

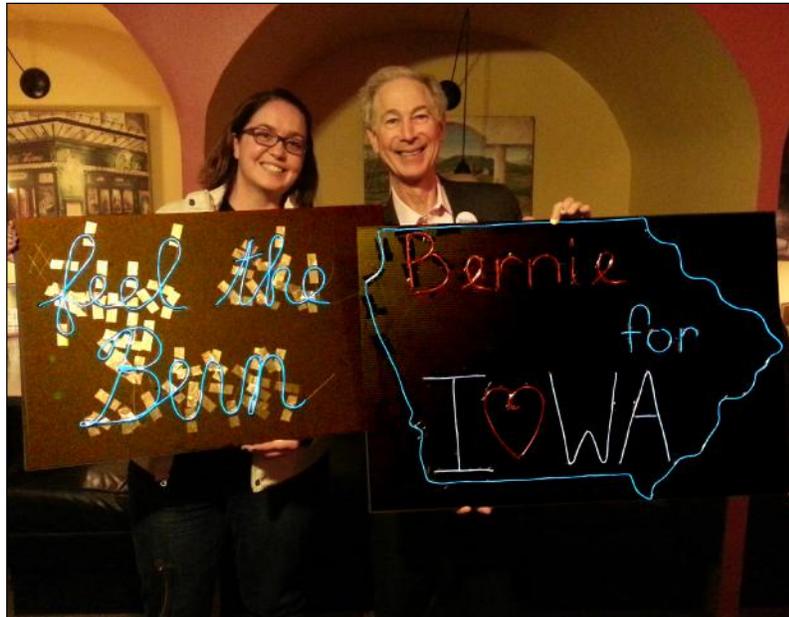
A New Yorker's Iowa Journey for Bernie

By Marc Crawford Leavitt

Table of Contents

Wed: Returning to the Heartland after 12 years.....	1
Thurs: Wearing my Bernie pin 12 feet away from Hillary.....	2
Fri: Rehearsing my cabaret show and going door to door.....	6
Sat: Filmed by German TV; Performing cabaret for the "Troops".....	8
Sun: Relaxing, watching commercials, and ringing doorbells.....	16
Mon: Caucus Day.....	17
Tues: Dodging a Blizzard to get back to NYC.....	21

For this born-and-bred New York Jewish lawyer, political junkie and cabaret satirist, Iowa caucus week ending 2-1-16 was something of a culture shock immersion into Midwest Americana.



Wednesday **Returning to the Heartland after 12 years.**

Leaving behind over two feet of snow in the Big Apple on Wednesday, I flew into Omaha, Nebraska (since the fares were much cheaper than to Des Moines). Driving across the Missouri River in a straight shot for two hours across sparsely populated open plains with patches of leftover snow, I passed John Wayne's birthplace and the bridges of Madison County. The Mississippi is the eastern boundary of this flat state where square counties have horizontal and vertical borders. The entire population at about 3 million is only slightly larger than Queens, the multi-cultural heart of the greatest city in the world where in 2009 I campaigned unsuccessfully to become Borough President. During my six days in Iowa, everyone I interacted with was white (and probably Christian, practicing or not) except the well spoken Latino manager of Yanni's Greek/Italian Restaurant where I performed a cabaret show, a couple of college student

campaigners, several of the busload of Floridian campaigners including Americans of Indian and African background plus Marty, a Jewish lawyer in his 60s, and two workers at the Great Panda Chinese Restaurant where I ordered take out for lunch on caucus day.

I enjoyed having dinner with Iowans Rich and his wife Sandy at the Urban Grill in a Des Moines suburb. Rich is a teacher and former girls basketball coach whose older brother is an East Coast friend; they grew up in an Iowa family of 10 siblings. Also Bernie supporters, their friendly and wholesome welcome felt like the essence of rural warmth. I silently admitted to being a New York culinary snob as I ate salmon in a too creamy white sauce and a bland salad with a gooey raspberry vinaigrette.

I drove 30 miles further east to the modest home of John & Elaine Mattingly in Newton, a company town grievously wounded economically by the 2007 departure of the Maytag factories. In 2004, when I was a Deaniac and Rich was not yet married, he was a gracious host. On caucus night, Rich and I watched Dean's notorious yell live on a big screen sports bar TV a mile away from party site. In December of 2003, I had seen a NY Times article about Dean supporters including the Mattinglys, then proprietors of the book and music store now run by his brother. I called them out of the blue to ask if they would sponsor my cabaret show in which I dressed as Professor Harold Hill from "The Music Man" singing a parody of "*Trouble in River City*." Their enthusiastic response resulted in my 2004 visit and a lovely friendship as they arranged for show venues in a neighbor's home and at Uncle Nancy's bakery café.

Only twelve years later I was back, welcomed with a happy hug from Elaine. John had gone to bed because he leaves at 6:15 am for his computer tech job, and she leaves not much later to work with special ed kids an hour away. Elaine was the precinct captain for Bernie and we scoped out plans for the week including campaigning, their musical gigs scheduled for the next two nights, and my cabaret show set for Saturday. I told her I would check out Bernie's Des Moines HQ the next day to see if I could perform and inspire the "troops" after 9pm when it's too late to campaign.

Thursday **Wearing my Bernie pin 12 feet away from Hillary.**

I awoke in an empty house and looked out the windows to absorb the small town working class aura. I drove two minutes to Bernie's still closed headquarters on a nearly empty town square surrounding a classic domed municipal building. The Medicine Shoppe featured Larry, the smiling competent pharmacist, and an array of football mementos plus normal products. The coffee shop included groups and pairs of well fed citizens, many wearing denim and baseball caps, all engaged in banter about family matters and Hillary's visit to the middle school set for 4:45 that afternoon. After breakfast I met young Dylan from Brooklyn, in charge of Bernie's local campaign (who spent a year in Indonesia on a Fulbright), and Alex from Seattle, both preparing packets of campaign literature and door

hangers matching lists of Democratic voters. I offered my services through caucus night on Monday and got scheduled for door knocking in the Mattingly precinct.



Then I drove on a straight flat highway with a 70 mph speed limit past open grey-brown fields and old snow, a lone white billboard that simply said “JESUS”, and other sparsely placed billboards for an Adult Store, plumbing repair, etc. Most of the radio stations were music, and several were religious variously playing bible interpretations and sermons or spiritually inspired music. Some talk radio included believers who were upset about abortion and gay rights. And thank God for Iowa public radio. I heard an interview with a southern evangelist preacher and radio host who early on with his wife had met and been totally taken with Ted Cruz. As the Trump phenomenon began, he felt sure that Trump’s rants against Mexicans and Muslims would turn off Christians, and absolutely could not fathom that he was mistaken.

Before arriving in Des Moines at Bernie’s HQ on Martin Luther King Boulevard, I noticed a Ben Carson billboard and pondered that Barack Obama beat Hillary here in 2008. The big tour bus in the shopping center parking lot sporting Bernie’s “A Future to Believe In” theme on the side was the only non-school bus I saw during my entire trip.

Inside, I was greeted by a gorgeous young woman with an intriguing accent who said she came from Greece to campaign for Bernie. During the previous week I had tried by phone to speak with key staff people Zach or Tara to offer my political cabaret talent. I asked for and was directed to Zach, an urgent young man busy organizing the scores of mostly college age volunteers. In 90 seconds I explained that I was a sophisticated campaigner who got over 12,000 votes

running for office and wanted to perform to inspire the volunteers after hours. He sharply dismissed me with “No way. Not gonna happen. Really busy (unspoken: go away, you looney),” as he dashed off on another task. Whew! That hurt. I could only hope that his organizing skills exceeded his people skills. Regaining my composure, as he zipped by a few minutes later I handed him my card and CD of the show I did the month after 9/11 and asked him to listen to “I Am Money, and I Write the Laws”, my parody of “I Write the Songs” embodying Bernie’s denunciation of big money in politics, and perhaps call me. He managed a curt thank you.



I drove back to Newton, and Dylan chuckled and agreed that Zach can turn people off. He said the main local campaign efforts would start tomorrow and I should feel free to attend Hillary’s event. He noted that Hillary’s campaign had made a major contribution to the local Democratic Party and Newton was therefore expected to go for her, but our job was to keep the margin as low as possible. While getting coffee and a muffin at Uncle Nancy’s, I encountered a group of media people about to cover Hillary. I shared that I was from New York and regaled them with a verse of my parody of her vote to authorize the Iraq invasion in 2002:

*“I’m Just a Girl Who Cain’t Say No when there are voters to sway.
If Bushy says ‘Come on, Let’s Go’ I ain’t the one to say ‘nay’.
For a while I tried to play it cool and say the choice should be by the U.N.
Then I saw Old Glory come unfurl’d & I told Congress to let Bush ‘Say When’...”*

Not wanting to feel like a traitor at Hillary’s rally while wearing a “Bernie” button, I wrote out a small sign that I put in a sheet protector and wore around my neck:

*I like HILLARY, and think she’d make a GREAT President,
But I LOVE BERNIE and what he STANDS FOR.*

At the vast local school campus, I found myself waiting in a slow line in the cold with 50 or more others perhaps being checked out by the Secret Service. We were marched to a cafeteria adjacent to the auditorium where Hillary was already inside. As people read my sign and smiled, sometimes agreeing with me, we were asked by staff to be patient while they tried to deal with Fire Marshals who wouldn’t let us in. One woman said she just had to take a picture of my sign. A mother with a pre-teen boy grumbled that she supported Hillary but was changing to Bernie because she made the effort to come and wasn’t getting in.

After a half hour, I approached the exit to get a progress report and was surprised to see a smiling Hillary walking right toward me to enter the room, not 12 feet away. As I backed off, not wanting to infringe on her space, she saw my Bernie button and perhaps read the sign. She then warmly greeted and apologized to the group, gave a positive two minute speech, noted that people could hear her on the loudspeaker, and walked out. That was as nice as could be expected.

Back at the Mattingly home I was warmly greeted by John and agreed with Elaine that Dylan is a neat young guy. I helped John load his large keyboard and audio equipment into his minivan and accompanied them both a few minutes away to the American Legion hall. Behind the well lit bar running the length of one wall was a gregarious full bodied woman serving drinks to a dozen men and women. The other walls were murals of patriotic soldier themes and flags. The guy with the grey pony-tail sitting next to me at the bar was the father of the bartender, a really nice guy.

The music started at 7. John wore a work shirt and a stars and stripes kerchief around his neck. Elaine wore jeans and a tie-died blouse. She began singing blues and pop songs with a sultry alto including some clever Maria Muldaur numbers. John's fingers danced across the keyboard with accomplished talent, and he sang as well. More people filtered in including two young men who wanted to play pool. We had talked earlier about me performing a couple of my parodies that are political but without mentioning candidates, and so I sang my Ballad of Enron to the tune of "Sixteen Tons" with the chorus:

*"Ya cheat tons of folks and whaddya get?
To keep all your profits and to shed all your debt.
St. Peter doncha call 'em 'cuz they can't go.
They have no soul 'cuz their company stole."*

Later I sang "Where did my parents go?" My parody of "Where have all the flowers gone?" With the answer being "Gone in the chain store massacre" These songs went over really well in this working class crowd. It was a fun night.

Back home, John and Elaine were amused that I was interested in watching the incessant TV commercials for the assorted Democratic and Republican candidates with which they had been bombarded for weeks. Obviously, we don't get these in New York. Bernie's upbeat ad played every half hour with Simon & Garfunkel's "*They've all come to look for America*" soundtrack and scenes of enthusiastic supporters and crowds happily marching with or greeting Bernie or cheering his speeches. Hillary's ad featured a chronology of her dedicated civic leadership from a young age to the present to demonstrate the depth of her experience and counter criticism of her changing positions. Republican negative ads of who lied about their present anti-immigration positions were played against Cruz, Trump and Rubio. Rubio's ad showed average citizens busy with

life tasks catching his rhetoric on a TV out of the corner of their eye and pausing appreciatively at what he was saying, and concluding with his full screen gratefulness for being part of our great country. A mild but dedicated Ben Carson spoke warmly of needed leadership that wasn't bombastic and concludes with his hands folded together not quite in prayer. The political ads were over half of the all the commercials. Sometimes they were back to back, and it was difficult to figure out where one started and the next stopped. Some ads criticizing how a candidate was insufficiently conservative actually seemed to me to show how reasonable that candidate had been in the past. It was as if trying to solve a problem was a disqualification with office.

Friday **Rehearsing my cabaret show and going door-to-door**

With the Mattinglys off from work, after we enjoyed a great omelet made by John, we all rehearsed the songs I planned to perform at our Saturday night show. John is truly a consummate musician, and during my stay I often heard him practicing Bach as well as jazz song arrangements.

At Bernie's Newton HQ I met several of the volunteers who arrived in a bus from Florida. Many were already making phone calls from lists of voters, some of whom had been determined to either be GOTC (Get Out To Caucus) or PERS (Persuadable). Other info categories noted if people were not home, had refused contact, were leaning one way or the other, etc. A table was covered with packets of lists and campaign literature by precinct section. I was given one near the Mattingly home and drove back there to start my stint.

The houses were spaced fairly far apart, so I did a lot of walking and was grateful that the weather was mild winter chill, thankfully not freezing. Less than half of the people on my list were at home, so I wrote "Sorry I missed you" on the campaign flyer and signed my name. I had friendly conversations ranging from how mostly older women liked Hillary to Bernie supporters who assured me they would be at the caucus to how some seemingly well informed Democrats were so disgusted with dysfunctional government that they actually liked Trump's brashness. Some people were politely not interested. A few were annoyed at the barrage of contacts during the caucus season. Several people sported Bernie lawn signs, but I saw zero signs for any other candidate.

A young woman who said she was independent listened with interest to my urging to register as a Democrat and caucus for Bernie. I said he was the only candidate who would actively make a difference reducing the gap between the super rich and the 99%. I observed that in NYC during most of the 20th century the City University system was entirely free, and shared that my own Uncle Sam benefitted from free tuition in the 1930s. Why should high school be free and not college in this day and age? That's not socialism; it's common sense to have a well educated workforce unburdened with debt.

I had told Dylan I could drive people to the caucus, and I encountered one man named Craig who took me up on it. Obviously suffering from something like cerebral palsy with a halting step and slurred speech, he told me on caucus night that he was in a severe accident 20 years before involving spinal injury, had lost his furniture business, and that his wife had ultimately divorced him. He was especially pleased just hearing on TV that Bernie supported legalizing marijuana. This is part of the complaint about the rigged economy and that Wall Streeters who nearly destroyed our country get treated with kid gloves while mostly Blacks and Latinos get arrested and jailed for marijuana possession.



As the beautiful pink sunset became dusk I completed my campaigning and drove over an hour northwest of Des Moines to the historic Hotel Pattee in Perry where the Mattingly's were performing in the lounge area with drummer Jimmy as J.J. Express. It reminded me of the NY upstate Mohawk Mountain House but with a Frank Lloyd Wright flair. A writer, Zachary Michael Jack, was giving a dinner talk about his novel "Corn Poll" describing the Iowa caucuses. The local power company was hosting a company dinner, and I enjoyed meeting a gregarious retiree and his wife of over 60 years. They joined me on the leather couch to enjoy the bluesy jazz. After I had enough to drink, I was prevailed upon to sing my Ballad of Enron song again, which was well received.

After I helped the Mattingly's and Jimmy load up their audio and percussion equipment, I bid them good night and drove a half hour to the Des Moines suburban home of Rich and Sandy, knowing that Rich was in Cedar Rapids with his elderly father who was just operated on for a hip fracture. Sandy welcomed me graciously and also expecting the arrival of her son and his girlfriend, both dental school students.

Saturday **Filmed by German TV while campaigning;
Performing my cabaret show for the “Troops”**

The house was cheery but the surrounding snow-covered scenery was dreary on this overcast, drizzly morning. I shared with Derek that my late father was the founding chair of the Endodontics Department at the Columbia University College of Dental Medicine and that I serve on the Dean’s Advisory Committee. We talked about how modern medicine and the reforms of Obamacare are turning sole practitioners into dinosaurs and that the health industry is moving towards results-based insurance compensation rather than fee for service.

I asked Sandy if I could stay with her and Rich on caucus night because they were closer to my Omaha departure location, and could she also save for my scrapbook the section of the Des Moines Register with caricatures of the candidate and articles about their sparring.

I then drove east of Des Moines, past a casino gambling and recreation complex, to report back to the Newton Bernie HQ. A news team from Germany covering the caucuses was interviewing volunteers, and I sang for them the introductory songlet from my show to the tune of the “Guys & Dolls” opening racetrack music for a Bernie Supporter:

*We’ve got the guy right here, and just like Paul Revere,
Bernie has warned of problems that should be clear.
 Can do Can do
This guy knows what we should do To rein in the one per-cent few.
 So vote should you.*



They got the idea. Then Elaine Mattingly came in and we hugged, and after I told the German broadcaster and photographer that she was my local host they asked if they could follow and film us as we went door-to-door. So we caravanned back to the designated precinct and were interviewed as we walked along. After asking permission from those who answered, our pitch and the responses were recorded.

Elaine invariably started out by introducing herself as a neighbor and apologizing because everyone in Iowa has been inundated with contacts. She knew some of the people, and our interchanges were often quite engaging. One man, a minister who worked with substance abusers, said that he had voted for Obama but liked much of what Trump represented. Elaine argued that Bernie's political revolution was a better kind of change, and the discussion got more philosophical. I observed that there's a silver lining to the nasty cloud of politics, and that despite the denunciations, recriminations, lies, grandstanding, sound-bite "gotchas" and obscene amounts of money, our candidates don't shoot each other and elections don't get cancelled. Those are good things to our imperfect system.

The German team liked our detailed efforts to write notes on flyers left for those not at home and filmed our voter lists as we made notes. It was a beautiful sunny afternoon, and we bid them good-bye as we continued canvassing. One older woman said she was through with having supported dreamers like Gene McCarthy and George McGovern and was firmly pro-Hillary. One man said he strongly supported former Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley, but knew that if the 15% supporter threshold was not reach he would have to choose. Without much prodding, he admitted being inclined toward Bernie.

Back at the house I laid out all of my hats and costume pieces so that John, Elaine and I could run through my program of songs, review accompaniment keys, and determine Elaine's narration in between numbers. Elaine said the event was billed on Bernie's website as an official pre-caucus party, and she had already received over 30 acceptances on social media.

We drove 5 minutes to Yanni's restaurant for an early dinner, and John and Elaine were proud that little Newton can sustain such a nice establishment. It amused me that there did not appear to be anyone of Greek or Italian background in or out of the kitchen to influence their cuisine. Our waitress was an attractive, happy, determined young woman who had studied opera and was the daughter of the local circuit judge, who with his wife stopped by our table to greet his local friends. The gracious Latino manager informed us that the front half of the restaurant would be cleared away for our performance when the current diners were finished.

After a very nice meal, albeit accompanied by a barely basic wine list, I laid out my costume material on the end booth table next to the area where John and

Jimmy set up their keyboard and drums. Various Bernie supporters started to arrive 9pm, some local, and many from out of state, mostly volunteers and some paid staff. Over the past three days I had met several of them. Creative lighted Bernie signs were placed around the dining room including some drawn in fluorescent colors on black glass to show the shapes of Florida, Iowa and other states. Everyone was happy and enthusiastic about the campaign. The vibe was clearly one of impending success. John and Jimmy and Elaine, collectively JJ Express, played several upbeat and jazzy numbers, and then it was time for my show.



Wearing a fedora, Elaine welcomed everyone and announced that people were coming to Iowa from all over the country... including her special political satirist friend from New York. I stepped up to the mike wearing a pink shirt and told everyone how happy I was to be in the heartland of the country participating in this very special and unique caucus process. Then I said there's a Broadway show some may have heard of called "Fiddler on the Roof" where Tevye the Milkman has a dream of being a rich man. And as I doffed my brimmed brown cap, I said I would morph Tevye into his dream as the son of 1% parents, and John vamped until I sang and bobbed:

*I will be a rich man.
When my parents die their money, money, money comes to me.
There should be no tax on the estate
Tarnishing my silver spoon. No!
Shouldn't have to work hard.
That's what poorer, poorer, poorer, poorer people have to do,
I should just be super-super rich
Feeding from my parents' silver spoon.*

*Me and my wife, my Goldie, will write the checks to
All legislators in the town*

*And the one who sits in the western wing.
And they will all say "Thanks" for our contributions
So each of them can stay around,
Knowing es-tate tax is a bad thing.*

This was joyously received by the Bernie supporters, and I ended the song:

*Lord who made the gap 'tween rich and poor
You decree what making laws are for.
I should keep it all, and more and more.
With my precious sil- ver spoon!*

Major happy applause. And as John played the Opening Race-Track Trumpet call from Guys and Dolls, Elaine displayed a sign: "*Bernie Supporter*", and I sang the verse (which I sang to the German TV team) followed by the verse for a Hillary Supporter:

*Vote Hil-la-ry 'cause all can see
With her ex-per-i-ence to lead the coun-try
She can She can
Command 'tho she's not a man, and beat the Repub-li-cans,
She can She can.*

...And a Republican supporter, which got the most laughs:

*We hate Obama-care, and Muslims should beware,
We're all conser- va- tives, about God we care
We care. We care.
Compassion is in our stare. As long as you didn't come here,
From there. We care.
(Bernie supporter:) (Hillary supporter:) (Republican:)
Vote should you. Yes, she can. Really care.
We got the guy RIGHT HERE.*

Elaine then announced:

"And that guy is Bernie Sanders whose comprehensive plan to break up the banks and improve the economy is the only real chance to reduce the gap between the rich and poor." And she displayed a sign with the chorus for all to join in, and we sang to the tune of "Supercalifragiliticexpialadocious":

*There's... Chase, Bank of America & Citigroup & Goldman.
They'll destroy our country, helped by Congress full of old men.
We need Bernie Sanders to get them to hit the road
And break up banks too big to fail like Citigroup & Goldman.
Um, diddle-iddle-iddle, um, diddle-eye
Um, diddle-iddle-iddle, um, diddle-eye*

I continued...

*In Two Thousand and Eight there was a story sad to tell.
The Masters of the Universe all made a living hell.
And millions lost their pension savings and their jobs as well.
And that is why we need the guy named Bernie who can tell*

them...

And the audience joined in for the choruses. Elaine, wearing her fedora, gruffly continued:

"This is Chris Matthews with Hardball, and we're bringing you back to 2003 to the eve of the invasion of Iraq. We're here with Hillary Clinton, freshman senator from New York... Some say that Iraq is the tail wagging the dog and the real problem is Afghanistan. As the Senate debates whether or not to give President Bush the authority to invade Iraq, some say Congress has been BUSH-WAGGED. Senator Clinton, have you been Bush-wagged?"



By this time I had donned a long blonde wig with a stars & stripes headband to answer as "I Do Hillary" to the tune of "I Cain't Say No" from Oklahoma that I sang part of to the media people at Uncle Nancy's cafe:

Are you kiddin'?

*It ain't so much a question of not knowin' what to do.
I've known what's right and wrong since I've been five.
But voters ain't attentive; sometimes they don't have a clue,
And I want to stay politically alive.*

*I know it takes a village, so I've writ
But when I'm in DC then I fergit.*

The crowd was loving it. I continued coyly with the interlude:

Whatcha gonna do when your support starts a saggin'?
The dog Bush is waggin' Whatcha gonna do?
S'possin that he says that inaction wud be horrible.
Saddam is intol'rabable Whatcha gonna do?
S'possin that he says that Freedom's at stake
That Saddam we gotta break or die?
Whatcha gonna do when he talks that way? Spit in his eye?...

And my favorite parody lines from the song are:

I know some think Bush- y is a fool,
And to the Left a leader I should be.
Then I think of that po- lit- ical rule:
The Center is the place you wanna be!

After the song and more applause, Elaine continued in Chris Matthews' voice:
"And now that Congress has been convinced of Saddam's dangerous WMD and voted to support President Bush, we bring you the invasion of Iraq."

Elaine held up the sign with the chorus as I started:

Georgie Doodle sent to Bagdad, just to squash a pho-ney,
Waves of bombers, fleets of ships so far away from home.

CHORUS:
Oh, Georgie, is the market up?
Ain't your job just dandy?
When you don't know what to do
A war is very handy!

Elaine and I alternated the intro words and character words for the next verses:

Rummy said, "Saddam's a meany; he'll do mass destruction.
Our bombs are so much cleaner, killing without muck." Shucks!

Chuck and Hil'ry joined the Senate signing Georgie's blank check.
Sadly, since there was a war we have them both to thank. Heck!

CHORUS

And the final verse, grimly, was:

Georgie said about his war, "Yur for me or 'ya aren't.
'Sides the people who'll be killed are very few or foreign."

Elaine resumed:

"Well, our country suffered through the rest of the Bush presidency, and then thankfully elected President Obama. Now Iowa leads the country in selecting President Obama's successor. And Hillary is running again, and we bring you her biggest supporter, former President Bill Clinton."

political system. John played the memorable intro to “I Write the Songs” popularized by Barry Manilow, and I entered to great glee and sang:

*I've been alive forever and I wrote the very first laws
I had the might and the power to enforce them
I am MONEY, AND I WRITE THE LAWS.
I write the laws that make taxes unfair
The super rich need never pay their fair share.
Some day the middle class may put up a fight
'Till then I'll keep writing the laws.
I am MONEY...*

And as I sang these words, I threw handfuls of toy paper bills into the air which fluttered down during the applause.

...AND I WRITE THE LAWS.

This, of course, is the theme of Bernie's whole campaign, but I wrote this song two decades earlier and performed it on my post 9/11 CD. As Elaine continued, “Besides Bernie and Hillary and former Governor Martin O'Malley, there have been lots of Republican contenders,” and held up a sign with the chorus, I came out in a stars & stripes sequined vest saying, “The Republicans like to wrap themselves in the flag” as I started snapping my fingers in time with the music like Tennessee Ernie Ford to the tune of “Sixteen Tons”:

*They had 16 Republicans, and ev'ry one
Wants to bomb Iran to kingdom come.
Same sex love is far to grim,
And they want lower taxes on the rich like them.*

CHORUS

*Ya had 16 folks, and each one, you bet,
Wants to slice good stuff to cut the national debt.
The Grand Old Party is just plain old
With a tarnished soul now that Trump took his toll.*

I had verses for each candidate, but my favorites were:

*Rand Paul's father taught him how to be free,
And be Kentucky Senator for liber-ty.
I mean he speaks for the Party of Tea
So everybody can be ME, ME, ME!*

*Rick Santorum lost his senate spot
But his passion for the presidency he did not.
Vested with faith that he speaks for God
By intelligent design, he will get the nod.*

*Jeb Bush wants to be the man to lead
And some calm rationality is what they need.
But basic Reaganomics doesn't ring the bell.
To his weak campaign people say, “Oh, well.”*

*Marco Rubio's of Cuban descent.
He wonders where everybody else's youth went.
The 2nd amendment's a right, not a suggestion,
And he gives Bush and Ted Cruz indigestion.*

This was definitely the right audience for me. People were whooping it up. Elaine concluded with: "So much for the Republicans. And now, we bring you, the next President of the United States: Senator Bernie Sanders." Wearing a sports jacket and having brushed my silver hair back to be a bit like Bernie, I sang heartily to the tune of "Galveston":

*Burlington, oh, Burlington,
with the breeze o'er Lake Champlain blowing
Where as Mayor, I helped its growing
Nearly forty-one, elected in Burlington.*

*Washington, oh, Washington,
In '63 I heard Martin preaching
Of a dream that's so worth reaching.
I had begun, to start in Burlington...*

I thanked everyone for coming and shouted "Bernie Sanders for President!!" What a fun show! We were all truly feeling the Bern. I proceeded to have a frozen margarita and be congratulated by many in the audience, making me feel very appreciated and very glad to be part of this wonderful caucus experience.

Sunday **Relaxing, watching more commercials, ringing more doorbells**

We all earned the right to sleep late after last night's show. I got an email from a New York Jewish friend who said he went to the University of Iowa, as follows:

*Due to the unusually OK weather in Iowa, Bernie will be losing to Hillary. Iowa is a state of so many older ladies who are going to get out & caucus for Hillary cuz the weather ain't so bad & they kinda relate to her, & enough of thur husbands are so prosperous lately to not vote for Bernie, even tho he might not be the one to take thur guns away. Sorry, you & all those starry hyped up kids aren't pulling it off this time.
And that is a good thing. Cause even if Bernie could win a general election--on the highly improbable assumption that America would elect a socialist--just not worth it.
He would have zero coat tails, Congress will have a supermajority of Republicans, the Supreme Court will flip solidly right, and he would be totally unable to get any progressive legislation passed. So what, I ask you, is the point then of Democrats handing the election to Republican jackasses on a silver platter?*

As I discussed this at breakfast, and we considered the report of an impending snowstorm late Monday night into Tuesday, John said my friend didn't understand Iowa older women. John projected that many will not go to the caucus in anticipation of the snowstorm. That reminded me of a local who learned that I had played Harold Hill in The Music Man and said she loved the line of "Iowa Stubborn" that we "can stand, touching noses, for a week at a time and never see eye to eye."



I checked back in at Bernie HQ and met several of the paid college staffers, all intelligent and enthusiastic, all making sure that the maximum number of possible caucus attenders were being contacted either by phone or by having volunteers place flyers on doorknobs stating the caucus locations. One young woman named Katya was a graduate of Columbia, and I was happy to tell her I was the only Columbia Law School student to be in the Gilbert & Sullivan Society of Barnard, the sister school. A Californian, she was soon seeking a job in environmental advocacy, so I took down her contact information to put her in touch with a friend who had been on the board of the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Some volunteers congratulated me on last night's show. In the sunny, mild afternoon I went out to do more doorbell ringing. It was really interesting to talk with people about the Bernie vs. Hillary question of who is more electable. Everyone liked them both, with few exceptions of those who disliked Hillary or felt Bernie was unelectable. I wasn't in contact with many Republicans, but I sensed that this was very different from the fractious Republican field.

Finally worn out, I returned to the Mattingly home and we went out for dinner to a large sports bar restaurant. They informed me that the country club closed not too long after the Maytag factory closed down, also many of the members now patronized this place. In one corner was a group of the Floridian volunteers who loved our show. I joined Elaine in ordering her standard broiled freshwater fish that was quite tasty. Unending campaign commercials appeared on the big screen TVs in every direction.

Monday **Caucus day**

John & Elaine left early, and I said I'd see her at the caucus at 7. Since I planned to depart directly to join Sandy and Rich in Des Moines, I packed up all my things and reported to HQ by 10. Dylan was scrambling to keep everything organized. He had not gotten much sleep. People were coming in and out and being assigned locations to attach more flyers to doorknobs and told not to bother to ring the bells. We were past convincing people and now just reminding them.



Several people were on cell phones calling lists of GOTV voters. Mostly, we left voicemails. My standard was: "Hi. I'm Marc Leavitt, a volunteer for Bernie Sanders hoping you're planning to caucus tonight. You probably know that the doors close at 7 sharp, so try to arrive by 6:45. If you need to confirm your

caucus location go to IowaDemocrats.org. Thanks for supporting Bernie.” Dylan had me orient volunteers about what to say when people answered (first ask if they were planning to caucus for Bernie and proceeding as appropriate from there) and what kind of message to leave. As they completed sheets they gave them to me. There must have been about 60, each with a dozen or more voters.

One precinct captain volunteer named Zach had never made calls before and was pretty gun shy. He asked me a few times about what to say, and I encouraged him not to worry about saying anything wrong. But he still went through the list for several minutes, focusing on the younger voters whose ages were designated in our sheets, before he actually started slowly making a few calls. Clearly, he was not comfortable, so Dylan sent him out on a different task.

By early afternoon, the office was fairly empty as everyone was out fulfilling their tasks. I continued making call after call. Mostly people weren't home. Of the ones who said they were caucusing, a majority supported Bernie. Two hung up on me. One older woman was ardently for O'Malley but unsure who to support if he didn't reach the required 15% threshold. So I spent about 10 minutes with her and convinced her to go for Bernie. One person I realized was Elaine's mother, who I knew was supporting Hillary and was very nice to me knowing I was visiting from New York. Another was Zach who had been in the office earlier, but I didn't realize that until I hung up the phone.

Dylan previously wasn't sure what he'd be doing after the caucus, so Elaine and I were ready to write recommendation emails to his boss. At one point, with just me and Dylan in the office, he shared that he had just been notified that he was being sent to Nevada. But first he was going to get some sleep. In fact, he asked me to cover the office for a few minutes so he could get a 10 minute power nap in the other room. Earlier, when I remarked to him about reaching particularly enthusiastic Bernie supporters, he often knew exactly who they were.

As the clock ticked toward 5, I happened to be scrolling on my outgoing call list and realized that I had made well over 200 calls. That averages about one every two minutes for over 6 hours. Whew, that's a lot.



About 6pm I drove to pick up Craig, who was all ready to go. He greatly appreciated the ride, saying he had never participated in a caucus before. When we got to the Woodrow Wilson School, snowflakes were starting to fall. Dozens of people were on line to get into the school gymnasium. The registration process was crowded but orderly, and Craig had to sign two different papers in order to register as a Democrat. Because of his shyness and limited manual dexterity, I had to shepherd him through the process, filling out everything except for his signature. At one point he wanted to go home, but he got into the swing and the excitement. There were nearly two hundred people in the room, all white I think except for a handful of Latinos including one young mom and her adorable baby. She was ultimately chosen as an alternate Bernie delegate.

At 7pm the doors were closed and an older woman took the lectern. She said she was a local Democratic leader and announced what everyone was already doing, namely that the Hillary people should be at the front on one side, the Bernie people in the back on the other, with separate locations for the small O'Malley contingent and the half dozen undecideds. As visitors, I and one other person were told to sit with a child near the registration table.

Then the leader recited some rules and asked the people in each group to sound off one at a time. The Bernie total was 55. When the Hillary number of 115 was completed, a cheer arose from that group. There were 15 O'Malley supporters, clearly not 15% of the total. So Hillary and Bernie advocates tried to convince the O'Malleyites and undecideds to join them, and more joined Bernie's group. When the totals didn't match, one of the caucus organizers actually asked me to help by counting the numbers of people who signed the various registration lists. The final delegate calculation for the state convention was 10 for Hillary and 5 for Bernie.

After that was announced, each group had to select delegates. Elaine, as precinct chair for Bernie, stood on a chair and supervised the selection which was decided by friendly talking and group consensus. Rachel, our waitress from Yanni's, was chosen as was a local elected public official. It was all very friendly, and then everyone went home. I gave Elaine and John a hug good-bye and drove Craig back to his house in the snowflaked chilly night.

As I drove out of town, a different precinct chair called on my cell phone because he couldn't reach Dylan and wanted to report results (I have no idea how he had it except that I was listed as an available driver to the caucus). When I reached Dylan minutes later, he already had those results, and I wished him well in Nevada. I continued toward Des Moines listening to voting tallies coming in slowly over the radio. It seemed that Hillary was a teeny bit ahead of Bernie and that Trump and Cruz were neck and neck. I heard Carly Fiorina's campaign manager spinning that they were undaunted by her poor showing and that New Hampshire was really where everything would start.

Arriving Sandy and Rich's favorite bar, not a hangout for youngsters, I was warmly greeted both by them and their friend the owner. I had popcorn with my drinks. As I saw the miniscule difference between Bernie and Hillary's totals I thought that this was actually the best result possible. I didn't want Hillary to be hurt, but I wanted Bernie's positions and candidacy to receive great credence. Rich's brother Bernie and wife Kathleen joined us, and we reviewed that their father was doing OK considering his age. As we drank and chatted and analyzed, we listened attentively to the various candidate speeches. Other people at the dark bar near the big screen TV, seemingly mostly Democrats were enthusiastically enjoying the moment with frequent yowls of put-downs for Trump. Maybe they were also glad that the blanket of political activity and advertising overwhelming the state was about to be lifted.

Tuesday **Dodging a blizzard to get back to NYC**

The snow and wind was piling up, and I was scheduled to drive smack into the heart of the blizzard two hours west to Omaha. After midnight I called American Airlines to try to switch my departure to Kansas City, Missouri, over 3 hours to the southwest but out of harms way. Although the 8 and 9:30am flights were cancelled, my 2pm was still not on the list permitting the change without charge. At 6am I called again with the same result. At 9:30, I finally convinced a supervisor to contact Omaha to see if any airlines were departing Omaha, and she then used her discretion to rebook me for free on the 2:30 out of Kansas City. Hooray.

The first hour of very careful driving as trucks were plowing the highways got me out of a blizzard into freezing rain, then another half hour later into normal rain,

then just cold, then to rising temperatures. Public radio was reporting the Iowa caucus results with less detail as I was now in Missouri, but I was deluged with changing market trading prices of various kinds of cattle and cuts of beef. And the open fields dotted by farms began to be covered with a sky of blue and billowy clouds as the temperature rose to 58 degrees. We ain't in Iowa anymore.

Back in the Big Apple, various people spotting the Bernie sticker on my coat gave me a thumbs up or commented their support, and they were pleased to hear that I had travelled to Iowa and performed a cabaret show to boot. At my favorite antique and old record store, Stray Vintage on Skillman Avenue, I found the perfect thank you/hospitality present for my Iowa musician hosts: the classic vinyl press of Miles Davis' "Kind of Blue."

