

# presidential campaign '80

## Iowans bask in political limelight

OSKALOOSA, Iowa — Iowa is known for corn, hogs, the world's richest farmland and a unique atmosphere blending the traditions of a rural heritage with the complexities of modern life.

But this year Iowa is known for something else: politics.

Iowa has relatively little clout at the two national nominating conventions and its eight electoral votes seldom decide presidential elections.

But tonight's precinct caucuses — the first test of the presidential campaign — are in the political limelight and Iowans are taking it in stride.

"We got to see Oskaloosa on the Today Show," said a cafe waitress. "That would never happen any other time. People all over the country are seeing Iowa. I think it's fantastic."

"I think it's great Iowa gets in the limelight," said Sioux City housewife Kay Fortner.

"Other people think Iowa is unimportant. We have as much here as any other state. People think all we have here is corn, and that's not true since a 1978 election."

Like many Iowans, Fortner and her husband, a part-time farmer and a biology teacher, have not decided whether to attend their caucus.

Only a small fraction of Iowans participate in the process that has brought an army of politicians and politician-watchers into the state.

However, most have been touched by the campaign in some way — shaking hands with candidates, getting calls from volunteers, or non-stop pleas for support on television or radio.

The campaign has been an economic boon.

"We love it," said a hotel clerk in Davenport. "As far as we're con-

centred, we could have these caucuses every three months."

The average Iowan, however, has found the attention a mixed blessing.

"It's a circus right now," said Cedar Falls service station operator John Repp. "There's too many running. It's utter confusion. It's a little wild and I think one of these days people will get bored with it because it's constantly in front of them."

For Lillian Gay, the political hullo-laballoo is of little interest. The real payoff was getting Sen. Howard Baker's signature to go with those of Frank Sinatra and Gregory Peck in her autograph collection.

The intensity of the campaign — telephone calls to a majority of Iowa's voters and a media blitz that has brought it into nearly every home — has drawn some politically inactive people into the process.

Virgill Davis Sr., a woodsman from rural Wellman, may attend the caucuses just to support President Carter.

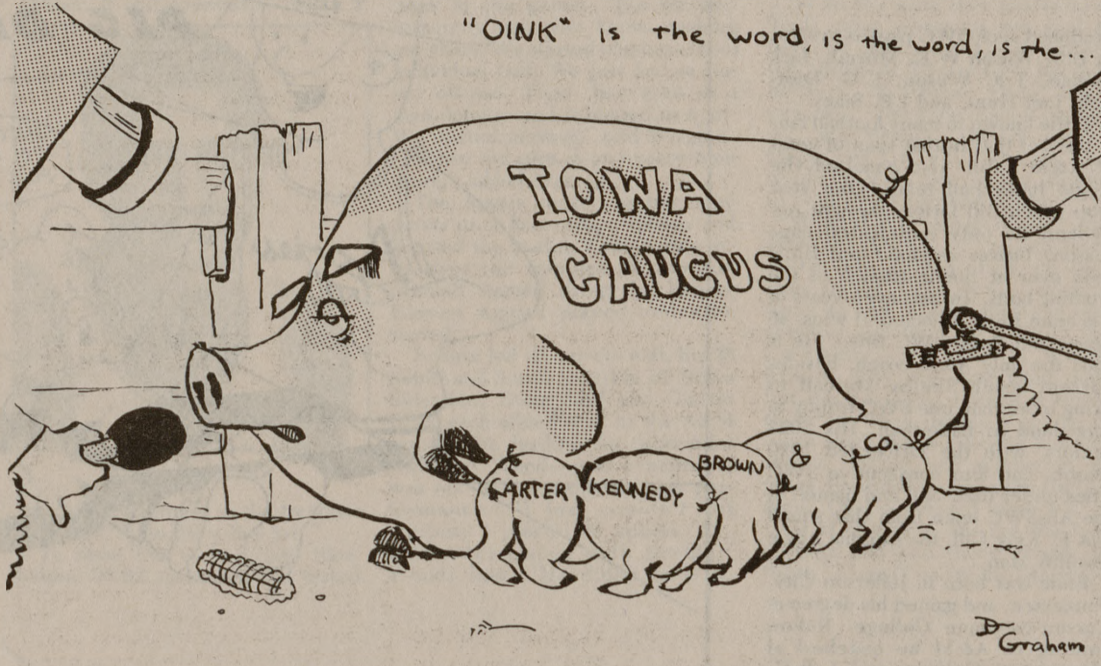
"It's kind of a toss-up, but I think we'd better help the one that's in office," Davis said. "I don't believe in changing horses in the middle of a stream."

Not everyone is as dedicated.

"It's all right," said Oskaloosa businessman Joe Shaffer. "But I'd go along with David Brinkley — it all seems like a big waste of money."

Beverly Ginsberg, who is on the staff at St. Ambrose College in Davenport, says she is tired of being deluged with telephone calls.

"Frankly, the attention and everything's just great," she said. "But I know I'm getting a little sick of it and I suspect a lot of other people are, too. You know, there's a limit on how much of this stuff you can take. And I think we've reached the limit."



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(Message in Tomorrow's Battalion)