

# The Debs Foundation Newsletter

P.O. BOX 843, TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA 47808-0843

35th Anniversary

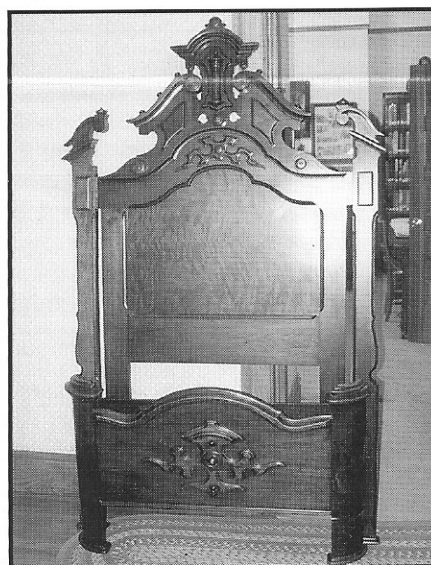
SPRING, 1997

## 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 decedents 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).

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Victorian Three-Quarter Bed and  
Dresser, before refinishing.

**SPRING BUSINESS  
MEETING  
APRIL 26, 1997,  
1:00 PM  
AT THE DEBS  
HOME**

## 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 suites as to crime in the streets, which dissects and exposes, 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 un beholden 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

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## 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 be 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 (UFCWU), 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

## DEBS FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

Spring, 1997

Published by

The Eugene V. Debs Foundation

Box 843

Terre Haute, IN 47808

Foundation Officers:

Jack Sheinkman, *President*

Noel Beasley, *Executive Vice President*

Charles King, *Secretary*

Woodrow Creason, *Treasurer*

The *Debs Foundation Newsletter* is published twice yearly for distribution to members and friends of the Foundation. The Eugene V. Debs Foundation is a non-profit, private organization which maintains the home of Eugene and Kate Debs as a museum and shrine to labor, and carries on educational and informational programs which aim to honor and promote the goals for which Debs struggled: industrial unionism, social justice, and peace. For those wishing to become members, an application form is provided elsewhere in this issue.

annual award banquet has continued to honor and bring to Terre Haute for public recognition outstanding Americans whose life work and accomplishments have been in the Debsian tradition. The list starts with Ed Asner in 1987, Joyce Miller in 1988, Morton Bahr in 1989, Lynn R. Williams in 1990, John Sayles in 1991, Ralph Nader in 1992, Dolores Huerta in 1993, Richard Trumka in 1994, Jim Hightower in 1995 and Victor Navasky just last year. Beginning with the 1987 banquet, we produced a souvenir dinner program including a greetings section, proceeds from which roughly equal annual membership dues and contributions. Income from these sources -- annual dues and contributions from faithful members, and greetings in the dinner program -- have with rare exception enabled us to operate financially in black ink and not have to draw from the endowment fund for special expenses. Throughout this period there has been annual prize for literature, carrying a cash stipend of \$1,000, and two scholarships annually, cash award of \$600 each, given to students at Indiana State University.

Equally important to the foundation's mission is the report of some increase in visitorship to the Debs Home. Well over 1,000 annually have toured the site, including bus loads of school children and children's organizations, classes from Indiana State University, bus loads of senior citizens, and many families and individuals stopping by as they travel through this area. It is gratifying to observe visitor's amazement and pleasant surprise at what they see and learn from their tour.

One thing which has not been accomplished yet is to develop the financial resources to afford a paid, full-time museum curator-director. It has been hoped that the Endowment Fund would grow sufficiently that annual proceeds would underwrite a salary, but this hope remains unfulfilled.

In Fall, 1987, Jack Sheinkman succeeded the retiring Murray Finley as Foundation President, other executive officers have remained the same. The future of the Debs Foundation will see no doubt a continuation of basic programs and hopefully new ones. There will be changes in leadership. However, we are confident that the Debs Foundation, as resilient as the ideals of the man it honors, will continue to defy whatever odds there be and some day announce anniversary number 50, and eventually a centennial celebration in the year 2062.

# 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

## CHARTER MEMBERS EUGENE V. DEBS FOUNDATION MARCH 17, 1962

|                            |                     |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| H. A. Abramson             | William J. Hillis   |
| Donald Allen               | John Haynes Hilmes  |
| V. Dewey Annakin           | Ruth Leprade        |
| Roger Baldwin              | Mitchell Loeb       |
| Morris Blumberg            | Dora Mayer          |
| Quentin Bone               | Louis Mayer         |
| Bernard Brommel            | John McDaniel       |
| John P. Burke              | Marjorie McDonald   |
| Ned A. Bush, Sr.           | Duncan McDonald     |
| William Coakley            | Brad & Lilly Miller |
| Robert Constantine         | Clyde R. Miller     |
| Marguerite Debs Cooper     | Virgil Morris       |
| Rolla Cowger               | Thomas Mulvihill    |
| Curtis Culver              | Oscar K. Edelman    |
| William Davey              | James O'Connell     |
| S. A. Dewitt               | John Dos Passos     |
| Tilford G. Dudley          | Otto Pragan         |
| Eugene Dyche               | Albert Schweitzer   |
| Ronald Elperin             | Clifford Shanks     |
| William Fox                | Mulford Sibley      |
| Ruth & Royal France        | Upton Sinclair      |
| Erich Fromm                | Edward Spann        |
| Adolph Germer              | Karl Stark          |
| John & Shirley Grindrod    | Kate Steichmann     |
| Robert Haageron            | Earl Stephanson     |
| Doyt & Connie Hamilton     | Irving Stone        |
| Howard & Leavitta Hamilton | Norman Thomas       |
| Albert Frampton            | Edward Whalen       |
| Mary Donovan Hapgood       | Woodward Creason    |

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

*Continued on Page 4*

### Membership Dues: The Eugene V. Debs Foundation

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
STREET \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$ 5.00 Student Member      \_\_\_\_\_ \$100.00 Sustaining Member  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$10.00 Regular Member      \_\_\_\_\_ \$250.00 Life Members  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$25.00 Supporting Member      \_\_\_\_\_ Other

Enclose remittance. Make checks payable to the Debs Foundation.

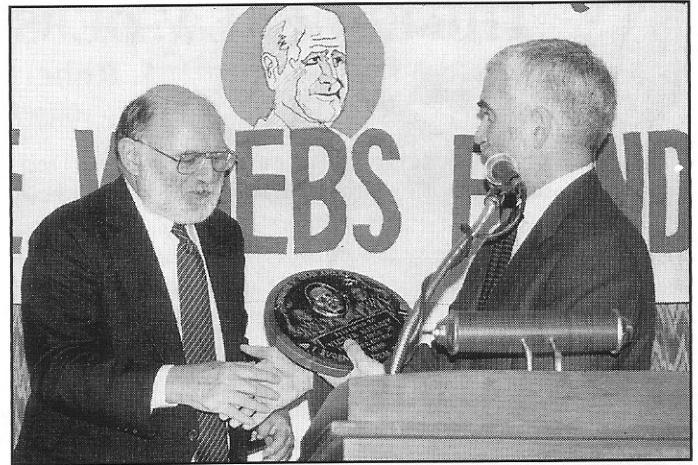
The Debs Foundation  
P.O. Box 843  
Terre Haute, IN 47808-0843

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.



*NAVASKY... continued from page 1*

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.



*Victor Navasky accepts plaque from Noel Beasley*

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

faculty members -- Quentin Bone, Eugene Dyche, Ronald Elperin, 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.

**EUGENE V. DEBS FOUNDATION**

P.O. Box 843

Terre Haute, Indiana 47808-0843

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