THE CANDIDACY OF NELL BURROW
FOR HANCOCK COUNTY COUNCIL:
AN HONORS COLLEGE SENIOR THESIS

BY
MICHAEL R. BURROW

FOR
DR. GARY CRAWLEY
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

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Dedicated to my mother, without who none of this would have been possible
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From the on-set of this paper, I will attempt to recreate the events, thoughts, and actions leading up to and including the candidacy of my mother, Nell Burrow, for Hancock County Council. The candidacy and the people involved embodied a peculiar combination of a mission-like attitude of the Camelot era; an unquestionable faith (and fate) of the McGovern Army, and the ruthless city-savy politics associated with Daley's Chicago. It is an experience which not only I will never forget, but will remember fondly.

The decision to run was made during spurious deliberations between myself and my political comrade and confidant Bob Williams (See appendix). Most of the conversation that day during spring break, 1984, concerned itself with attempting to reverse the trends of the past decade and elect a Democrat to a county-wide office in Hancock County. Bob fielded the early notion of running a candidate for county coroner in opposition to the Republican candidate and county chairman Fred Counter. The thinking behind this was the belief we could convince voters that by electing Counter to this office, they would, in reality, be giving a salary to someone for being a full-time politician rather than a "dutyful" public servant. Subsequently, this idea was abandoned simply because it wasn't appealing, either politically or publically, to make such a big deal out of such a minor
(and ghoulish) office.

John Burton (See appendix) had already decided to run for county council. Being a good friend of Bob's, we had both early on decided to help Burton in his campaign. I noted to Bob that if we (the Democrats) could somehow elect three councilmen-at-large, these people, combined with Wilbur Lantz (See appendix), the only current Democrat on the county council, would constitute a majority on that body. By having a majority, the Democrats could control the budgets of all the county offices (held by Republicans) from the commissioners to the coroner. I reasoned it would be a major step in rebuilding the party. Further discussion between Bob and I produced reasonable assurance that issues (predominantly involving county road conditions) could be the major ingredient in a surprise Democrat victory.

It was then decided we should run the three candidates as a team, informing voters if they did not elect all three, the likelihood of improving road conditions would be small since there would not be a Democrat majority on the council. Reminiscent of smoke-filled rooms at National conventions, Bob and I proceeded to decide what would make a "balanced" (and thus, electable) team. With Burton (a prominent businessman from the southwestern part of the county), we reasoned we needed someone from the north and someone for the center (or near center) which are both the most populous regions of the county. Further, we needed at least one woman (this was the year of the woman we reasoned) and we did not want any farmers. All seven members of the council were farmers
and there was a growing sentiment in both Democrat and Republican circles, that a farmer couldn't or shouldn't handle the reigns of county government.

My mother was (and is) well-known in Democrat circles throughout the county (See appendix). Also, she was from the Greenfield area (center) and I was convinced my mother would be the perfect woman for the ticket. By being fiftyish and active, she could portray that certain "mom" image to all those so-called county Yuppies who all-too-frequently voted Republican. Perhaps that charm could convince them to cross-over for a local race.

Convincing her didn't pose too large a problem either. For someone who has been as active in politics as her, it was only a natural step to move from worker to candidate. In fact, the only real concern she expressed to me was what she would do if she won.

Next, we needed someone from the north, and I knew there was really only one person well-known enough to fit the bill - Jack Christian. Jack was luke-warm at best to the prospect. However, I assured him that he wasn't being chosen to be a sacrificial lamb like the party had placed on the ballot all-too-frequently in the past. This race, I said, was winnable and there was a genuine commitment on the part of the candidates as well as the backers to pull an upset. He agreed to run.

With candidates set, Bob and I planned pre-primary strategy. Both of us decided the candidates should lay low and conserve
our very sparse resources until after the primary unless by chance, someone else should file against our chosen three. No one did. In fact, except for a commissioner and circuit court candidate, no one filed for any of the other offices and this proved to be a major problem to overcome.

Without contested races higher on the ballot, I was certain that voters would not search to the bottom of the ballot for the council race. It seemed urgent to fill these positions, even in name only, to keep our already poor ballot position from deterioration even more. This was a battle with which Bob and I wrestled the entire summer of 1984, but failed in correcting. Looking back, I feel it was a major contributing factor in the defeat of all three candidates.

Early on in the campaign, shortly after the primary, the dream ticket was dealt a major setback; that being the sudden death (by heart attack) of John Burton. To complicate matters further, a newly enacted state law required a vacated candidacy be filled within one week. John had been a dynamic individual. He was hard-hitting and cutting. Both his speaking abilities and knowledge were major assets to the team and nearly impossible to replace. Bob and I toyed with the idea of Bob himself running, but he would have had to resign his Cumberland Town Board position. I decided that there were only two men who could make up for Burton's loss; these being Bill Blue and Jim Thomas.

Bill Blue is the former (and very popular) mayor of Greenfield, the county seat. He operates an insurance in Greenfield and is
well-liked by both Democrats and Republicans. After consulting with county chairman, Rodney Fleming (See appendix), I learned Blue would not be interested in running as he had run and lost in 1980. This fact had escaped my memory until I was reminded of it.

This left Jim Thomas. In many ways, Jim was actually my first choice. He had been my boss for years at the newspaper as he was the owner and publisher of the Hancock Ad News. Jim was a Democrat, yet he had this uncanny knack of transcending partisanship. Part of it, I suppose, dealt with the need to obtain advertising dollars from both sides during elections, but I attribute most of it to Jim's outstanding personality and commonality which allowed him the opportunity to be a friend to all. Anyway, convincing Jim to run nearly made me a nervous wreck.

First and foremost, we were working with a deadline. Secondly, Jim was reluctant to get into what he was sure was a loosing race. I thoroughly explained strategy and issues and winnability. He said he needed to think it over for a couple of days. A central committee meeting was already scheduled for the day which was one week after Burton's death. Someone had to be chosen by then, or the whole idea of taking a majority on the county council would be lost. With Jim see-sawing, Bob and I decided on an alternate plan in case Jim did say no; Bob would have his name placed in nomination (obviously with no opposition) simply to fill the position. Then, when we could find
someone, he would resign so that person could place his name on the ballot. I was really worried this was going to be seen as "politicking" by the general public and work as a negative to the ticket, but if Jim said no, we had no choice. Luckily, Jim consented, and the ticket was as strong, if not stronger, than before.

STRATEGY

Circumstances created by past losses convinced me the only way our candidates would win would be to divorce themselves from public Democrat partisanship. There were just too many reasons for the Republican-leaning electorate of Hancock County not to vote for our candidates without our flaunting the fact that we were Democrats. Moreover, our game plan specifically did not plan on any help from the county party regulars. The county party was (and remains) riddled with factionalism and weak, ineffective leadership. Prior to 1984, candidates could expect nothing more than a few newspaper advertisements from the party and I saw no reason why we should expect a shift in performance.

At best, I was sure the Republicans would capture the majority (if not all) the races above council; however, my early thinking was if Wayne Townsend could catch fire with his license branch reform state-wide, our chances would be better. My feeling was the higher on the ballot a cross-over occurred, the more likely it could and would occur further down. Most certainly I wasn't counting on a Townsend coattail effect, but I was hoping he could at least blunt a certain Reagan and possible Orr coattail.
7.

I thought the single most pressing issue which we had on our side was the condition of the county roads. In early April of 1984, Oscar Haynie, Hancock County Road Superintendent, admitted in a television interview that 600 of the approximately 780 miles of Hancock County roads needed repaved. Hard winter or not, three quarters of a county's road system does not deteriorate to these conditions in four months. It was a phenomena which had been occurring for years. This fact, coupled with the knowledge that the Republicans had controlled the county council for sixteen years was the key issue which I thought could be exploited in our favor.

A secondary issue which was in our favor was the threat, and constant worry, of voters over a wheel tax to finance repair of the roads. A proposed wheel tax was annually brought up by the commissioners and narrowly defeated by the council. Therefore, the strategy, I thought, was simple; let the rural voters of the county drive over ever-growing chuckholes for the duration of the summer and fall, and let the town voters worry that they would be assessed a tax to fix roads that they seldom, if ever drove on.

The major obstacle I saw to overcome was voter apathy and ignorance over this important issue. Therefore, a large part of summer had to be spent on educating the voters on our issues. Our first big opportunity was the Hancock County Fair. After considerable deliberation on my part, I decided on a subtle approach. I designed a flyer (See appendix) which on one side carried the
picture and abbreviated biography of the candidates and on the other side, posed one statement and one question which I hoped would nag every voter's mind once it was read. "Deteriorating road conditions isn't the only problem facing Hancock County Voters in 1984." This placed our issue first, yet allowed the reader to think of some of his own gripes also. "After 16 years of a Republican-controlled County Council, Isn't it time for a change?" The nagging question. It was my uncle, Paul Stephens, who first proposed using the "time for a change" theme and I hoped for reactions like, "Gosh, have they been in control for that long? Maybe I should vote for these three just to give them a chance." Of course, I was hoping they might infer the possibility of corruption or at least inability with the Republican control of sixteen years. Of particular note was my decision to make the word "Democrats" small as (again) I was hoping to raise issues, not partisanship, in the average voter's mind. I was especially proud of this flyer as I was in complete charge of its production, having did the photography, layout, and composition of it. I even chose the color of the paper - something bright to catch the eyes.

Early, Bob and I thought we should attempt a massive door-to-door effort. However, our perceived notion of timing and worry that GOP dollars spent early would bury us, kept us from doing so. We were concerned, also, that any door-to-door work earlier than four to six weeks prior to the election would be met with negative reaction. Therefore, we abandoned this idea and
opted for newspaper ads and inserts.

I did not design the insert. Bob did so, and while I readily admit it was better than no insert, it went against the general strategy which I had planned. First, it posed two questions, not one, which I felt was confusing and required too much effort on the part of the reader who at best would look at it and toss it in a five second span.

Secondly, "Democrats" is too large and the likelihood of the independent voter which leans Republican (whose votes were critical to a victory) looking at it favorably was diminished.

Lastly, because of objections raised by Jack Christian, his name was placed above Burrow's and consequently, out of ballot order. Late in the campaign, when it became apparent that not all three candidates would be elected, Jack started becoming more concerned about his needs rather than the needs of the team.

Though Bob fell short on the inserts, he outdid himself as far as the campaign slogan and posters. "Three for the Roads - Burrow, Christian, Thomas." Posters bearing this inundated the county two weeks prior to the election and easily outnumbered Republican posters six to one. Again, the posters placed our central issue (roads) in the forefront. I distinctly remember traveling the county roads the weekend before election day placing posters on the first telephone pole past a chuckhole. I figured the best time to win a vote on road conditions was after a voter hit one of these giant craters.
10.

RESULTS

As mentioned earlier in this paper, all three candidates lost to the Republicans. This miffed me somewhat because I was sure (as sure as anyone can be in politics) at least one of the three (most probably Jim Thomas) could be elected. More specific to Burrow's race, she ran sixth (out of six) in all of the county's thirty-two precincts except six; five of which she placed fifth, and one of which she placed fourth (Brandywine Township - her home precinct). Of particular note, however, is how closely she did run to the fifth place person. In all but a handful of precincts, less than ten votes separated the fifth and sixth place positions. This had not occurred in 1980 when Wendell Swain had ran a very distant sixth (See tables).

Most assuredly, it would be easy for me to sit and make excuses as to why our team lost and their team won. If elections were won by work alone, we would have won by a landslide. However, I do offer some explanations as to factors which I feel contributed to our loss.

Both Democrats and Republicans alike saw a decline in straight ticket balloting; however, Republican straight ticket balloting still outnumbered those of the Democrats by better than two-to-one (See tables). Thus, 52 to 58 percent of the total number of votes the Republican candidates received were from straight ticket voters; whereas only 41 to 48 percent of the votes the Democrats received were from straight ticket votes. These straight ticket votes are core votes which both sides depend
on and simply from party strength, Republicans can expect fully two times more votes from their core supporters than can the Democrats. If the difference between Republican and Democrat straight ticket voting were more closely comparable, these council races would become much more competitive. Simply put, Republican candidates' margins of victory are largely the difference between the number of straight ticket voters. Republican councilmen are ushered into victory each election by the strength of their party, not their candidacies. And I think this is an inherent weakness which would make them vulnerable if Democrat candidates could ever put issues and campaign dynamics into their favor. One particular note was the substantial decline (9 - 12 percent) in straight ticket votes even though their actual number of votes did not substantially decrease (See tables). Further, the Democrat council candidates received over 1300 votes more than the Democrat council candidates did in 1980; therefore, it is reasonable to assume some inroads were made and some cross-over from Republican to Democrat was realized in 1984.

A second factor which I feel contributed to the Democrat loss was the combination of poor ballot position and the lack of a full ticket to compensate for it. The county council race was the last race on the ballot before amendments to the State Constitution and retention of State Supreme Court Justices. Out of a total of eight county-wide offices, five ran unopposed due to the inability of the Democrat party to find capable (or even incapable) people to run. Many voters, I feel, did not find the
council race due to the lack of interest from unopposed races.

One reason for the Democrat party's inability to find candidates is the weak, ineffective leadership which has prevailed for over a decade. Naturally, a minority party has a difficulty in finding qualified precinct workers and central committee officers; however, this problem is especially acute in Hancock County due to the complete and persistent defeats the party incurs at the hands of the Republicans election after election.

Still another factor in the Democrat council defeat in 1984 was our inability to gain real press coverage. The predominant newspapers of the county do not cover local politics except for an election eve "compare the candidates" and, of course, by that time, it is too little too late. Obviously, none of our candidates carried the name recognition that the eight-year Republican incumbents did, and this was aggravated further by the local press not covering either the individual campaigns or the issues which surrounded them.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ELECTIONS

One issue which could transcend any election in Hancock County is the complete domination of county government by the county's GOP. Most certainly, the majority of county voters are oblivious to this fact, especially due to the lack of local press coverage. A conscious effort on the part of Democrats, beginning in an off-year, to inform voters of this fact of Republican domination would certainly begin to reverse its effect. A systematic and repeated effort involving flyers, advertisements, and
door-to-door contact is needed to raise public awareness of this fundamental issue of domination of county government by a single party.

Secondly, Democrats need to fill entire slates of candidates in any manner possible to raise the credibility of the party in the voters' minds. Further, the party then needs to target specific offices in which Republicans may be particularly vulnerable (albeit from issues, lack of incumbent, etc.).

Thirdly, the Democrat party needs to make a conscious effort to target voters and establish increased contact through phone banks and door-to-door work. In recent years, these methods have become nearly non-existent.

Lastly, rank and file county Democrats need to precipitate a major change in the leadership of the county party. All of the aforementioned recommendations only require a combination of hard work and organizational skills and Democrats need to place individuals who are willing to put forth the much needed effort into these roles of leadership.

CONCLUSION

Though the council candidates did not win, there was an improved performance in their candidacies when compared to the same race in 1980. We organized the candidates to work as a team and had a central theme which I feel allowed our candidates to run much closer together and to win over 1300 more votes than the candidates did in 1980. It is my hope that their candidacies will illustrate to county Democrats that county elections can be won.
TABLES

TABLE ONE  TOTAL BALLOTS CAST

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1984</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18,433</td>
<td>17,965</td>
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TABLE TWO  STRAIGHT TICKETS CAST

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<th>1984</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7,099</td>
<td>5,835</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Dem.</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>1984</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3,281</td>
<td>2,555</td>
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TABLE THREE  ACCUMULATIVE VOTES RECEIVED BY INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>% votes from str. tick. ballots</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>11,577</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster</td>
<td>10,266</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roney</td>
<td>10,184</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>6,591</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Garrett</td>
<td>5,926</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swain</td>
<td>3,722</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>88</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>1984</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>% votes from str. tick. ballots</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>11,255</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foster</td>
<td>10,104</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>58</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roney</td>
<td>10,072</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burrow</td>
<td>5,374</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>5,866</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>6,308</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>41</td>
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TABLE FOUR  TOTAL VOTES RECEIVED BY DEMOCRAT COUNCIL CANDIDATES

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<th>Year</th>
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<th>% of total votes</th>
<th>Total votes of ticket</th>
<th>% of total votes</th>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>16,239</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>17,548</td>
<td>36.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+ 1309 from 1980</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX

BOB WILLIAMS

Bob is currently residing in west central Hancock County. Previously, he was active in Marion County Democrat politics when he lived in Indianapolis. Bob was instrumental in getting four (including himself) out of five town board members elected to the Cumberland board. Along with four Democrats on the town board, he was also able to get elected a Democrat to the Clerk-Treasurer's post. Currently, Bob is serving as President of the town board and harbors an acute interest in being Hancock County Democrat Chrmn.

JOHN BURTON

John owned and operated a small grocery in Cumberland. He lived near New Palestine. John was well-known in Cumberland as his grocery was a hang-out for local politicos. He was one of the key issue men and backers in the Cumberland Town Board race.

WILBUR LANTZ

Wilbur is a life-long resident of Hancock County and Brandywine Township. He is very well-known throughout the county's farm organizations such as the Farm Bureau and REMC. Currently, he is on the county council and is one of the only Democrats capable of being elected to a county-wide office.

NELLY BURROW

Nell has been active in Democrat politics since 1962. She was a precinct committeeman while residing in Greenfield and since then, has been the county coordinator for George Grabinowski, 6th Dist. congressional candidate in 1982 and Wayne Townsend, Gubernatorial candidate in 1984, as well as doing door-to-door work for Birch Bayh and Gary Hart.

JACK CHRISTIAN

Jack is a prominent banker in Shirley and knows a great many people through this position. He has also been a precinct committeeman for several years.

RODNEY FLEMING

Rodney comes from a very old and prominent Democrat family in the county. He obtained the chairmanship in a coup in 1982 from then county chairman Dan O'Connor. Rodney has come under fire for his many losses and (believe it or not) going on a fishing trip in 1983 with the Republican candidate for mayor. The Democrat incumbent mayor eventually won, however.

JIM THOMAS

Jim is currently owner and publisher of the Hancock County Ad News, the county's largest newspaper with a 15,000+ circulation.
Jim is well-known through his former business - "Jolly Jim's Texaco Station." He is past president of the Greenfield Sertoma and has been very active in the capacity of coach and on the board of directors of the Greenfield Boys' Club.
Deteriorating road conditions isn’t the only problem facing Hancock County voters in 1984.

After 16 years of a Republican-controlled County Council, Isn’t it time for a change?

Dedicated • Honest • Hardworking

In Hancock County in 1984...
Isn’t it time for a change?

ELECT
BURROW • CHRISTIAN • THOMAS
DEMOCRATS for
COUNTY COUNCIL

Paid for by the Hancock County Democrat Central Committee
Les Barr, Treasurer
Why are taxes not reduced when we have a surplus of over a million dollars?

Are the county roads better now than four years ago?

Vote for the DEMOCRATS for County Council

JACK CHRISTIAN
NELL BURROW
JIM THOMAS
elect
3 For The Roads

• BURROW
• CHRISTIAN
• THOMAS

✓✓ Check out opponents record
✓✓ Higher property taxes the last 4 years
✓✓ Over $1,000,000 surplus in budget
✓✓ Deteriorating road conditions
✓✓ Check the G.O.P. out on Nov. 6th

Paid for by Better Roads Committee - Bob Williams, Chairman