Congratulations, Survivor!
It’s Our 35th Anniversary

Did you know that only one in sixteen firms founded in 1962 is still in business? It’s true, according to a Larsons Label Company letter offering to sell anniversary labels. Inside this issue you will find reproduced Bob Constantine’s article written on the occasion of our 25th anniversary. It truly was a fortunate mix of academicians, humanists and labor leaders who joined efforts to found the organization, the immediate goal being to save the Debs home from the wrecking ball literally, with the long range goal to preserve the home as a museum and to promote the ideals for which Debs struggled: social justice, industrial unionism and peace.

The 25th anniversary was announced in the Spring issue of the Debs Foundation Newsletter, an organ introduced just one year earlier. A perusal of the last ten years of newsletters reveals that we have been doing a lot more than bare survival these years. A lot has been done which was newsworthy. In accessions, a number of donations by direct descendents of Kate Debs have greatly enhanced the historical value and the appeal of the Home. These donations have brought back for display the Debs’ mahogany dining room suite and full service of Havilland china (thanks to Mrs. Rhoden Calder), their parlor furniture, vases and an invaluable photograph of the Debs in the living room showing just how it looked in the early twenties (thanks to Peter Sargent), and the most recent accession a three-quarter bed and dresser, Victorian styles (thanks to Betty Heller, again from the estate of Rhoden and Leoma Calder).

Victor Navasky:
Needed, A New Voice For Workers

Guests at last fall’s award banquet were given plenty to think about in Victor Navasky’s acceptance speech. The subject of his address was well thought out and researched, a discussion of the need in this country for a newspaper for working people which does for them what the Wall Street Journal does for business and the managerial class, one which gives as much coverage to crime in the streets, as to crime in the streets, which exposes the fact that, for instance, the irrelevance of most of the rhetoric of the recent national elections. Navasky used Appeal to Reason as an example of what a newspaper for the common man can do. Published in Girard, Kansas, this newspaper appealed to the progressive and populist sentiments so strong in mid-America around the turn of the century.

Navasky correctly pointed out that Eugene Debs was not only a labor and Socialist Party leader, he also was a journalist who wrote extensively for Appeal, where the force of his guest editorials contributed substantially to the paper’s national reputation. Navasky pointed out that at the zenith of its popularity, Appeal had a readership of three-quarters of a million which, compared to population size, would be equivalent to double the circulation today of the New York Times.

Navasky called for a national working people’s organ which is independent, free and unborne to any vested interest such as corporate advertisers or even the sponsorship of organized labor. Debs demonstrated the power of the printed word when as editor of Locomotive Firemen’s Magazine he used that organ to assist...
You See Dust?

The following excerpt which is “From the President” of the Association of Indiana Museums caught my imagination:

“I have a friend who is vertically challenged (she’s short). Her brother is vertically enhanced (he’s tall). The brother, a compulsively neat person, visits her in Indiana twice a year. During the visits, he would notice all the dust on the top of her refrigerator. He would fret for days about telling her -- could he offend? Finally he just dusted up there. She caught him. Now when he visits, she hands him a rag upon entering. They both feel better. It is amazing what perspective does to your outlook...

Like my vertically challenged friend, I need to make sure that I listen to others with a different perspective. They may see dust that I do not. Or they might just think there is dust. If they think there is dust and there really is not, it is important to know why. The perception is the real key.”

Source: IAM Bulletin, Vol. 27:2

An organization that has survived thirty-five years can take pride in the evidence that a lot of right things have been done for the organization to stay "on track" for that long. With the passage of time, however, there is danger that dust collect, that the organization become formalized and rigidified, and suffer the loss of imagination and energy. Leaders need to the supported, but also to be inspired and sometimes nudged into new efforts and new ideas and methods. The Debs Foundation tries to be a fairly democratic, egalitarian organization, so you should not consider yourself "vertically challenged" when you would like to approach the leadership about something you'd like to see done or done better. If you as a member think you see dust collecting around or on the Debs Foundation, let us know about it. Write, or show up at a business meeting and let us know what's on your mind. We'll listen, and your input might make a big difference.

CONGRATULATIONS... continued from page 1

The foundation has spent a lot of money during this period. There were the expenses for refinishing Debs furniture. We spent $25,000 to replace the Home's slate shingle roof, and close to $10,000 for new drapes and wall coverings for the parlor and library. We spent or "invested" a chunk of money in producing in quantity a full color reproduction of the 1904 Debs-Hanford campaign poster, a set of six postcards which provide a full color tour of the Home inside and out, and a new edition of Ray Ginger's The Bending Cross, which includes the addition of a number of photographs and an "Introduction" and bibliography by J. Robert Constantine. To the Memorial Gardens, plaques have been added honoring an additional eight pioneers of American labor: Phillip Murray (USWA), Sidney Hillman (ACTWU), Patrick Gorman (UCFWU), Mother Jones (UMWU), Charles Luna (UTU), Peter J. McGuire (Carpenters), Patrick J. Quinlan (Plumbers and Pipefitters), and Joseph Beirne (CWA).

During this ten year period Eugene Debs has been honored as being one of the 100 outstanding Americans of the 20th century by Life magazine, and he was inducted into the Labor Hall of Fame, Department of Labor, Washington, D.C. The Debs Home has been provided with a State Historic Site marker by the Indiana Historical Society. The
The Eugene V. Debs Foundation: 1962-1987

J. Robert Constantine

(Reprinted from 1987 Debs Foundation Newsletter)

An attempt to describe the launching of the Debs Foundation in 1962 suffers from a shortage of documentary evidence and from inevitable memory lapses, so at the outset a disclaimer and apology are in order. One useful document is a list of the Foundation’s “charter members,” i.e., the 58 men and women who contributed $100.00 each toward the $9500.00 purchase price of the Debs home in Terre Haute. This charter member list underscores an important fact: The Debs Foundation was begun by an alliance of Indiana State University faculty members, organized labor representatives, and a mixed group of men and women who shared “Debsian” ideals. The same alliance has made possible the growth of the Foundation during the past 25 years.

As I remember it, Tilford Dudley, who was at the time director of the AFL-CIO speakers’ bureau in Washington, D.C., played the key role in getting the Foundation off the ground. Dudley steadily pushed the idea on ISU faculty members, drew up the articles of incorporation, and solicited essential “seed money” from his acquaintances at the national level of union leadership (Ted Dudley was, and is, a very persuasive man!). At the local labor level, clearly the most important “charter member” was Ned Bush, who served the Foundation as executive vice-president and as curator of the Debs home for many years before his death in 1979. Looking back on it, it seems unlikely that the Foundation could have grown as it has without Ned’s services. Ned was helped, of course, by other local labor officials—Curtis Culver, William Coakley, John McDaniel, Virgil Morris and others who were charter members.

Among the charter members from the faculty at Indiana State University, two of the most important were Howard Hamilton, in the political science department, and the late Earl Stephanson, in the economics department. Hamilton personally typed scores of letters to colleagues in academia and in labor and socialist circles, seeking and getting charter memberships for the Foundation from, among others, Roger Baldwin, head of the American Civil Liberties Union; Erich Fromm; Mary Donovan Hapgood, who served as secretary of the Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee; John Haynes Holmes, pastor of the Community Church in New York City; Clyde R. Miller, a journalist whose testimony helped convict Debs in 1918; John Dos Passos, Upton Sinclair and Irving Stone; Norman Thomas; and Albert Schweitzer. Earl Stephanson worked with Hamilton in securing charter membership, especially among labor officials, and was, I believe, instrumental in getting Patrick Gorman to serve as president of the Foundation. Among other ISU faculty members who were charter members of the Foundation, Woodrow Creason has served as treasurer of the Foundation for more than 20 years; this writer served as secretary from 1963 to 1983 and has since 1979 directed the Eugene V. Debs Project at the University; Bernard Brommel has published a respected biography of Debs; and Edward K. Spann has made possible the Foundation’s Bryant Spann Memorial Prize, an increasingly coveted and prestigious writer’s award. In countless ways, from keeping the Debs home open to the public on Sundays in the early days to trimming the hedges and washing the windows at the home, these and other ISU

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CHARTER MEMBERS

EUGENE V. DEBS FOUNDATION

MARCH 17, 1962

H. A. Abramson  
Donald Allen  
V. Dewey Annakin  
Roger Baldwin  
Morris Blumberg  
Quentin Bone  
Bernard Brommel  
John P. Burke  
Ned A. Bush, Sr.  
William Coakley  
Robert Constantine  
Marguerite Debs Cooper  
Rolla Cowger  
Curtis Culver  
William Davey  
S. A. Dewitt  
Tilford G. Dudley  
Eugene Dyche  
Ronald Elperin  
William Fox  
Ruth & Royal France  
Erich Fromm  
Adolph Germer  
John & Shirley Grindrod  
Robert Haagerson  
Doyt & Connie Hamilton  
Howard & Leavita Hamilton  
Albert Frampton  
Mary Donovan Hapgood  

William J. Hillis  
John Haynes Hilmes  
Ruth Leprade  
Mitchell Loeb  
Dora Mayer  
Louis Mayer  
John McDaniel  
Marjorie McDonald  
Duncan McDonald  
Brad & Lilly Miller  
Clyde R. Miller  
Virgil Morris  
Thomas Mulvihill  
Oscar K. Edelman  
James O’Connell  
John Dos Passos  
Otto Pragan  
Albert Schweitzer  
Clifford Shanks  
Mufford Sibley  
Upton Sinclair  
Edward Spann  
Karl Stark  
Kate Steichmann  
Earl Stephanson  
Irving Stone  
Norman Thomas  
Edward Whalen  
Woodward Creason

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Membership Dues: The Eugene V. Debs Foundation

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Enclose remittance. Make checks payable to the Debs Foundation.

The Debs Foundation
P.O. Box 843
Terre Haute, IN 47808-0843

Your dues and contributions are tax deductible. The Foundation owns and maintains the Debs Home and offers several educational and cultural programs. We are a voluntary organization with no paid staff.
in organizing and building the brotherhood, and to communicate numerous working class issues to a considerably larger, national audience of progressives and liberals. And the biased and extremely negative news coverage of the Pullman Strike evidenced how effectively the power of the press can be slanted in a pro-business and anti-labor direction. While Navasky is not optimistic regarding the eminent emergence of a new "appeal to working people" type of newspaper, he did emphasize that we are experiencing a communications revolution during which we need to keep before us the need for news in the language of and on the issues of concern to working America. As the communications revolution is changing the ways news is generated and disseminated, we the people need a voice.

FOUNDATION: 1962-1987... continued from page 3

faculty members -- Quentin Bone, Eugene Dyche, Ronald Eelperin, and others -- helped launch the Foundation and kept it going.

In addition to the labor and ISU faculty representatives, the charter membership of the Foundation included men and women from a wonderful variety of backgrounds and interests. Terre Haute businessmen -- Clifford Shanks, Edward Whalen, Morris Blumberg, William Hillis, and others -- were joined by the New York political cartoonist, Mitchell Loeb, and the sculptor, Louis Mayer, and the poet, Ruth Leprade, and the physician, John Grinrod, and the coal miner, Brad Miller (and his wife, Lilly), and the journalist, Ruth France (Norrick), and a score of other men and women whose only apparent common ground was their interest in keeping alive the Debs tradition.

No account of charter members of the Foundation would be complete without special reference to the roles played by Marguerite Debs Cooper and Oscar Edelman. Cooper, who is Debs' niece (and will be celebrating her 93rd birthday on May 24, 1987; Meadows Manor, 3300 Poplar, Terre Haute, Ind.), generously donated much of the furniture and memorabilia which fills the Debs home, and for her gift to Indiana State University of some 7,000 Debs letters, scholars and others will be forever indebted. During the occasional financial crises of the Foundation, Oscar Edelman "of Dayton" was a reliable and generous supporter and one of his donations made possible the curator's apartment in the Debs home. In addition, Edelman donated his vast library of labor-socialist literature to the Foundation and Indiana State University.

I want to emphasize the point that the success of the Debs Foundation over the past 25 years has been the result of contributions made by Charter members and by the hundreds of men and women who joined the Foundation at a later date. One thinks immediately of Hilton Hanna, Dallas Sells, Martin Miller, Noel Beasley, Charles King, Robert Clouse and so many others that it becomes impossible to mention all of them. Together the charter members and those who joined later have set in place an organization which has preserved a unique shrine in labor, socialist, and reform history and, at the same time, through its research and educational programs contributed to the preservation and understanding of Debs' ideals.