so Libertarians would use this room as they selected their delegates to the party's state convention.

After moving quickly through various reports, including updates on local governmental activities, Morrell introduced candidates who were seeking nomination at the state convention. The first candidate was Morrell's son, Jeremiah, in his early twenties, running for state representative.

Jeremiah, heavy-set, with dark hair and a youthful face, shifted nervously on his feet as he began his presentation. He held up a green box of Girl Scout cookies "Like any normal politician, I've brought bribes for your votes," he proclaimed. "Help yourself to them, while I tell

you about my campaign,” he added, passing several boxes of cookies to a woman in the front row. The attendees chuckled as the boxes made their way through the crowded room.

Jeremiah finished his remarks quickly, reminding the attendees that even though he was running unopposed for the nomination, he still faced NOTA at the convention. “I’d like your support, if you attend the convention.”

Next, the elder Morrell introduced Rupert. “I speak from the heart,” Rupert began in his softer voice, then rolled back into his loud baritone. “We can change our state. We MUST change our state.”

The elder Morrell sat off to one side of the platform. He watched intently as Rupert spoke. The crowd in the small room matched his attentiveness. Cautious looks dotted the faces in the crowd. Rupert told them of his years of mentoring at-risk teens, and explained how the principles from his mentoring program can be applied to reduce dependency and incarceration rates. The mood of the crowd eased. Their faces were beginning to relax. Heads nodded in agreement.

“I can go on and on,” Rupert proclaimed after about ten minutes. Evan, sitting in the back row, had just raised his hand in a fist, signaling to wind down the speech. “Do you have any questions?”

Several hands shot up immediately. Property taxes, authority of the state government over the county government, and prison reform proved to be popular concerns.

A few weeks later, at a campaign event in a roadside diner in a neighboring county, Paul Morrell told me that Rupert was able to win over the members of his county’s party.

“He’s genuine,” Morrell explained, clad in his familiar blue denim shirt. “We had many of our members skeptical that he was just using our party to increase his celebrity. After they

met him and listened to his message, they saw that Rupert was willing to use his celebrity status to aid the party. He really does want to change the state.”

Morrell pointed at a man with a long salt-and-pepper colored beard, and his wife, seated at a nearby table. “Tom and Patty were among the skeptical. Since Rupert came to see us, they’ve come to three of his events. They love his message, and how he’s bringing attention to our party.”

...

“They did a great job with decorations,” Sam Goldstein said as he surveyed the banquet room in the Caribbean Cove and Conference Center in Indianapolis. Goldstein’s silver hair and rugged yet refined features showed him to be in his mid fifties. The far end of the room was set with a stage, backed by dark blue velvet curtains. Rows of long tables, about a foot wide, draped in white linens stood facing the stage at the far end of the room. The tables were divided into three columns, nine rows deep. Chairs stood behind the tables, empty now, but sure to be filled the next day as the delegates packed the hall.

“It looks like a real political convention,” Goldstein said, his eyes twinkling with pride.

The following day, March 24, the Indiana Libertarian Party would be nominating candidates for state and federal offices. Rupert was the party’s only declared gubernatorial candidate. Still, the party’s rules allowed any party member to run, and Rupert still had to face NOTA.

The next morning, delegates slowly slipped into their seats in the convention hall. Goldstein, his thin frame decked out in a cream colored linen suit with a colorful checkered tie, stood on the stage. There were many activities to get through before candidate nominations would take place.

After lunch, delegates reconvened for the heart of their meeting. With late arrivals, the registrar announced that ninety-two delegates were present in the convention hall.

Chairman Goldstein called the meeting to order shortly after 1 p.m. Rupert sat at one of the narrow tables in the center section, a few rows from the stage.

In the back of the room, a lone cameraman from a local TV station was busy mounting a video camera on a large tripod. Instead of all the major stations in the market covering the Libertarian convention, only one TV station sent a cameraman. Not even the local CBS affiliate that carried *Survivor*, which gave Rupert his celebrity, was present to cover his nomination.

Goldstein began with reports from party officers. As chair, his was first. He broke from the traditional role of impartial chair, and offered up his own impromptu endorsement of Rupert. When he was told that Rupert had contacted the party, and he wanted to run for governor, he wasn't sure about the celebrity.

"Riiiiiii-iiight ..." Goldstein said, trailing out the syllable in apparent disbelief. "The guy from *Survivor* wants to run for governor." Goldstein explained that he and other party leaders sat down with Rupert several times, learned of his background, and saw the principles he taught in his mentoring program. "That's when I knew we had a potential candidate."

Goldstein, after all of the other officer reports were finished, finally announced "According to our bylaws, the [next] order of business is statewide offices, including governor of Indiana ... Rex Bell, do you have something to tell us?"

Bell, one of the most respected members of the state Libertarian Party, walked toward the podium. In his slow, rural Indiana drawl, he began telling delegates a short parable. The tale centered on a fictitious story about the time he and his friend Stinky Wilmont tried to get a stubborn mule named Bella to move.

“I slapped Bella with the reins,” the grandfatherly Bell told his audience. Then, his voice shifted slightly to indicate a new character speaking.

“‘Now Rex, you have to be gentle with them.’ Stinky bent over and picked up a piece of firewood about this big around,” Bell held up his hands cupping an imaginary piece of firewood about the size of a softball, “[Stinky] walked up and smacked that mule right betwixt the eyes ...”

“I said, ‘Stinky, I thought you said you had be gentle.’

“He said ‘Well, you do ... but, first, you have to get their attention ...’”

Bell looked out at the convention delegates as he ended the story. “Libertarians have always had the best ideas for running the government, but we haven’t always been able to get the attention.” Bell said, his smile widening as he shifted away from his story. “We have a candidate running for governor this year that gets the attention.”

Bell explained that his most recent Libertarian county meeting had four times its normal attendance because Rupert was the featured speaker. “I believe that Libertarian candidates, up and down the ticket, will gain and benefit from the attention that this candidate is going to bring.

“Now, it’s my great honor to place into nomination for the Libertarian candidate for the governor of Indiana, Mr. Rupert Boneham.” Energetic applause filled the room.

Goldstein stepped up to the podium. “Is there a second?” Multiple cries of “Second!” sounded across the room. “I think you could hear about a hundred seconds there,” he said with a wide grin. “Were there any other nominations for the office of governor of Indiana? ... Hearing none, I will close nominations.

“I will now entertain a motion [to approve] Rupert Boneham as our candidate by acclimation.”

Cries of “So moved ...” and “Seconded!” echoed across the meeting hall.

“All those in favor, stand up and applaud,” Goldstein shouted into the microphone.

As one, the entire mass of delegates stood and applauded wildly.

“I’d like to ask our candidate for governor to come up and say a few words to the convention ...”

Rupert, his broad smile – larger than I had yet seen on his face - was framed by his wiry black beard. “I would love to ...” his deep baritone boomed from the middle of room. The microphones on stage picked up his voice and sent it echoing across the chamber. He moved toward the stage as delegates gave him congratulatory handshakes, and patted his broad shoulders enthusiastically as he passed them.

On stage Goldstein shook the nominee’s hand vigorously as he turned the podium over to Rupert. “Thank You, Thank You ... Thank YOU!” Rupert said waving at the still standing delegates.

“I have been thinking about this for, well ... the last few years, since I found the Libertarian Party,” he explained as delegates took their seats again. “As Libertarians, we don’t have a lot of money, but we have that desire to change the world. And we are going to start with Indiana. We are going to make Indiana the showplace for the entire fifty states.” He continued his rambling, unscripted comments until Spangle touched his arm, reminding him that there were still more nominations to be made that day.

“That’s why we are out there every day, showing that we’re all Libertarians ... It’s our time!” Rupert raised his hands as applause rang out again. Grinning widely, Rupert headed back to his seat. Goldstein called Evan, Rupert’s campaign manager, to the microphone.

Evan, dressed in a stylish purple oxford shirt, stepped up to the microphone as he wiped his eyes. “You all got to see me cry – one time,” he said, looking at the crowd.

“It won’t happen again ...” teased Spangle from off stage.

“It will,” Rupert’s deep voice contradicted loudly from the main section of the room.

“When we win!”

...

Three weeks before the Libertarian state convention, the Indianapolis Star’s headline read “Indiana Tornado 2012: Henryville Schools Face Tough Calls With Twister Outbreak.” That week, lives in the small town of Henryville changed suddenly and unexpectedly as a storm front moved through Henry County. At 2:15 p.m. March 2, an EF-4 category tornado, with winds raging above 260 miles per hour, ripped the small town apart. Buses had just been loaded with students at the end of the school day, and were still parked in front of the schools when the tornado warning sounded. With the funnel cloud bearing down on the school campus, a vice principal realized there was no time to pull the students off the buses and into the school buildings. He signaled the buses to race away from the twister. That proved to be a fortuitous decision: The funnel cloud tore apart the school. The small town was devastated with major damage to homes and businesses. Three people lost their lives, and many more were injured.

...

Once Rupert had secured the party’s nomination, Spangle decided to temporarily move his office across the street into Rupert’s campaign headquarters. This would allow him to become a key advisor to the highest profile race while still helping other candidates in his role as the party’s executive director.

Working together, Evan and Spangle planned how to use Rupert's celebrity status for the campaign. They needed to use his notoriety to break through the pre-ordained agenda that accompanies third-party candidates: "You won't win, so why should we pay attention?" Rupert's celebrity status as an already known – although "hairy and scary" – public personality would help, they hoped, to get him in front of voters where other third-party candidates would have struggled to get in the door.

One of the early calls Evan received asking for Rupert to appear as a celebrity was for a benefit for the Henryville tornado victims. The day included a charity motorcycle ride, which fit Rupert's image and lifestyle. He already had several charity motorcycle rides supporting his mentoring program, and was often asked to ride along as part of other charity events. Having the celebrity along allowed the ride organizers to announce his presence before the ride in hopes of increasing attendance at the event.

April 14 was a cold and windy Saturday. Despite the rain that was being forecast, several dozen motorcycles lined up outside the American Legion in Greenfield. A group of bikers from the next county south, Shelby County, had stepped in to organize the motorcycle part of the benefit. Even though it was a few weeks before Indiana's riding season normally began, the guys from Shelbyville were happy to help the relief effort for the tornado victims.

Rupert roared up to the Greenfield Legion on his large 1500cc tie-dyed motorcycle about forty-five minutes before the ride was to kick off. Instead of a warm leather jacket, he was wearing several layers of sweatshirts, flannel shirt, and a nylon jacket. I was outside waiting on him, while Evan set up table with campaign materials inside the Legion. As Rupert dropped his kickstand, another rider wandered over.

“Hey man,” the rider said, holding out his right hand. Rupert and the biker closed in for a traditional biker greeting, right hands clasped, step in close to one another, left arms across the other’s shoulders, patting their backs with two loud slaps. “Where’s your rain gear?”

“My daughter took it to school and left it there,” Rupert said pulling a cigarette pack out of the inner breast pocket of his coat. “It was dress up day. She went as a biker.”

“Gonna be cold, might rain.” The biker looked up at the heavy cloud cover. Rupert shrugged.

Across the parking lot, two of the Shelbyville-based bikers who had organized the ride were working the registration area. Both men wore leather vests over their leather riding jackets. One vest sported a patch reading “Dipstick” while the other read “Pitbull.” In the six weeks since the tornados decimated Henryville, Doug “Dipstick” Burns and James “Pitbull” Fallor managed to plan, advertise, and get enough bikers together to stage the motorcycle ride.

They had planned the route, had called the taverns that would serve as rest stops, and had contacted police departments to serve as escorts within their towns.

Dipstick rode because he loved what he called “Wind Therapy” as his bike rumbled through the countryside. He rode in and organized benefit rides to help those who needed their lives put back together. The people down in Henryville had their worlds rocked, and he knew that bikers would help the way they knew best – get their bikes out of winter storage, gas up, and ride. The Henryville community needed financial assistance at that time. So the bikers stepped up to lay down their money and ride for the cause.

*We can’t change the world,* Dipstick realized as he looked at the bikes that slowly drifted into the Legion’s parking lot. *But we can change somebody’s world.*

I stayed close to Rupert, ready to photograph him with fans, or to hand him campaign materials if he needed to pass them out. At the registration table, riders were laying down twenty-dollar bills, one per bike, to register. They recognized Rupert as he wandered over to the table. More handshakes and backslapping. Dipstick, who was grinning despite the drizzle that had begun to fall, directed Rupert to roll his tie-dye bike to the front of the line of motorcycles. Two abreast, the motorcycles stood, waiting for the call to ride. Rupert positioned his bike behind the leaders.

Eventually the call for all riders to gather sounded. Instructions were given, a blessing for the riders was prayed, and the bikes roared to life. The noise of about a hundred engines coming to life warmed the area, despite the forty-degree weather and drizzle. Overhead the clouds looked angry.

The color guard from the Legion stood at attention and saluted on either side of the driveway as the bikers slowly pulled out behind their leaders. The front bikes, with Rupert right behind, lead the column of bikes through Greenfield and turned south on State Road 9. Their next stop was supposed to be the Crosstown bar in Shelbyville, about thirty minutes south of Greenfield. The weather, however, had other plans for the bikers.

“The windshield on a bike will divert wind around you,” Dipstick explained after the ride, “but won’t stop rain from hitting you. When it rains, we slow down until it stops stinging our faces.”

Mother Nature unleashed not only frigid rain, but hailstones as the riders headed south. Pitbull led the riders into a gas station at the corner of State Roads 9 and 52, a mile or so after the hail began falling. They struggled to quickly get all of the hundred or so motorcycles under the metal canopy. Wet and sore from the rain and hailstones, riders who smoked pulled out

cigarettes and lit up. Eventually, the hail turned to rain again, and slowed to conditions safe enough to ride in. As their engines roared to life again, Pitbull watched about half of the bikes turn north and head back to Greenfield. With another ninety cold and wet miles remaining in the ride, no one faulted those who decided to head back to warmth and comfort of the Legion hall in Greenfield.

Rupert joined the remaining riders in mounting up, and heading south. Ninety miles and three stops later, roughly a dozen bikes returned to Greenfield. Each stop a few more riders had peeled off, heading home instead of braving the frigid temperatures and cold drizzle. The remaining riders were soaked, frigid, and shivering when they pulled in.

“The ice outside of Morristown was the worst,” Pitbull said.

“Hail five miles into the ride!” Rupert added as the bikers began stripping off their water-repellent leather gear. Rupert, lacking a rain jacket, was pulling off layers of soaked cotton and flannel shirts. His tie-dyed T-shirt underneath those layers was wet around the collar and about halfway down his shoulders in back. “Once you get wet, it just gets COLD,” he added as he pulled out a cigarette.

...

Two weeks later, on a Sunday morning, Rupert and I met up again with Dipstick, Pitbull, and a couple dozen of their friends, most of whom had braved the weather for the ride in Greenfield. The weather was again frigid and cold as he rolled his tie-dye bike into the parking lot of the Crosstown bar in Shelbyville. In addition to being one of the places the riders had stopped at two weeks earlier, this was the home base for Dipstick’s group of riders. Today, they were mounting up and heading down to Henryville. They would be delivering the check in

person, and again asked Rupert to ride with them. I followed in one of the chase vehicles that trailed the riders, ready to help any who had mechanical difficulties.

Once the motorcycles were under way, Mother Nature repaid the riders' efforts two weeks earlier. The sun broke through the clouds, and the temperatures climbed. About halfway down to Henryville, Pitbull could see trouble ahead. On the shoulder of a winding county highway, a rider on what the biker community called a crotch rocket – a bike designed for speed and racing instead of leisure riding – was stopped at the side of the road. The brake system on his rear wheel was smoking. As Pitbull arrived, flames were shooting out of the brake line. He grabbed a T-shirt from his bike's saddlebag and smothered the fire. The bike could continue, but he had only his front brakes to stop with. Pit and the other rider dashed ahead to catch up with the column.

In Henryville, one of the churches that survived the devastating tornadoes was serving as a food pantry. Its gymnasium was stacked with cases of drinking water and canned food for the residents who were struggling in the face of the devastation. It was here that the riders pulled in. Rupert's tie-dyed cycle was again one of the lead bikes. Its unique style drew the attention of residents who had gathered for church services and stayed to see the bikers roll into town. Townsfolk recognized the beard and the tie-dye. "Rupert! Can we get a picture?" someone called holding up his cell phone camera.

"Sure," he said as he pulled off his jacket and draped it over his bike's seat. His black shirt was unbuttoned, revealing a red, white, and blue tie-dyed campaign T-shirt underneath. He swept his arms wide. "I'll get in the middle," he said as a mother and daughter slid in. Dad pushed the button on the camera phone.

Bikes continued to roll in. Rupert smiled. “How are you?” he asked, shaking hands with anyone coming up. As young kids approached, their eyes drifted away from him, looking at his tie-dye covered motorcycle. “You wanna get on it?” A nod. “Hop on!” he said. Delighted, the youngster climbed aboard. Smaller kids he picked up and sat on the seat. Cameras clicked. Smiles and hugs brightened the people of the town recovering from the horrors of two months before.

Townpeople offered up food to the riders once the bikes were all parked. Trays of pulled pork and beef brisket along with baked beans donated by a nearby restaurant were served in the church’s gymnasium. Henryville residents, in addition to the donated food, had baked a wide variety of desserts for the riders.

Following the meal, the organizers of the benefit day in Greenfield presented an oversize replica of the real check to the town. The amount read \$6,667. They explained that when the accounts were settled, it was all sixes. Bad luck. One of the organizers had pulled out a dollar, and added it to account before the certified check was printed at the bank.

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Paul Gable, a reporter for the *Shelbyville News*, realized that if there was a foreshadowing for the heat that would blanket the Shelby County fair in 2012, the obvious choice would be the fiery inferno that consumed the fairground’s wooden grandstands building several weeks earlier.

At 1:01 a.m. on May 19, the Shelbyville Fire Department got the call that the wooden structure at the fairgrounds was engulfed in flames. The 133-year-old structure was fully involved, with flames licking the night sky in the sleepy little town situated southeast of Indianapolis.

In 1902, the grandstands were a mere twenty-three years old when three-time Indy 500 Champion Wilbur Shaw was born in Shelby County. Shaw competed as a youngster in his first real race – in a cart pulled by a goat on the dirt track in front of those grandstands. A century later, fire investigators found enough evidence to suspect arson for the blaze that had consumed the fairground’s historic structure.

Fair officials declared that the burning of the grandstands would rally the residents of Shelby County around the fair. Expect record attendance, they said. They had a mere seven weeks to clear the debris of the ruined structure and find makeshift seating for the expected crowds for major events, such as the tractor pull contest and the demolition derby that typically draw large crowds in small farming communities.

Gable still heard the words of the fair board in his head as he pushed the stroller with his young son around the sparsely attended Shelby County fair. The record-high heat wave killed any hope of the fair board members’ expectations coming true. This year, arriving early at the dirt track wouldn’t secure the few shady spots in the grandstands; fans had to get there early to find their spots on the much smaller section of temporarily erected bleachers.

With highs above 100 degrees through most of the week and the heat generated by the animals, the animal barns were baking at over 120 degrees inside. Fearing for the safety of the animals, the fair board recommended that all livestock be returned to their home farms and pastures where the animals could better deal with the heat.

It wasn’t just animals that were staying home. The high temperatures made this one of the lowest attended fairs most folks could remember. Gable and his fellow news staff watched and reported as fair participants learned to adapt to the unusual situation. The livestock auction, when

kids in the 4-H program attempted to sell their animals to community members, was just such a lesson.

As heat in the show barn climbed above 100 degrees for the auctions, the youth had to get creative to sell animals that had been sent home. Most of the youngsters pretended that their animal was in the show ring, carrying a lead rope attached to an invisible steer, or tapping a white show cane against the invisible flanks of an imaginary hog. Gable had chuckled as one enterprising young man carried a package of bacon into the ring and held it aloft to entice bidders to purchase his missing hog.

As Gable and his wife pushed their young son around the fair grounds on the last day of the fair, the temperature was topping out at 105 degrees for that Saturday. The last day was hottest day of the hottest fair the community could remember. He was surprised to recognize a bearded man, his fresh white shirt already stained with sweat, greeting fairgoers just outside of the manufacturing exhibit building.

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Rupert had campaigned across the state, attending many of the county fairs that summer. In my role as Media Director for the campaign, I routinely travelled with him. Occasionally, I'd ask my wife to come along and help staff the small booth we would set up with campaign materials and tie-dyed T-shirts. Shelbyville was one of the times she came along to help. The heat that day was oppressive, as my wife and I drove down to Shelbyville to meet Evan and Rupert at the county fair.

At a county fair Rupert's campaign staff would typically occupy the local Libertarian Party's booth. Shelby County didn't yet have a county party, so we had to set up our own booth. We had brought along a couple of pop-up canopies, two folding tables, and a bunch of tie-dyed

red, white, and blue campaign T-shirts to generate donations. Rupert tried to help us set up the canopies. But, someone recognized him and pulled him away to talk. The rest of us kept going with the set up.

This Saturday wasn't just the hottest day of the summer; however, it was also my forty-eighth birthday. My wife and I were spending it campaigning, instead of going out to a nice dinner at one of our favorite restaurants.

By the time the booth was set up, we were all drenched with sweat. Evan, who suffered from Crohn's disease, was especially strained. We were positioned outside; along the west-facing wall of a large barn that served as the fair's manufacturing exhibit building. As the hot July sun travelled across the sky, that wall acted as a large reflector, bouncing even more heat into our little patch of shade. Evan headed into the barn to escape the heat. That was not much better than being out in the sun.

Even with the oppressive heat, Rupert kept greeting a fairly steady stream of people. "Hey there," his voice boomed whenever someone did a double take as they recognized him. "Rupert Boneham. I'm running for governor," he said as he held out his calloused hand for a handshake.

"Can I get a photo?" most of the fairgoers usually asked. I'd step in and use their camera or cell phone to take a photo for them, then raise my own camera. "One for our page?" Rupert asked. They always said "yes" with a big smile. Click.

A younger couple, husband and wife pushing a stroller came toward our booth. The husband was dressed in a T-shirt and shorts, with his ball cap turned backwards. He had a camera slung over his shoulder. They hovered outside the booth for a moment as the candidate finished his chat with another fairgoer.

“Rupert Boneham,” he said thrusting his hand out toward them.

“Paul Gable,” the young man said. He said he was a reporter for the local newspaper, and introduced his wife and young son.

*Damn, this is a guy who is REAL, Gable realized as he talked issues with Rupert. Yet, he doesn't have that celebrity presence. You can walk up to him and not have to walk through ten different bodyguards. He's a guy who achieved fame and fortune, but is still grounded, and hasn't lost touch with the average Hoosier. He can talk about issues that are really facing Hoosiers: Do we leave the lights on this month, or do we buy food?*

Shortly after Gable and his wife bid us farewell and resumed their slow stroll of the fair, we saw familiar faces making their way toward us: Rex Bell and his wife Susan, one of Indiana's elected Libertarians as the town judge in Hagerstown in eastern Indiana. Rex was running for Indiana state senate, and the district he wanted to represent included parts of Shelby County. He was out shaking hands with voters at every county fair in his district.

Rex stood next to Rupert and started talking with voters. Susan sat in one of the canvas lawn chairs, next to my wife, in the shade under our canopy. I drifted over to them, keeping an eye on the two candidates in front of the booth.

“We just saw Evan in the barn,” Susan waved toward the building behind us. “He looks like he's about to pass out. He needs to cool down.”

I looked at my wife. She shrugged, not sure how to convince him to leave the fair.

Susan offered to watch the table if we could get him somewhere to cool off.

A sheriff's deputy was strolling by about then. I asked him if there was a medical station or fair office with air conditioning. He replied there wasn't, and suggested heading into town to a restaurant.

I headed into the barn and found the wilting campaign manager. He looked like a wet dishrag as he leaned against a wall. Evan dehydrates easily due to his Crohn's disease, and this stifling heat was draining him quickly. He didn't protest as I walked him over to where our van was. My wife already had the vehicle running. Evan slumped against the side window, as my wife backed the car out, and headed into Shelbyville to find a place for him to recover.

By then, Rupert was drenched with sweat. I could see the red and blue of his tie-dye T-shirt bleeding through back of his white dress shirt. Rex's wit remained cool. He pointed out that compared to the other county fairs that summer, Shelby County won the award for hottest campaign spot of the year.

Late in the day, when the hot July sun seemed to hang overhead for hours longer than it should, a man with short salt-and-pepper hair and black plastic-framed glasses, ventured out of the manufacturing building. He saw Rupert and drifted over. Rupert held out his hand in greeting.

"Rupert Boneham, I'm running for governor."

"Tom DeBaun," the man replied with a smile as he grasped Rupert's hand. "I'm mayor of Shelbyville."

Rupert's eyes lit up. He obviously wanted to talk to the mayor. Rex and I drifted away, leaving the two to converse. Rex turned to greet the few fairgoers wandering by, continuing his mission to shake every voter's hand in his district. I noticed he was acting as a shield to Rupert and the mayor, giving them time to chat. Both Rupert and Mayor Tom remember the short conversation. It would be the beginning of a relationship with a major impact on Rupert's mentoring program.

*No matter how this election turns out, Rupert told the mayor, we need to set up a time to talk. I've been running my mentoring program in Marion County for twenty years, and there are things we can do to assist your county.*

With promises made to get together at a later date, the mayor drifted away. Rex shook a few more hands. Susan sat behind the tie-dye tables chatting with a few voters who drifted into the little patch of shade under the canopies. Rupert, seeing a break in the sparse crowd, ducked back in under the canopy. He unbuttoned his drenched dress shirt, and peeled it off. Rex and Susan laughed as we saw the streaks of red and blue dye from the tie-dyed T-shirt staining the formerly white fabric. Rupert smiled and hung it over the back of a chair.

“Do you think Mike or John are out campaigning in a T-shirt at any fairs?” He jokingly asked about the other two gubernatorial candidates, Republican Mike Pence and Democrat John Gregg.

My phone buzzed with a text from my wife. She and Evan were at a restaurant in town. Our campaign manager had cooled down on the drive, drank a soda, and had recovered enough to head back out into the heat to smoke a cigarette. She texted that he had ordered food for both of them. They were about to have a nice dinner. We'd laugh for the next year about her date with the campaign manager, instead of me, on my birthday.

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Election days in Indiana are either frigidly cold and wet, or sunny and pleasant. We lucked out and got a nice sunny one. I spent the day running from polling place to polling place with Rupert, where he'd greet voters and ask for their votes.

I'll never forget the twinkle in his eyes as he looked around during the day. Each time, he'd have a toothy grin peeking through the curly black hairs of his beard.

“We’re going to win!”

I shook my head. “Ten percent, if we’re lucky.” No Libertarian in the Indiana governor’s race had pulled much more than low single digits of percent of the total votes. Four years earlier, the Libertarian in the race won just over two percent. I hoped we could double that.

Evan had learned a few days before the race, the Democratic Party and its backers were sending out emails and messages asking people not to vote for Rupert, but to vote for the Democratic candidate instead. That meant we were becoming an issue. Polling of the top two candidates, Pence and Gregg showed a tight race. Rupert could be the spoiler.

“We’re going to win!” he told me again at our next stop. I just shook my head. We’d be lucky to get ten percent.

That night, I knew before the news results were tallied that we hadn’t won. Just like when he was on his first season of *Survivor*, Rupert didn’t see his defeat coming. His hopes died as the results started coming in. I saw the worry creep in at the corners of his eyes, and the way he held his jaw as he watched the numbers on the TV in the pizza place where the Libertarians had gathered to have our election night — or to Rupert, the “victory” — celebration.

I could see the disappointment in his face as we moved out into an enclosed courtyard behind the downtown restaurant. After a few remarks from Sam Goldstein about making an impact, Rupert stepped up to the podium to give his thank you speech to the fifty or so people gathered. There was a slight tremor in his hands as he leaned forward and gripped the podium for a moment to get it to subside. He thanked a lot of people. He thanked us all for helping him get more votes in an Indiana gubernatorial race than any other candidate in history: Three-point-seven percent.

The Democrats were partially correct. The difference between the other two candidates was less than three percent. Some observers called Rupert a spoiler because of that close race, something that both Evan and Spangle were quick to deflect: Exit polling from other races in the past had shown Libertarians drew almost equally from both parties. Even splitting Rupert's votes sixty-forty between the other candidates, giving the majority to second-place candidate Gregg, wouldn't have changed who sat in the governor's chair the following January.

But to our candidate that night, none of that mattered. He had put his life on hold for two years to run for governor. Today, he had expected to win the race. Tomorrow, he'd go back to private life and have to pick up the pieces of everything he let slide: his mentoring program, his businesses, his family.

Tonight, he was tired, and those of us who knew him well, could see it. Tomorrow. Well... tomorrow, he'd be the bearded, tie-dyed, rumbling voiced Rupert from *Survivor* once again.

### **Part 3: Give Back – Surviving**

The week before the 2012 national elections, the U.S. Eastern seaboard saw devastation that had not been seen in generations. Residents of Cape Cod, Mass., were closing up from the summer tourist season and preparing for the winter's normal Atlantic storms. That week, as Hurricane Sandy made landfall, Cape Cod saw wind gusts of up to eighty-three miles per hour.

In New Jersey, high winds and massive storm surge waves battered coastal communities. The storm ripped apart the Atlantic City Boardwalk, tearing a fifty-foot section away. In New York City, the New York Stock exchange closed for two days because of the weather and its aftermath – the first two-day closure due to weather since 1888 when a great blizzard hammered the area.

The week after Election Day, visitors to Rupert's north side Indianapolis office might have mistaken it as a staging area for the cleanup efforts from the storm ravaged East Coast. The conference room, where the fledgling candidate had met with Spangle and Rutherford two years earlier, was piled high with office equipment and boxes full of leftover campaign materials – everything that was in the old campaign office the week before. Unlike the devastation at the Jersey shore, this was just the clutter of moving out of a campaign office.

The days immediately following Election Day didn't quite have the feel of a wake, but spirits were low following the election. Even though Rupert received the most votes for a Libertarian gubernatorial candidate in Indiana, our efforts only captured just short of four percent of the vote total.

In that week following Election Day, Rupert's spirits were down, yet he busied himself with the work of vacating the campaign office. Campaign volunteers were there to help, both emotionally and physically. Despite setting a new third-party record, we had still lost.

More folks drifted in and out that day. We filled boxes with tie-dye T-shirts. We made trip after trip, driving the clutter from downtown Indy, back up to Rupert's offices on the north side, eventually emptying the campaign headquarters of all but the ghosts of our presence.

The campaign headquarters had been our home, even if I wasn't there much as we travelled from one end of the state to the other. Ultimately, renting this office was a boondoggle – but one with good intentions. Evan had tried to run an orthodox campaign with a slim budget that was just as unorthodox as his candidate. Being close to the seats of power was intended to broadcast the campaign's serious nature. But without serious donors, the office suite became a financial burden that sucked every spare dollar out of the campaign fund and made filling the gas tank on the campaign vehicle a daily struggle. But that financial impact went far beyond the campaign.

“This is my pile of BAD ...” Rupert slammed the four-inch-thick stack of papers onto the top of the desk in his business office. I was sitting at what used to be his office manager's desk in the small office next to the conference room. Seven days had passed since the election, and Rupert's eyes revealed the toll of the campaign. Gone was the sadness from losing the race. Now he had a haunted look. Four inches of unpaid bills, collection notices, and other financial problems for his businesses sat between us.

Campaigning had taken Rupert out of the celebrity-appearance circuit. There was no money coming into his business from other avenues, either. Rupert's office and operations manager had spent most of the past year trying to hold Rupert's business world together while he attempted to change the state by running for governor. She told him that his relationship with the television sports networks had collapsed, and Tournament Towers had no jobs the last year. His

former business partner – who'd turned into his competitor – had gotten the contracts instead of Rupert.

Rupert had often found himself wishing that his other business partner was still around. Billy, whose death had been a catalyst for Rupert to consider politics, would have kept the business running. He would have helped raise money for the campaign. He would have kept Rupert's world running, while Rupert ran for office to change the world. Without Billy, the past two years had killed Rupert's financial world, as though a hurricane had ripped through his life. The hurricane was his run for office, and now he had to clean up the mess it left behind.

He usually ran his mentoring program as a break-even venture. In the years that donations were slow, he had enough business income, as well as celebrity appearance fees, to cover the difference. Not this year. He wouldn't be able to build his program as he climbed out of the financial rubble that the campaign had left behind.

The next several months were a very slow, very painful climb out of the hole for Rupert. He began selling anything he could. He usually got offers of pennies on the dollar of what he had purchased the items for.

Celebrity appearances happened, but the donation dollars were sparse, and consumed by filling the gas tank, paying utilities, or covering other expenses. Rupert was facing a long road to financial recovery. Every month was challenging for Rupert: Which bills could he pay, and which got delayed yet again. Fortunately, Dipstick called.

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Although they're not like the biker gangs you see on television or in the movies, there are still a lot of similarities. They have biker names. The nicknames usually have a connection to the real life of the biker. Dipstick knows quite a bit about real dipsticks due to his years as

automobile mechanic. Pitbull got his biker name from his love of that breed of dog. Other biker names may describe personality or physique, such as Big Dawg or Pillsbury. Even their nicknames had nicknames. They used a less formal shortened version if they were in familiar company. Just as a Robert would become “Bob” among friends, Dipstick became “Dip,” while friends of Pitbull called him “Pit.”

Dip and Pit have been riding for years, and like many in the biker community, they like supporting a good cause. “I can go to a charity ride, and throw down my twenty bucks, and feel good,” Dip told me after the campaign, about why he and Pit had formed a bike club. “Instead of showing up as a single guy laying down that money, but instead show up five or ten guys in a group, each of us throwing down enough twenties, that adds up.”

During the campaign a few weeks after the Henryville ride, Dip had contacted the campaign to see if Rupert could head up for a charity ride in Anderson. A young child, who had been seriously burned when a gas grill had leaked and exploded, was facing a pile of medical bills. Dip, Pit, and their motorcycle club were going to help. The presence of a celebrity would help them boost attendance and dollars.

Unfortunately, due to other campaign events, Evan had to decline Rupert’s attendance. The campaign pulled the candidate out of his normal cycle of celebrity appearances, including charitable ones. Dip was understanding of the Rupert’s situation, and knew Evan was trying to get him out to as many charity rides as possible in between campaign appearances.

Following the election, Dipstick still had a desire to return the favors that Rupert had given by riding for the Henryville tornado victims. He had no idea how big the financial mountain was that Rupert faced, but he had seen enough to know Rupert and his mentoring

program were trying to make a difference. He contacted me that winter, knowing I was still helping Rupert. “We want to help.”

And the Ride for Rupert’s Kids in Shelbyville was created.

We settled on the last weekend of April. Dip’s idea wasn’t just for a ride. He wanted a day of activities. He’d call me to ask if this or that idea would fly. *Bounce house for the kids? What about a hot rod car show?* Rupert’s answer: *Sure, why not?*

Hot-rod enthusiasts and motorcycle enthusiasts may share an interest in loud engines and racing down the highway. But the social overlap doesn’t exist. Bikers got together to ride. Hot rod owners might occasionally race, but they usually spent most of their time showing off their machines.

A few weeks later, Dip and Pit met with the Shelbyville Shifters Hot Rod Club. Their vintage autos and tricked-out muscle cars could be the centerpiece of the time while the bikers were out on the ride. Dip wanted to attract the local community to support Rupert’s mentoring program, not just another bike ride.

When Dip pitched the event to the club, he explained: *We’re not one of those ’70s bike clubs, smoking weed with their old ladies running around with their tops off. If that’s what you do, well, we’re not here to judge, but that’s not what we do.* I can imagine him smiling, with a twinkle in his eye, as he kidded the hot-rodders. He and Pit laid out their ideas, and asked the club to consider hosting a car show at the event.

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Pit was the road captain for the event. He planned the route and took his bike out, riding it ahead of time to anticipate potential traffic hazards. Going from Shelbyville to the halfway point of Edinburgh was normally a fairly straight line. He and Dip wanted a longer and more

scenic route so riders would enjoy the time on their bikes. This meant he had to lay out a route with turns and curves on less-travelled back-county roads.

Bringing in a hundred or more motorcycles to the small town may sound easy, but the goal is to move the riders through the town without stopping at traffic lights or four-way-stop intersections. That's where other drivers make mistakes - they don't see the next biker coming or they try to cut into a small gap in a mass of bikes. Safety of the riders was Pit's responsibility. Could the town help?

Pit reached out to old acquaintances. He had been a volunteer firefighter in one of the small fire departments near Edinburgh, and he knew the police and fire personnel in town. He got assurances from both chiefs that they would help get Rupert and the other bikers through town safely.

As April approached, Rupert's only concern was getting an event insurance policy. He didn't have the eight hundred dollars it was going to cost. Rupert was still squeezing every penny that came in, and the money for the insurance just wasn't there. Three weeks before the ride, Rupert drove down to Shelbyville to attend a planning meeting for the ride.

The Crosstown Bar is a rustic tavern. Bare wood beams soar overhead while an open faced stone fireplace adds to the place's charm. Dip and his extended family of bikers gathered in this room every Friday evening. They'd get together for a steak or a burger, knock back some beers, shoot pool, or throw darts. The smell of cigarette smoke hung in the air even though we were there a few hours before the normal Saturday crowd arrived.

Dip ran the meeting, quickly, laying out his plans for the event. They still needed funds to purchase trophies for the car show and the bike show. Then he asked Rupert what else was

needed. Rupert stood and let his voice soften. They still needed to raise the money for the insurance, he explained. Without it, the event wouldn't happen.

Dip began asking those assembled – the Shelbyville Shifters club, his own bike club members, and those from other bike clubs who were volunteering to help – *who had ideas?* Several of the bikers over near the pool table held a quick, whispered conversation. Their leather vests were emblazoned with their club patch on the back. A neon-green leering skull was bracketed top and bottom with curved name patches. The top read “The Infamous Few,” and below the grinning skull, “Charity Riders, Ripley County.”

One of the “Infamous” riders stepped forward.

*We've got about a thousand left from last year's fund-raisers. We were leaving it open for a while to see where it was needed. We'll donate what you need so you can make this happen.*

These were bikers giving back. Just like Rupert's motto.

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The small brick and block building that houses the broadcast facility for WSVX The Giant – Shelbyville's classic oldies station – sits in a small valley right off of Interstate 70. To get to the place, cruise past the Cracker Barrel restaurant, turn down Morristown road, and wind your way through about half a mile of rustic Indiana countryside. The single-lane driveway to the radio station's building dives down even deeper into the little gully. The area was so low that a few months later, Dip would put out an emergency call to help sandbag the station's building as the nearby Blue River flooded, threatening the station and all of its broadcast equipment.

But on that Saturday morning in April, with a chance of rain in the forecast, Dip and Pit were laughing and joking as they awaited the riders for the event.

Despite his normal cheerful nature, doubt nagged at Dip. He expected a large turnout. This was, however, still a tad early in the season. Most riders would just be getting their bikes out of winter storage. Two hundred bikes would thrill him, but a hundred wasn't anything to sneer at this early in the year. Until all the bikes were checked in, he wouldn't know the numbers. He had no idea what the call for "Kickstands UP!" at 11 o'clock would bring.

Pop-up canopies were set up for the normal Rupert autograph station. Tina, a volunteer, had a business license and usually attended larger events selling tie-dyed T-shirts. Her colorful stacks of swirled shirts covered a long table under one of the canopies. She would, as normal, donate a large percentage of the profit from T-shirt sales to Rupert's Kids. On the table sat Rupert's pirate-themed treasure chest, decorated with "Thanks for Helping Support Rupert's Kids." Next to that, baseball-size rocks held down stacks of glossy photos of Rupert to keep them from blowing in the morning breeze. Several black markers sat next to the photos. Behind the autograph station was the bright bouncy house for kids.

Slowly the roar of bikes, one and two at a time, alternated with the throaty rumble of hot rod engines, drifted down the winding lane as vehicles slowly made their way toward us. Bikes went to the back of the parking area; the cars were directed out onto the grassy area by one of Dipstick's volunteers.

Dipstick repeatedly looked up at the clouds throughout the morning. *If the anticipated rain held off ... if more bikers showed up ... if enough cars showed up ... if the community came out ... If ...* Dip kept his worries to himself and continued to joke with the other bikers.

Rupert rolled in on the brown Honda Shadow 750 he had owned for almost two decades. He had returned the larger, tie-dye bike he had ridden before when its lease ran out during the campaign, and he didn't have the money for a new lease. Rupert for Governor stickers still clung

to the older, smaller bike's gas tank. He hopped off, and the other bikers came over to exchange hugs in a ritual bikers across the country have adopted. Gripping right hands. Left arms around each other's shoulders. Quick hug with two hard pats with their left hands. And, as always with Rupert, smiles all around.

Gable drove down to the site. Camera in hand, he was there to cover the event for his newspaper. Spangle showed up as well. This was one of the early events in the spring and looked promising to help get some much-needed funding for Rupert's mentoring program.

Bikers were trickling in. Rupert got busy at his autograph table. Gable watched a familiar figure coast down the station's drive. Mayor Tom DeBaun of Shelbyville didn't have to push the pedals of his bicycle – gravity made the ride in easy. Gable moved to greet the mayor, who made a joke about showing up to a bike ride, but didn't know they meant motorcycles.

Nine o'clock. Dip looked at the thirty or so bikes parked in the lot. *Not enough*. Not what he hoped for, but the morning was still young.

Gable watched the two men converse off to the side. By now, Rupert and the mayor were in earnest discussion. DeBaun had researched Rupert and his mentoring program and saw promise there. He let Rupert start selling his ideas. In Shelby County, helping a handful of young offenders – old enough to get tagged with a felony drug offense, but young enough to get started on fixing their lives – was a big deal. Shelby County didn't have as large of a budget to incarcerate its citizens as Indianapolis did. Any chance to keep more of Shelbyville's citizens out of jail was something he wanted to investigate.

Gable's gaze drifted around the site. By 9:30, only about fifty bikes were in the lot. To Gable, that seemed like a good turnout. He didn't realize the worries Dip and Pit were

experiencing over low attendance. His cell phone rang. It was his wife. She and their son were up at the top of the hill at Cracker Barrel for breakfast, before coming down to see the ride take off.

*You won't believe this*, she told him. *There are about fifty, maybe seventy, bikers up here who just left. I think they're headed your way.* In a moment, the rumble and roar of many motorcycles rolling down Morristown Road filled the air.

As the bikes roared in, Gable glanced over at Rupert. He and the mayor were shaking hands, smiles large on their faces. He glanced at this watch. Their talk must have lasted around forty-five minutes.

With the new arrivals, Dip and Pit started directing bikers where to line up for the ride. Dip was smiling. Lots of new riders coming in. *Better, but not there yet.* Not to his goal of two hundred.

Eventually, the stream of bikes rolling in slowed. Dip and Pit called the Road Captain's meeting for all the riders, and briefed them on the course and schedule. Bikers moved toward their bikes. Engines roared to life then settled into a gentle purr. The purr was loud, a cumulative pulse coalescing into a gentle rumble. Those who wore helmets slid them on. Fingerless gloves were pulled tight, hands closed, wrapping fingers around handlebar grips. The riders pulled their bikes upright, moved their left feet to tuck the kickstands up. Rupert, Dip, and Pit, mounted up, and led one hundred and sixty-nine bikes up out of the valley. Many of them had an extra rider. Not quite to Dip's goal of 200, but a good showing for an early season ride. The bikers were there – and as Dip liked to say, changing somebody's world. That day, the world they were helping to change was not only Rupert's world, but also their home community of Shelbyville.

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The bikes wound their way through the countryside. Dip and Rupert rode a few places back from the front. Pit was running up and down the long line of bikes as they wound their way through the Indiana countryside. He and several other riders worked as “blockers” at the rural intersections, where they blocked cross streets in order to allow the column of bikes to pass through without stopping. It would only take one impatient driver to pull into the column, or not see an approaching bike and cause a major calamity.

As they approached Edinburgh, one of the local police cars pulled in front of the pack, lights flashing, to escort them through town. Pit pulled in behind the squad car.

Edinburgh police and fire personnel were out of their vehicles, working traffic control at every intersection. Officers and firefighters stood to block cross traffic. Pit smiled at his friends in the fire department. Several of them stood at attention and saluted as the lead bikes roared past. Pit knew that it would take the line of bikes about ten minutes to clear the intersection.

At the Harley dealership on the far edge of town, the bikes roared in and kept coming. Rupert wandered over, and started greeting some of the local folks who had come out to meet him. About an hour later, the riders mounted up, and headed out for another leisurely ride back to Shelbyville.

Back at the radio station, Gable sat and listened to some of the local bands that had set up on the impromptu stage, a flatbed semi trailer that Dip had arranged to be there for the day. The car show was set up with about twenty hot rods parked in the grass. A few folks had come and gone throughout the day. Many of them promised to come back once Rupert returned. Finally, he heard the roar of the bikes rumbling down the gully.

Once the bikers had returned and parked, with hugs and backslaps for a good ride delivered all around, Rupert sat at the table and began autographing. Every time someone would drop a donation in his treasure chest, he'd say loudly "Thank YOU!"

After the ride, Pit could relax. His job was over. The worry was done. Except for a mechanical breakdown of one bike, the ride went off without a hitch. The rain had stayed away. He could enjoy the rest of the day. He was wandering around the event when he caught sight of a familiar face. Austin, the kid from the gas-grill fire they had ridden for a year before, was there with his father, and they were walking toward him. Austin wanted to meet Rupert, and since Pit and the other guys from Shelbyville had ridden an hour just to get to Austin's benefit ride and continued stopping by whenever they rode that direction, Austin pushed his father to drive down to support Dip and Pit with their event for Rupert's Kids.

*You wanna meet Rupert?* Pit asked him, after greetings and hugs had been delivered.

*Yeah, but ...* Austin's voice trailed off as he looked at the line that wrapped around the corner of the parking lot.

*Come on!* Pit said, taking the young boy's hand. *You got VIP status.* They walked to the front of the line. Pit caught Rupert's eye as he finished signing an autograph. *Rupert, I want you to meet a special friend of mine. This is Austin.*

*Glad to meet you Austin,* Rupert said, beaming at the boy, whose face was sheathed in a clear plastic mask molded to fit his head. The scars and pink flesh of new skin grafts were plainly visible. Rupert's eyes were locked onto Austin's eyes. The celebrity was off his chair, one knee in the dirt, eye to eye with the boy.

Behind the autograph table, Gable looked over and watched Rupert chat with the youth. Rupert led Austin back toward the table, and started autographing photos for him. *What about mama? What's her name?* he asked, marker poised over another photo.

Austin was all smiles as he hugged Rupert. They had spent about ten minutes chatting, he realized. More than anyone else in the long line was able to get. Gable had seen this type of connection with Rupert before. *You can spend thirty seconds with him, and feel like you've known him your entire life.* He had just witnessed Rupert turn that charm on full force for Austin.

Dip and Pit told me later that Austin doesn't see himself as anything but a kid. A kid who wears a mask, but just a kid. That's how Rupert connected with the youngster. He let Austin be that kid. He ignored the mask. I'd seen that same connection countless times on the campaign trail, and after the election. But, with Austin, the connection wasn't just Rupert's charm. It was Rupert living his motto.

Life is good. Be you. Give back.

At the end of the day, Tina and I rode with another volunteer back to the Rupert's Kid's building. Dip called me with an update. I forget the exact numbers, but he sounded disappointed. The money from the event hadn't hit his goal that day.

"What about the donations in the treasure chest," I asked, and told him how much people had donated directly to Rupert's Kids.

"That helps man," he said, a little brighter. "We're close, but not quite there."

From the back seat, Tina chimed in: "Don't forget about the T-shirt sales." She told me the amount she'd be donating from that. I passed it along.

"We made it!"

With the donations coming in before the event that paid for the insurance, bought trophies, and all the other expenses, Dip and Pit had raised over \$5,000 dollars. Their work helping the community give back would give Rupert enough help to keep the mentoring program running for another couple of months.

Life is good. Be you. Give back.

...

Rupert didn't choose the building in Shelbyville. If anything, the building chose him.

His outward appearance of the hairy-scary *Survivor* star didn't blend well with his headquarters in the Nora area of Indianapolis. Just down the road, health food stores dotted the shopping centers near Indy's Monon Trail. The old Monon rail line is now a trail that hipsters and new-age folks walk or bike as they commute to and from downtown Indy.

Although his wife, Laura, grew up in the area, this isn't a location one would expect to find a mentoring program working with convicted felons.

One of the first decisions Rupert made after the 2012 election, as he faced the accompanying debt, was to attempt sell his office building in the Nora section of Indianapolis. With his businesses faltering, and having to rebuild his celebrity appearance schedule, he didn't have the income to pay the bills. For the first time in a long time, as building owner, he'd have to charge his mentoring program rent, just to keep making the mortgage payment on the building.

Rupert wasn't running just a mentoring program. He was trying to change the community he was working in. Nora, where his headquarters was, wasn't the community he needed to serve. Nora was too upscale, and Indianapolis was too large to be affected by what his small program could do to reduce the incarceration rate in the county.

In October 2014, almost two years after he closed up the Rupert for Governor headquarters, Rupert finally sold his Nora offices. That marked the end of over twenty years of mentoring in Indianapolis. A new chapter was just beginning. Rupert and his program were moving their operation to Shelby County.

The year before, after their conversation at the motorcycle ride, Mayor DeBaun had spent several days in meetings with Rupert. They usually gathered in the mayor's office in the limestone monolith that was Shelbyville's town hall. The drab gray stone structure stands a block west of Shelbyville's circular downtown meridian intersection. The intersection is the little cousin of Indianapolis' impressive Monument Circle, near which Rupert's campaign office was located.

The months following the motorcycle ride, where DeBaun and Rupert had talked of common interests in repairing what Rupert simply called "the system," the mayor began pulling together the people who could make or break bringing a Rupert's Kids extension program into his city. These early meetings with the county prosecutor, probation officers, the county sheriff, and city police chief all needed to happen. None of them realized at the time, months before the Nora building sold, that the relocation wouldn't be an extension of the program. Rupert's Kids was moving to Shelbyville due to the sale of the building in Nora.

A month after Rupert signed papers to sell his old office, the sidewalk outside of 26 West Broadway in Shelbyville was awash in tie-dye. Colorfully swirled T-shirts hung from the metal frames of pop-up canopies along the front of the old building.

The tie-dye shirts were visible against the Bedford stone façade of the three-story building. The tan of the first-story's limestone contrasted with the aged and worn red brick of the façade on the second floor and above. This was a building from more than a century before,

when ceiling heights were tall, towering twelve feet or more overhead. Windows stretched upward, glass fingers in the stone and brick walls. A pigeon swooped in and landed on window ledge of one of the third story attic windows. It disappeared inside the building. Where there was one pigeon, there were sure to be many, many more.

A long green dumpster occupied several of the parallel parking spots in front of the building. Crumbled plaster, dusty and crumpled cardboard boxes, and a worn and faded office chair apparently from the 1970s, were piled in the giant steel bin. Rupert and his guys were beginning to clean out decades of debris from the old building.

Two young men – one Caucasian, clad in a lime-green and yellow tie-dye over a gray hoodie sweatshirt, the other dark-skinned wearing a down-filled vest over a long sleeved white T-shirt – struggled to maneuver Rupert’s life-sized pirate statue out through the door of the run-down structure to help attract attention.

Today was the grand opening of the new facility. The mayor and other town dignitaries came over to cut a ribbon and have a photo opportunity. Rupert, the mayor, and the others held scissors. On the count of three, hands squeezed, metal scissors sliced, and the ribbon parted into multiple pieces. Paul Gable, now managing editor of *The Shelbyville News*, had sent a reporter to write a small piece for the next day’s edition.

“Have you seen the place yet?” Rupert asked me, sticking his hand out in greeting. This was the new office of Rupert’s Kids, and soon to be a community center full of office space and conference areas to help the people that inevitably walked through the Rupert’s Kids’ door every week.

Rupert’s goals included meeting rooms for the organizations that could help the community’s disadvantaged. “We’re reaching out to [a drug and alcohol rehab center] to come in

once a week with low-cost counseling programs. It's not just booze and pot down here. We're dealing with crystal meth and heroin in this county."

"We had a girl in here last week," Rupert told me, his eyes conveying his compassion. "She met with Georgette," he said pointing toward his social worker's office in the back. "And six hours later she was in the emergency room with an overdose. [Indianapolis] is more violent crime. Down here," he said waving a calloused hand out at Shelby County, "we've got more drug use and trafficking."

"Let's go upstairs," he said, returning to his happier mood. He led me around into another musty section of the building. We passed a couple of rooms full of dusty office chairs and cardboard boxes collapsed under years of abandonment. Around a corner, he flipped on a light switch. A single incandescent bulb glowed dimly in the murky darkness. A flight of wooden stairs, with a rickety handrail nailed to its side, rose toward a wall with peeling light-green paint. The stairs took a right-hand turn and climbed up beyond sight. "Watch your head," he said ducking under an exposed bulkhead. It didn't appear to be attached to any sidewalls. Due to the ongoing demolition of non-supporting walls, it hung merely to create an annoyance. "That will come out soon," he said, disappearing around the bend as he climbed.

At the top of the stairs, the old architecture soared with high ceilings again. He led me to the west side of the building, over Georgette's office, and the rest of the new Rupert's Kids headquarters below. The vast space upstairs was lined with more of the tall windows. They reached up eight or ten feet above their starting point toward the ceiling. "Twenty nine of those windows. Each one \$500 dollars to replace. Almost \$15,000 just in windows for this building."

The ceiling above the windows was cracked, its plaster had split, with a ten-foot long by five-foot or so wide bare to the wooden lathwork above. The floor below that section was

covered in crumbled plaster fallen from above. Most of that pile was blanketed by soft down and guano from the pigeons that now roosted in the attic above. “We’ll spend the winter knocking down the plaster, and redoing the walls and ceiling.”

“And evicting the pigeons?”

He smiled and nodded. “This will be my office,” he said sweeping his arms wide toward the front of the building that overlooked Broadway. “I always wanted a corner office,” he said with a chuckle.

“Is this where the pool tables and game room is going?”

He shook his head. “This isn’t a rec-center. It’s a community center. It’ll be a nine-to-five center for the programs the low-income, at-risk folks need, he explained. “Vocational education, computer rooms. People can come in to work on their GEDs. If we have the ability, we’ll reach out to medical professionals for sliding-scale medical advisor.” I could sense his excitement. This was what he had been trying to build in Indianapolis. Now he had a blank canvas in Shelbyville.

“We’ve started with very little resource and no government dollars so far. We’re going to create a path to a better community, and show the state,” he paused, “SHOW THE WORLD,” he said emphatically “how to do it.”

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

Politics and campaigns are covered extensively in today's media. Third-party candidates, however, often struggle to gain media attention. The researcher observed this first hand through immersion in the campaign of Rupert Boneham in 2012. Agenda-setting by media – presuming that third-party candidates could not win and covering third-party candidates less seriously, if at all – directly influenced campaign management. As a result, the Rupert campaign instead pursued social media and numerous campaign appearances where the candidate's celebrity status could overcome, in small ways, the spirals of silence that a third-party campaign wasn't viable in a major statewide political race.

Several conclusion can be entertained for further investigation in future campaigns. The researcher realizes that the celebrity status of the candidate was not a typical personality image cultivated by politicians. The candidate examined in this project falls into an outsider category, just as Governor Jessie Ventura of Minnesota – a former professional wrestler – did during his 1998 gubernatorial campaign. *New York Times* correspondant David Carr points out in a 2009 piece on Minnesota politics that quirks in election laws for Minnesota, such as same-day registration, may have contributed to Ventura's victory. Indiana doesn't have those particular election quirks. Any comparisons of the two campaigns would need to consider such differences to examine how a campaign like Ventura's was able to use those differencing laws to overcome any media agenda in the coverage of third-party or independent candidates.

Comparisons with other candidates considered as outsiders can also be made, such as to the 2004 presidential campaign by Vermont Governor Howard Dean. Political media specialist

Joe Trippi chronicled his role running the Dean campaign in a 2008 book, *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*, where he chronicled Dean's status go from campaign frontrunner to unserious, all after Dean's infamous scream in a speech. During the Dean campaign, Trippi was able to bypass traditional media by using emerging media with various new internet-media sources. In the foreword to a later edition of the book, Trippi noted that if the Howard Dean presidential campaign of 2004 was a "Wright Brothers of this new kind of politics" in its methodology of using Web 2.0 and non-traditional media to reach voters directly, then the 2008 Obama campaign was the equal of the Apollo project in furthering the use of non-traditional, web-based media.

In their 2010 book *Game Change*, Heilemann and Halperin chronicled major-party campaign use of emerging media. This book demonstrated how little-known candidate Senator Barack Obama was able to build on strategies for developing online media to overcome agendas in media coverage that favored established, well-known candidates. Both the 2004 Dean campaign and the 2008 Obama campaigns operated within the major-party sphere of media coverage and did not face the same type of spirals of silence in agenda-setting that third-party and independent campaigns face. This differentiation provides areas for researchers to examine in both scholarly and journalistic narrative approaches.

Further research also could be conducted on coverage given to each candidate by Indiana-based media. Secondary research comparing the amount and tone of coverage among all candidates could show how media resorts to agenda-setting. In addition, research can be developed by exit polling of voters in future races, and comparing those results with coverage levels of candidates across media types. This should include researching new-media sources,

such as social-media interactions with campaign entities, as well as interactions with traditional-media sources that cover the campaigns.

My insights from this project came by directly observing campaign operations. There were two basic levels of ethnographic observation I engaged in. Early on, I was an observer with broad access to the campaign events and staff, similar to the approach McGinnis and Cramer used. After several weeks, when I took on the role of media director, I was included in the decision-making process of the campaign staff, similar to Trippi's experience. By being open and honest with all major contacts about my dual role as both campaign staff and as reporter-researcher, I gained a level of access into the inner-workings of a political campaign. While identifying my dual roles in initial contact with sources seemed minor at the time, such as with the motorcycle riders, it helped build trust with them as I approached them after the events for further information.

One major handicap of the participant-journalist approach was that I was not always able to take notes. Often, this was because I was driving to or from campaign events, taking photos of Rupert with his fans, or reaching out to contacts for the campaign. During these situations (except for driving), the camera became the best tool I had. Many of the scenes detailed here were enhanced with sensory details I gathered by looking at the photos during the reconstruction phase of the research. The photos also served as memory aid to the participants I interviewed. When they or I could not remember a detail or sequence of an event, we could look through the images from that time, and refresh our memories through the visual record I created with the camera.

Further aid in research was provided by way of video recordings of key events, such as the Libertarian State Party's videos of the State Convention. These video records allowed me to

pull speeches directly into quotation, without having to reconstruct the dialogue based on notes and participant recollection.

In addition, several months of exposure to a candidate allowed me discover the personality traits, habits, speech patterns, and other descriptive attributes that helped bring life the written text about the people involved. I learned quickly that Rupert has several different versions of the stories he tells. He expanded his narrative with details important to the particular audience he was addressing. He told the same story in a shorter time when he was greeting individuals, or in more depth when he was appearing before a larger audience. But despite the variations, the stories all had core concepts or moral illustrations that did not change.

This helped when I was working with Spangle and Rupert to reconstruct their early meetings before I joined the campaign. Neither of them remembered their conversations verbatim. Still, they were comfortable with my reconstruction of the scenes, based on pulling a version of the appropriate story from Rupert's later appearances or interviews that I had witnessed. When I was working on that early section of the narrative, I made sure to confirm the details and general concepts of the dialogue with both Spangle and Evan.

One downside to this methodology lies in Rupert's extreme dyslexia, which makes him uncomfortable reading long pieces. Instead of passing him a copy of the written narrative to verify, I instead relied on verbal conversations, paraphrasing the key points to verify information with him. Even though other campaign staff and I had built a level of trust with each other, I attempted to verify the content of any reconstructed events and internal dialogue with the subjects from the narrative.

During the writing process, I or my editors found my description of reconstructed events going into too much sensory detail. I began to question whether I had added these details from

my own imagination, or if they had been given during an interview but not translated into my notes. Subsequent edits were made with an eye to removing such details from reconstructed scenes unless I could confirm that such sensory details came from my own, later observation of a location, or were provided directly by a participant in the scene.

A final word of caution to potential researchers looking to embed in a campaign: Be careful of letting your current situation while in the campaign affect your narrative later. I found myself at odds, often, with Evan the campaign manager on the daily operations and how we handled events in the field. This conflict, however, had to be put behind us after the campaign. My advice to anyone attempting a participation journalistic approach is to write your narrative well past any times of strife, so that conflicts don't color your perceptions of the people or the events.

Despite these challenges, I found writing the narrative to be both stimulating and rewarding. The follow-up interviews with the various participants allowed me to see how the campaign affected a wide variety of people, from campaign insiders to those on the outside, like Diptick and Pitbull. Working through the various interviews showed me how a single event, such as a motorcycle ride, could have an impact on a wide variety of people who would come together later in order to help each other again. Through writing this narrative, I've been exposed to a wide array of individuals and have had my impressions of stereotypes broken.

The most challenging time of the entire process was being with the candidate immediately following the loss in the election. Despite being a third-party candidate, the expectations for Election Day ran high. Despite the realization that the candidate would lose, going through the loss and recovery time was not easy. Staying with the story long enough to see how the candidate recovered both emotionally and financially created a dimension to the

narrative that moves the participants, and hopefully, the readers past the stage of disillusionment with the election and into a victory with Rupert's opportunity to rebuild Rupert's Kids.

## CHAPTER 6

### EVALUATORS

Two evaluators reviewed this project. Dr. Nancy Whitmore, Director of the Eugene S. Pulliam School of Journalism at Butler University, and Lt. Col. James Billings (Ret), U.S. Army Public Affairs officer. The full evaluations are located in the appendix of this project.

Whitmore explored the use of literary journalism as a vehicle to provide “an extensive behind the scenes look into the candidate selection decision, various candidate appearances at events and charity bike rides, and the financial challenges associated with the campaign.” She notes that the project “expands our understanding of third-party politics and the extreme challenges these parties and their candidates face. Readers were able to experience a campaign built primarily on a political strategy of appearances at county fairs and charity bike rides.” This evaluator did note that the role of the researcher as a participant observer in the campaign needs to be better detailed in regard to how the project was conceived and how it impacted the research methodology.

Billings noted the topic of this project is “ideal” for the long-form narrative form of journalism. “The decline of traditional journalism and the rise of non-traditional reporting, makes this an ideal topic. It is especially interesting in light of the Tea Party revolution of 2010 and its effect on the Republican Party.”

According to Billings, several areas could be developed further. “This piece has a great deal of potential, but it also leaves unanswered questions. . . . how did Boneham’s campaign fit in with Libertarian trends nationally? Did it establish the Libertarian Party as a solid third party in Indiana politics? Do people like Boneham attract voters to the Libertarian Party? Can the Libertarian Party draw Tea Party voters from the Republican Party?”

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## **APPENDIX**

### **EVALUATIONS**

**Evaluator Name: Dr. Nancy Whitmore, Ph.D.**

**I. Brief discussion of evaluator's credentials** (e.g., knowledge and experience of the subject area)

I am a professor of journalism and currently serve as the director of the Eugene S. Pulliam School of Journalism at Butler University. My scholarly work focuses largely on First Amendment theory and freedom of speech and includes published research on economic expression, student press issues and constitutional doctrine. While I am primarily a legal scholar, I have also published historical research based largely on in-depth interviews and document analysis.

Since joining the School in 2001, I have taught a variety of journalism and public relations courses, including courses on mass communication law and ethics, journalism history and media economics. I received my Ph.D in mass media from Michigan State University and M.A. in communications and B.S. in journalism from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. I have served as director of the School of Journalism at Butler since 2008.

**II. Relationship to the student and subject matter**

Troy Hill has been an adjunct instructor of photography at the Eugene S. Pulliam School of Journalism for seven years. As director of the School, I initially hired Troy and have renewed his appointment each year. In addition to teaching our news photography class each fall, Troy also assesses and maintains our camera equipment. I also rely on Troy's advice in deciding when

to retire current equipment and purchase new camera equipment.

### **III. Evaluation of the topic as appropriate for the creative endeavor**

Overall, the project is well conceived. It uses an ethnographic, participant observation research approach to detail the “challenges and daily rigors” of Rupert Boneham’s campaign for governor of Indiana. In this way, the researcher involved himself in the campaign and used his day-to-day observations and immersive reporting to produce a long-form creative project modeled on the style and writing techniques of literary journalism. Some of the most important works in literary journalism have employed these immersive research techniques to expose, chronicle and intimately portray. While virtually any topic can be the subject of a piece of literary journalism, the chosen topic should allow the researcher to produce a intimate examination that captures real people in real life situations in ways that provide a rare and engaging look at the topic. In this regard, the topic and creative project approach are appropriate.

### **IV. Evaluation of the student's approach**

The methodology chapter indicates that Troy spent two years following Rupert Boneham while serving as a volunteer staff member and unpaid media director to Boneham’s campaign. During that time, Troy used observational research to capture the scene and dialogue. He also conducted interviews with participants to presumably fill in gaps in his observational reporting. Troy also examined photographs and videos of speeches.

From the methodology section, it is somewhat unclear when Troy’s role as a participant observer to the campaign initially started since he wrote a paper about the 2012 campaign in spring 2013. It would be helpful to include the dates Troy spent embedded in the campaign as a researcher and when the campaign was informed of his dual role. From the chapter, it is difficult to discern whether this project was conceived in 2012 and that is one reason Troy volunteered to

serve as a staff member and media director or whether the idea for the project came after he served as staff member/media director and as a result Troy had to rely on his memory and the photographs to piece together the research. I think this needs to be more clearly stated in the methodology section.

## **V. Evaluation of the body of the project**

### **a) Quality**

The quality of the narrative is very good. I am especially impressed with the way the narrative is organized and how the various scenes and sections are tied together. Each scene flows into the following scene with detailed and descriptive writing that is interspersed with lively dialogue.

### **b) Depth of treatment**

The narrative provides an extensive behind the scenes look into the candidate selection decision, various candidate appearances at events and charity bike rides, and the financial challenges associated with the campaign. While the majority of the work is presented in much depth, three major themes in the narrative, I believe, would benefit from additional reporting and greater depth of treatment.

1. According to the narrative, Boneham was seeking public office because he wanted to make a difference, wanted to change lives and correct problems he saw in the system. This message is repeated throughout the narrative, but is not explored in depth. As a result, readers never find out exactly what this means to Boneham. The narrative doesn't include the campaign platform. It is not clear exactly what message(s) Boneham delivered in his campaign.

2. In the narrative, Boneham is portrayed as a successful business owner whose unsuccessful campaign for governor left him deep in debt. This aspect of the narrative would

also benefit from more in-depth treatment. It is unclear how much money the campaign raised and spent. Campaigns are required to disclose the funds they raise and spend, so these records should be relatively easy to find. The amount of rent he paid on the campaign headquarters would be nice detail to include as well as financial information from Rupert's Kids. Also the claim that he is a successful business owner would benefit from data to support it given that after he won \$1 million he used part of the money to get himself out of debt and out of the "hood." It would be interesting to include, for example, the number of celebrity appearances he made before running for governor, the approximate revenue he received from an appearance, the number of celebrity appearances he made in the months after the campaign, etc. When the narrative states that he is a successful business owner, how is business success being measured? Did his success come largely from the celebrity appearances or from his other businesses?

On that note, Troy did include the amount of money raised from the bike rides, which are nice details to have in the story.

3. It would be nice to provide a more intimate portrayal of Boneham. The narrative provides a good day-to-day treatment of Boneham. But we largely see him on more of a surface level, i.e. shaking hands, being photographed and riding his motorcycle. We don't, for example, get the same insight into what he was thinking as we do with Evan, Spangle and Dipstick. That said, one of the strongest parts of the narratives was election night and Boneham's belief he was going to win. From the narrative, I'm not sure exactly why he believed this, but it was a very interesting detail that could be explored in more depth and introduced earlier in the narrative (if this belief was evident in the early stages of the campaign) as it is in conflict with the outcome and the expectations of the campaign staff.

From the narrative, it appears that Rupert's Kids is an intimate part of Boneham's

identity. It would be good to provide additional details of this program. For example, how many kids have gone through it, what exactly does the program involve, how does the program measure success, how much time does Boneham devote to it and in what role, etc.

### **c) Coverage**

It is clear from the narrative that Troy spent a great deal of time with Boneham and the campaign staff. The overall framing (pre- and post-election) was excellent and the extent of the coverage of the topic was very good. Especially noteworthy in terms of breath of coverage was the inclusion of Dipstick and Pitbull and the charity rides. It not only helped round out Boneham as a central character in the narrative but also provided valuable scene setting and environmental color to story.

## **VI. Evaluation of the student's work as contributing to the field (e.g., body of knowledge)**

As Troy explained, the Rupert for Governor Campaign was fairly unique in terms of political campaigns given Boneham's "hairy and scary" celebrity image, his lack of political experience, lack of familiarity with the Libertarian Party and lack of campaign funds/supporters. Even without knowledge of the Libertarian Party platform, Boneham was selected only because he was better than NOTA.

This narrative expands our understanding of third-party politics and the extreme challenges these parties and their candidates face. Readers were able to experience a campaign built primarily on a political strategy of appearances at county fairs and charity bike rides. And even with a celebrity candidate, the only media attention the campaign appeared to draw was a reporter from Shelbyville. The narrative also increases our insight into the life of a third-party candidate and toll a run like this can have on the candidate and his financial and emotional health.

**Evaluator: James T. Billings****I. Brief discussion of evaluator's credentials** (e.g., knowledge and experience of the subject area)

I have been in the field of journalism and public relations for more than 30 years. I have a bachelor's degree in journalism/public relations from Ball State University (1986) and a master's degree in strategic communication and leadership from Seton Hall University (2009).

I worked as a newspaper reporter and editor, and covered local government and politics, among other responsibilities, for two small daily newspapers in northern Indiana before going on active duty as an Army public affairs officer. As part of my responsibilities, I prepared news releases, edited news stories from military journalists, wrote speeches for senior officials and developed communication plans. I also edited the book *Army Reserve At a Glance*, published in 2014.

**II. Relationship to the student and subject matter**

I have known Troy Hill since 1985, when we were both resident assistants at Ball State University. We later worked together as journalists at The Goshen News. He has been a personal friend and colleague for nearly 30 years.

My relationship to the subject matter is that of a journalist and observer of the political scene nationally and in Indiana for many years. Troy is an avid political junkie and I follow his thoughts on Facebook.

**III. Evaluation of the topic as appropriate for the creative endeavor**

The literary journalism approach is the most appropriate for this subject. It allows the journalist to tell the story in a narrative style. This paper reads like book or a long-form magazine article. It is very much like what I would expect to see in Politico or The Atlantic Monthly.

Traditional journalism – inverted pyramid, etc. – is not sufficient for an inside look at a political campaign. The literary approach allows the reporter the space to expand on personalities, motivations, things that may not seem important at first glance.

However, there is a difference between a reporter’s view from inside a political campaign and a campaign operative’s view. Standard expectations of journalistic objectivity should still apply.

#### **IV. Evaluation of the student's approach**

Troy had a unique opportunity to tell the story of an unusual candidate and an unusual campaign. He does it well and the reader is left with having seen the Boneham campaign from the inside.

What concerns me here is the lack of objectivity. Obviously, it would be impossible for Troy to report on the Boneham as an objective embedded journalist. Still, the piece gives an interesting perspective on how Boneham became a candidate for governor as a Libertarian.

My overall problem with the article is the overemphasis on “celebrity” and the lack of discussion about Rupert’s political philosophy. I counted 49 uses of the word “celebrity” – five in one paragraph. The constant emphasis emphasis on Boneham’s celebrity seemed heavy-handed and off-putting. I’m not a fan of Survivor and confess to never having watched the show. But I can also say that I have never heard anyone mention or talk about Rupert Boneham, other than Troy. So I do question how much of a celebrity he is – certainly not in my own personal view. The piece does mention numerous times that people recognized Boneham and asked for photos with him.

Perhaps that was the point – the campaign was heavy on celebrity and short on substance.

#### **V. Evaluation of the body of the project**

### **a) Quality**

The work is well written and engaging. I felt that I really got to know the various characters introduced. However, I wasn't always sure why.

For example, I'm not sure how the section about the bikers contributed to the overall story, except perhaps for color. I think fewer characters would help keep the focus on the "tie-dyed candidate." There were times I could have used a scorecard. Remember, it's about the candidate, not the inner workings of the Libertarian Party. Some of the characters could be eliminated without harming the overall perspective of the candidate.

### **b) Depth of treatment**

As mentioned earlier, the piece goes into extensive depth on some things, but very little on others. I would have liked to learn more about the candidate's views (or lack thereof) on state government. All I could glean from this piece is the following:

- "He wanted to change lives and correct problems he saw in 'the system.'"

We do not learn what those problems were and how he intended to change them.

- Rupert wasn't skilled or knowledgeable in Libertarian stances, but lives the Libertarian principle of self-reliance.
- He could speak with authority on issues important to Libertarians. What are those issues? What did Rupert have to say about them?
- He wanted to change Indiana's criminal justice system. Again, how?
- We know that Libertarians were concerned with property taxes, authority of the state government over county government and prison reform. What thoughts did the tie-dyed candidate have on these issues?

I would have liked to read less about Evan and Spangle and more about the candidate.

Again, don't lose focus.

**c) Coverage**

This is an appropriate and fascinating subject, especially given recent trends in national politics. Polls show more interest in third parties, and more dissatisfaction with the two main parties. While Boneham's campaign was unsuccessful, he did draw more of the vote than any other Libertarian candidate in state history. That is significant, and could have national implications. I would like to see how his campaign compared to others around the country.

**VI. Evaluation of the student's work as contributing to the field (e.g., body of knowledge)**

As a piece of literary journalism, Troy's work is a fine addition to a growing field. The decline of traditional journalism and the rise of non-traditional reporting, makes this an ideal topic. It is especially interesting in light of the Tea Party revolution of 2010 and its effect on the Republican Party.

This piece has a great deal of potential, but it also leaves unanswered questions. In addition to those mentioned above, how did Boneham's campaign fit in with Libertarian trends nationally? Did it establish the Libertarian Party as a solid third party in Indiana politics? Do people like Boneham attract voters to the Libertarian Party? Can the Libertarian Party draw Tea Party voters from the Republican Party?

Overall, this is a solid piece of journalism that tells an unusual story.