Happy 25th Birthday, Libertarian Party!

The Libertarian Party celebrated its 25th anniversary on December 11th — marking a quarter-century as America’s most active, successful, and influential third party.

“We’ve established ourselves as the most important third party of the latter half of the 20th century,” said Steve Dasbach, the party’s national chairman. “Now we’re working to become the dominant major party of the first half of the 21st century.”

During its 25 years, the party has run thousands of candidates for public office, elected hundreds of officeholders, racked up tens of millions of votes, and grown to include 125,000 registered voters in 28 states.

It was on December 11, 1971, when eight individuals met in Colorado Springs (CO) and formally voted to form the Libertarian Party. The impetus? The imposition of wage and price controls by President Richard Nixon.

Growing concern over Nixon’s “authoritarian” presidency made the group decide, recalled David Nolan, one of the founding members, that “a new political party, dedicated to the uncompromising defense of individual liberty, was needed now!”

Since then, the Libertarian Party has helped to fundamentally shift the nature of American political debate.

“Libertarian ideas that were considered outlandish 20 years ago — like privatizing government services, ending the War on Drugs, and so on — are part of mainstream politics now,” said Dasbach. “Libertarianism has become one of the most powerful intellectual forces in America.”

Indeed, the party’s philosophy has permeated the nation’s political dialogue to an astonishing degree—which hasn’t escaped the notice of the media. Libertarianism has been called “the real inspiration behind the Republican revolution” (New York magazine, 1995), and “the cutting-edge politics of the time” (The Village Voice, 1996).

Beyond its philosophical victories, the Libertarian Party has also helped redraw America’s political map, rewrite the record books on third-party success, and reform the nation’s ballot access laws.

“For 25 years, Republicans and Democrats have been hoping that we’ll go away,” said Dasbach. “No chance of that! Every time they suggest a new tax, or impose more censorship, or get America involved in another futile, bloody war, or subsidize their corporate clients, the Libertarian Party will be there to point out their sins.”

Two bestselling authors admit they’re libertarians

Libertarianism has taken a literary bent over the last several months, with two well-known authors announcing that they are libertarian — essayist and novelist Joan Didion and Charles Murray, author of Losing Ground.

“I’m a libertarian,” Didion stated in the September 2nd issue of New York magazine. According to the article, Didion had confused friends by veering between political admiration for Barry Goldwater and Jesse Jackson, but said, “It would take me all day to explain why I think my position has been consistent — but I think that it has.”

Didion is the author of the novels Play It As It Lays, Salvador, and A Book Of Common Prayer, and the collection of essays Slouching Towards Bethlehem.

Meanwhile, Murray announced his libertarian beliefs in a bold fashion: He has written a book entitled What It Means to Be A Libertarian, scheduled for publication in January.

In the November 18th issue of The New Yorker, Murray argued that the federal government could be cut by 40% — and “you’d get large numbers of people who’d realize we don’t need it. Most people are already living lives where they could do without the government just fine.”

But despite his libertarian rhetoric, Murray isn’t perfect: He admitted he voted for Bob Dole this year. “I voted for Dole because my wife said if you want to vote against Bill Clinton you have to vote for Dole. If I hadn’t voted for Dole, I would have voted for Harry Browne,” he said.

Magicians & triathletes for Browne

Besides winning the support of radio talk show hosts and investment advisors, Harry Browne also won votes in 1996 from . . . magicians and triathletes?

That’s right: Browne won the support of Jillette Penn (half of the famous magic duo Penn & Teller) and Jeff Devlin, identified by Inside Triathlon magazine as one of America’s “top triathletes.”

In the October 20 issue of The State Journal-Register (Springfield, Illinois), Penn said Browne had his support because “a vote for him means an awful lot. Nobody who goes to the polls to vote for Clinton or Dole is not only misinformed but also, on some level, evil.”

And in the December issue of Inside Triathlon, Devlin said, “If we elect a Republican or Democrat, everything will stay the same. [Browne is] actually able to articulate some common sense and make valid points.”
It makes America work
Thankless campaign draws its reward from small school

I didn't intend to run for Congress this year. But, like the loyal party activist that I am, I allowed my name to be placed in nomination, intending to become a "paper candidate." However, that just isn't me — once in the fray, I became immersed in the battle to win office.

I was nominated in May, but it was late August before I finally worked up enough enthusiasm to formally announce my entry into the race. The local media called me a "perennial" candidate (I had run for office six times before) and asked me why I was running this time. My answers didn't impress them.

The first major hurdle to overcome was fund raising. I spent hours writing news releases, speeches, statements, fund-raising letters and answering questionnaires. I ended up with permanent cramp in my neck.

During the next two plus months, I spent endless hours driving to other counties in my district, hauling materials in and out of locations where candidate fairs were held, shaking hands and passing out the literature. My right hand is sore and I have a backache!

Then I spent endless hours on the phone asking for help, lawn sign locations, endorsement money, and more.

Then there were lawn signs to be installed in muddy lots and weed-filled yards. I ended up with muddy boots in dirty car.

Then I spent endless hours driving to other counties in my district, delivering materials in and out to locations where candidate fairs were held, shaking hands and passing out the literature. My right hand is sore and I have a backache!

Then I spent endless hours walking my district, delivering literature door-to-door. Ash, at last, some good results: I'm losing weight.

During the Washington/OU game, a student volunteer and I stood at an entrance to the stadium path (footbridge over the Willamette River) and passed out literature. It was very cold and my hands soon became so stiff that it was difficult to separate each pamphlet and give it quickly to the passers-by. But it was rewarding to have them recognize me, call me by name and wish me good luck.

My volunteer was so encouraged by the response that he said, with the optimism of youth, "I think you have a chance to win." I knew better, but I didn't want to disillusion him.

On one awful day, I went to Albany for a candidate's forum. I forgot to turn off my headlights when I arrived, so my battery died. I was dead when I came back to the car. With the help of one of my opponents, I arrived home only to discover my 1983 Chevy was leaking oil badly and couldn't be used. Then I discovered my computer wouldn't "boot up" and was unusable.

Somehow, it all worked out — until the day before the election.

In a last ditch effort to get my message out, a volunteer and I spent hours on the University of Oregon campus distributing materials and talking to students. On the way home, I was side-swiped by a van. No one was hurt, but my car was almost totaled.

The accident terminated my campaign activities. I'm glad it didn't happen until the last day.

The truth is, I enjoy campaigning. Even though I knew I didn't have a chance of winning with five persons splitting the anti-incumbent vote, I enjoyed meeting new people and hearing other ideas. In addition, I felt my Libertarian positions were educating and influencing many people. I could see their eyes light up when I said something that struck home.

But the most memorable appearance was at a high school in Philomath. The class of seniors was attentive for more than an hour. The questions they asked were more perceptive and challenging than those of the media or other audiences. The students were native, more polite and more informed than other classes I have talked to over the years.

I had begun to lose confidence in my fellow voters. They seemed uninterested in the social problems facing them and uninformed about the issues. The Philomath seniors changed my view in that class I saw a search for truth, a spirit of independence and a willingness to consider varying viewpoints that I find lacking in many citizens today.

When I look back at this, my seventh campaign, I know it is the Philomath students and their teacher, Mike Crocker, I shall remember most fondly. They restored my faith in the ability of human beings to seriously consider national problems and deal with them.

Unlike the editor of a paper I encountered who declared himself a pessimist, these students are optimists, willing to face their futures with courage, honesty and a belief that they can succeed in solving problems and reaching goals. They project the American spirit that made this country productive and prosperous and gave us the highest living standard in the world.

They are the future, and after meeting them, the future looks bright to me.

Toni Nathan was the Libertarian candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives for Oregon's 4th District. In 1972 she was her party's first Vice-Presidential nominee and became the first woman in history to receive an Electoral College vote.

A Publisher's Weekly
New York, NY
November 18, 1996
One vote for the Libertarians

Many years ago, my college instructor in political science asked the class to state where each of us stood on the political spectrum. It’s a lecture I find myself returning to every four years because of my personal tendency to roam across the political landscape at will.

My position in society has afforded me the opportunity to personally meet and interview, at length, candidates for high office in three states, including the current president of the United States. I make no apologies for having voted for Bill Clinton for president four years ago, because I knew him. But I was an exception since my president had been prior to 1992 were marked for Gerald Ford, John Anderson, Ronald Reagan and George Bush.

I am otherwise a notorious ticket splitter. Since I do get to speak personally, I have discovered how the political philosophy of the Libertarian Party and its candidate for president above there are, regardless of the person running for political office, especially at the local level, I depend upon my personal appraisal of the person running for the office in question.

What I have lacked is a basic political philosophy. The presidential votes listed above would tend to indicate that I’m a pretty conservative voter, but I’ve never thought of myself that way. A lot of voters describe themselves as being fiscally conservative, but socially liberal. One of our recent letter writers suggested that one cannot be both. I disagree. The problem is one of definition. Most people incorrectly define “liberal” as the opposite of “conservative,” when in fact, they are points along a spectrum of political beliefs ranging from fascism on the extreme right, to anarchy on the extreme left.

In this election cycle, I found myself giving more thought to my presidential vote than ever. And I found myself even less comfortable with the views of the Republican and Democratic candidates for president than ever.

One vote for the Libertarians

By Mike McNeill

Generally, I see people asking government for more, more, more, and that both major parties, despite their protests to the contrary, seem intent on providing “more,” which means more of my tax money. The most important problems of our nation are going unsolved and ignored. When you add to the arrogance of the major parties, which have excluded the voices of others from debates about this country’s future. This means fully half of the electorate has tuned out of the political debate, which in turn means that if Bill Clinton or Bob Dole wins the presidency, only about a fifth of the potential electorate will actually have cast votes in support of the winner. More dangerously, people of the moneyed special interests will have undue influence on the public policy of the United States.

At the same time, I’ve found myself attracted to the political philosophy of the Libertarian Party and its 1996 presidential candidate, Harry Browne. I voted for him. This is a personal endorsement and should not be considered an endorsement by the Marshall News Messenger.

I don’t have any delusions about the Libertarian Party sweeping into office. But I consider the philosophy of Libertarians as having already won the public debate, if not the political one.

There can be no denial that most Americans have concluded, as Browne says, that the federal government does not work and cannot possibly be made to work, and that reliance on the rules of the Constitution, the exercise of personal responsibility in all aspects of life, and the unleashing of free enterprise and individual liberty will make the United States the place the Founding Fathers intended it to be.

The Libertarian philosophy doesn’t fit a “liberal” or “conservative” peg. Libertarians cannot imagine life without a huge federal government. Conservatives can’t accept that they should not be allowed to regulate lifestyles. Libertarians maintain that government should leave businesses and individuals and their money alone, so long as they are not violating the rights that the Constitution provides all Americans.

I think most Americans believe as I do, even if they decide not to vote that way this year.

McNeill is managing editor of the Marshall News Messenger.

Both parties have lost libertarian principles

By JAMES COLLINGS JR.

Election day is four days away. I can’t say everything I need to say in 300 words, nor will I try.

The Republicans and Democrats get four or five stories each, every day. I have seen and read about the Libertarian congressional candidate. I have seen none about the senatorial, presidential or vice presidential candidates.

But I’m not going to complain about unfair press coverage. First, because it would do no good. Second, because the press has a vested interest in keeping the Democrats and Republicans in power.

Since Jay Rutledge, the Libertarian congressional candidate, is starting to get noticed; the Republicans and Democrats have decided to make him something he is not. It is no accident that Jay Rutledge is not listed under the Libertarian party on the ballot.

It will also not be a bureaucratic snafu that keeps him from being listed where he belongs before election day. It is a calculated move by the Democrats and the Republicans to confuse the voters and keep his vote total low.

If you believe I am paranoid, stop and consider the political philosophy of the Libertarian Party and the Republicans to confuse the voters and keep his vote total low.

If you believe I am paranoid, stop and consider the political philosophy of the Libertarian Party and the Republicans to confuse the voters and keep his vote total low.

If you believe I am paranoid, stop and consider the political philosophy of the Libertarian Party and the Republicans to confuse the voters and keep his vote total low.

If you believe I am paranoid, stop and consider the political philosophy of the Libertarian Party and the Republicans to confuse the voters and keep his vote total low.
Despite loss, Libertarian secures party's position on next ballot

First Libertarian gets elective post in county

He was one of four running for six seats on parks commission.

By KAREN JOSEPH
WASHENATOW COUNTY STAFF REPORTER

Washenaw County has its first Libertarian elected official. Granted, running with three other candidates in a race with six open seats made things a little easier for Brett Cashman to win a seat.

LIBERTARIAN: 1st November wins for party in Washtenaw County

In nearby Lenawee County, Libertarian Brian Wisneski was elected to a seat on the Clinton Township Board of Trustees.

The election Tuesday was a turning point for the Libertarians in the state, Salvette said. It was the first election in which Libertarians had won a seat in November.

The only previous win for Libertarians was in April 1988, when a Libertarian was elected mayor of Addison, Michigan.

Wisneski, who works as a facilities management supervisor at Parke-Davis Pharmaceutical Research in Ann Arbor, was listed on the ballot along with incumbent Republican Connie Furgason to win one of two open seats on the board.

He finished ahead of another Republican who waged a write-in campaign.

The 31-year-old Wisneski said his unusual party affiliations made him a hard sell with voters.

“When I first told people I was running, they said ‘Good, go for it,’ ” he said. “Then I told them I was a Libertarian and they started locking up their livestock at night.”

However, voters did relate to some of Libertarians’ basic principles, like efficient use of tax dollars.

Once officially sworn into office, Wisneski plans to sit down with the clerk and review the township budget line by line.

“We have some high administrative costs in my opinion,” he said.

He promises legalizing drugs and the abolition of the Medicare program, which he criticizes as unworkable.

Libertarian doc who opposes Medicare wins House seat

Of the seven physicians elected to the U.S. House of Representatives last week, the most interesting may be Ron Paul, a Texas obstetrician-gynecologist.

Paul, a Libertarian, defeated Democratic lawyer Charles “Lefty” Morris with 51% of the vote.

This will be Paul’s third trip to Congress. He served as a Republican in the House in 1976-1977 and 1979-1986.

After leaving the GOP, Paul was the Libertarian candidate for president last year, running on 5 and 10 percent.

Paul’s political future is in the hands of voters who are voting for Cecil Underwood, he quipped, “At least it’s not close. I don’t have to stay up to 4 to see what we did.”

Aafter a vacation in the Bahamas, the doctor planned to make steps toward efforts to influence legislation in the 1997 session, depending on who occupies the governor’s mansion.

► Modern Healthcare
Chicago, Illinois, November 11, 1996

◄ The Ann Arbor News
Ann Arbor, Michigan, November 9, 1996