CHAPTER 2

IOWA

One of the most interesting aspects of the presidential nominating system in the United States is the way in which, over a span of about 30 years, the state of Iowa succeeded in replacing the state of New Hampshire as the "First In The Nation" presidential nominating event.

Iowa is famous for holding presidential *caucuses* rather than a presidential *primary election*. There is a good reason for that. New Hampshire had a tradition of always holding the first presidential primary. In fact, New Hampshire has a *law* requiring that its primary be one week before the presidential primary of any other state. By holding caucuses rather than a presidential primary election, Iowa was able to schedule its caucuses 8 days ahead of New Hampshire and thereby not inspire New Hampshire to reschedule its primary to one week ahead of Iowa. That is what that famous New Hampshire law would require if Iowa held a primary rather than a caucus.

Insiders know that, in reality, Iowa holds what amounts to a presidential primary but has disguised it as presidential caucuses in order to bamboozle the folks in New Hampshire.

It was in 1972 that Iowa first scheduled its "First In The Nation" presidential caucuses. Four years later, in 1976, the Iowa caucuses were propelled to major importance when Jimmy Carter, a little-known former governor of Georgia, devoted virtually a year of his life to campaigning in Iowa. Carter did surprisingly well in the Iowa caucuses and soon was the front-runner for the Democratic nomination. It was an advantage which Carter exploited so well he was eventually elected president of the United States.

There is , however, a downside to the Iowa caucuses for presidential hopefuls. Iowa can be the burial ground for a candidacy instead of the launching pad. That happened to U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts in 1980 when he challenged incumbent President Jimmy Carter for the Democratic nomination. President Carter polled 59 percent of the Iowa caucuses vote to 31 percent for Kennedy. The Massachusetts senator's campaign for president essentially ended at that point.

The Iowa caucuses gained some added luster in 1984 when Gary Hart, a relatively-unknown U.S. senator from Colorado, ran for the

Democratic nomination for president. In one of the great political surprises of all time, Hart finished second in Iowa with 16 percent of the vote. The political pundits were so shocked by Hart's unexpected second place showing in Iowa that he received a tremendous run of articles in the newspapers and interviews on television. Overnight, Hart became such a strong contender that he shortly thereafter won the New Hampshire primary.

Gary Hart subsequently lost the 1984 Democratic nomination to Walter Mondale, a former vice president of the United States, who won a number of major primaries after New Hampshire. Nonetheless, Iowa and its caucuses were given credit for transforming Gary Hart from an unknown into a major competitor.

One reason for the success of the Iowa caucuses was the way Iowa political leaders designed them to capture news media attention. The most important thing the press wants on presidential primary election night is "reportable results." Iowans organized their caucuses so that, the minute the outcome of the voting in each neighborhood precinct caucus was known, the results were telephoned to the city of Des Moines, the state capital. Running totals for the various candidates were continually reported to the news media. At the end of the evening, in plenty of time to make the 11 o'clock news on the East Coast, the Democratic and Republican statewide winners were announced.

It was this swift reporting of results, as well as the early date, that made Iowa so instantly important in the presidential nominating process. By the mid-1980s, major television networks were broadcasting their evening news from Des Moines on caucuses night. Iowa officials lighted the exterior of the statehouse in Des Moines so that classic Victorian building, with its beautiful dome and stately pillars, could serve as a television backdrop for the reporting of the latest Iowa voting results.

Perhaps most significant of all, on caucuses night downtown Des Moines was jammed with numerous satellite trucks. These vehicles could send television images of the latest electoral doings in Iowa up to communication satellites and from there to the nation and the rest of the planet.

Presidential candidates came to Iowa seeking an elusive commodity known as the "Iowa bounce." Want-to-be U.S. presidents were hoping

that a strong showing in Iowa would enable them to "break out of the pack" and grab the lead over the other candidates from their political party. Other ways for the Iowa caucuses to be described included "a slingshot to victory" and "a catapult to front-runner status." Moreover, as the news media made an ever-increasing fuss over its caucuses, Iowa evolved into a "must-do-well" state for all presidential candidates.

Iowa became a place where the news reporters and television commentators enjoyed playing the "expectations game." Going into the caucuses, there was always a collective news-media wisdom about how well or how badly a particular candidate was going to do. If the candidate "exceeded expectations" when all the Iowa caucuses results were counted, that candidate was declared a "winner" by the news media, even if the candidate finished in second or third place. On the other hand, if a candidate did not do as well as predicted, that candidate was labeled a "loser" by the press, despite the fact that the candidate may have come in first or second in the actual voting.

Over the years, a general rule developed among the political pundits about the Iowa caucuses. If a presidential candidate did not finish in at least one of the top *three* spots in Iowa, that candidate's quest for the White House was instantly doomed.

Another working principle emerged from the media. The Iowa caucuses were well established as the first stop on the presidential nomination trail, but the Iowa caucuses were not as important a stop as the New Hampshire primary. In fact, the best way to look at Iowa was as a "gateway to New Hampshire."

That principle began to fray badly in the early 2000s, however. Particularly in the Democratic Party, the Iowa winner began to have a major impact, if not *the* major impact, on the voting in New Hampshire. Winning the Iowa caucuses suddenly seemed critical to winning in New Hampshire. It was at this point that the Iowa caucuses replaced the New Hampshire primary as both the first event in the nominating process and the *most important* event in the nominating process.

One of the charming characteristics of the Iowa caucuses is the easy access that average Iowa voters have to the various presidential candi-

dates. Campaigning in the Iowa caucuses means candidates having coffee with average citizens in Main Street restaurants in Iowa small towns. It means interested Iowans can stop by the local Holiday Inn in Cedar Rapids or Sioux City and hear a short talk by and shake the hand of a leading person in United States national politics.

This street-corner-greeting, handshaking, baby-kissing, coffee-drinking type of politics that is fostered by the Iowa caucuses is known as "retail politics." These highly-personal techniques contrast with "wholesale politics," the kind of campaigning found in the more populous states, where giant political rallies and impersonal television advertisements are the order of the day.

There could be no better example of the person-to-person character of the Iowa caucuses than a Republican caucus held in Clive, an upscale suburb of Des Moines, in 1996. U.S. Senator Robert Dole of Kansas was the leading candidate in that year's Republican presidential nomination race. Bob Dole announced to the press that he was going to pay a visit to Clive at 7 P.M., exactly the time at which voting in that particular Republican caucus was scheduled to begin.

The caucus location was a modern brick building which housed the junior high school in Clive. The caucus itself was held in the school gymnasium, which on a normal night was where the Clive "Warriors" played their home basketball and volleyball games. A number of portable chairs were set up so the caucus attenders could sit down.

Several minutes before the caucus began, millionaire business publisher Steve Forbes and his wife, Sabena, walked into the gymnasium. Forbes was one of Bob Dole's strongest competitors for the 1996 Republican nomination for president. Forbes, surrounded by a dozen or so television cameras and their accompanying boom microphones, began shaking hands along the front row of seats. There was a brief people jam as all the Clive Republicans who wanted to meet Steve Forbes and shake his hand began lining up for their brief share of the candidate's personal attention.

Steve Forbes did not disappoint his fans. Everyone who wanted to have a word with Steve and get their right hand gripped by a political

celebrity got to do so.

As Steve Forbes was leaving the Clive junior high gymnasium, frontrunner Bob Dole was coming in. There was a veritable army of reporters and television camera operators clustering around Dole, but the Kansas senator gamely pushed his way out of the media pack and began chatting and shaking hands with interested voters. Instead of being upset by the fact that Dole was delaying the Clive Republican caucus for 1996, the Republicans in charge seemed pleased that he was there and clearly wanted him to stay as long as possible.

So, at the moment when Robert Dole had shaken every available hand and was heading for the door, the caucus chairwoman said in a loud voice: "Senator Dole may address the caucus if he wishes."

It was typical Iowa. When the great names of U.S. politics come to Iowa looking for caucus votes, Iowa voters expect to be talked to and paid attention to. Senator Dole instantly reversed course, marched to the front of the room, and gave an impromptu speech to the party faithful in Clive.

There was just one problem. Because Bob Dole was the frontrunner in the 1996 Iowa Republican caucuses, he was accompanied by that unusually large army of television camera operators and microphone technicians. As he went to give his little speech to the Clive caucus, he was instantly surrounded by a 360-degree circle of television news personnel. Dole could not see the caucus goers, nor could the caucus goers see him. Senator Dole, however, was famous for his off-the-cuff sarcastic ad libs. "Hi folks," he intoned. "I can't see you, but I know you are out there." There was a roar of heartfelt laughter from the caucus goers, who were feeling somewhat overwhelmed by the large number of news personnel at the caucus.

Even after Bob Dole had left the 1996 Clive Republican caucus, the personal political fun-and-games were not yet over. Conservative newspaper columnist and television pundit Patrick Buchanan, another candidate for the Republican nomination, walked in the door. Once again the proceedings stopped while this additional campaigner made the rounds of the hall, indulging in political small talk, gripping outstretched hands,

and slapping backs.

When all the person-to-person campaigning at last was over, the Clive Republican caucus for 1996 was won by Robert Dole. Both Steve Forbes and Pat Buchanan finished well behind. Senator Dole went on to win the Iowa caucuses, which was a big help to his eventually winning the Republican nomination. In the general election in November, however, Bob Dole was defeated by incumbent Democratic president Bill Clinton.

Four years later, in 2000, the Iowa caucuses were exciting for the Democrats and dull for the Republicans.

The frontrunner for the Democratic nomination, Vice President Albert Gore, Jr., was challenged by former U.S. Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey. Because he had been born in Missouri, the state adjoining Iowa to the south, Bradley hoped to appeal to Iowa caucus goers as a fellow Midwesterner, at least by birth. Al Gore responded by attacking Bradley for being a carpetbagger from New Jersey who knew little or nothing about Iowa problems, particularly Iowa's agricultural problems.

Al Gore scored a solid triumph over Bill Bradley in the 2000 Iowa Democratic caucuses, and in this case an Iowa victory actually meant something. Thanks to his "Iowa bounce," Al Gore easily defeated Bradley in the New Hampshire primary eight days later. The race was essentially over at that point, and Al Gore went on to gain the Democratic nomination but lose the White House to Republican George W. Bush.

On the Republican side in Iowa in 2000, Texas Governor George W. Bush easily defeated his only serious challenger, millionaire business magazine publisher Steve Forbes. Mathematically it was a solid victory, but this was Iowa and the expectations game came prominently into play. Bush had been "expected" to win Iowa, so the news media took a ho-hum attitude. True, Bush had won the caucuses, but he received very little of that famous "Iowa bounce."

In reality, the most significant thing that happened to the Republicans during the 2000 Iowa caucuses was a non-event. John McCain, a U.S. senator from Arizona, had the best chance of wresting the Republican nomination away from George W. Bush in 2000. Senator McCain de-

cided not to run in Iowa, preferring to devote all his time and financial resources to winning the New Hampshire primary the following week.

As it turned out, this "bypass Iowa" strategy worked perfectly for John McCain. He held 114 town hall meetings with voters in New Hampshire and spent much of his campaign money on television advertising in that state. When McCain won the New Hampshire primary by a wide margin, he clearly established himself as the major challenger to George W. Bush for the 2000 Republican nomination.

It took George W. Bush five weeks of hard campaigning and a string of presidential primary victories in other states to undo the effects of John McCain's big win in New Hampshire. Bush gained the 2000 Republican nomination for president and went on to win the 2000 presidential election and take up residence at the White House in Washington, D.C.

A potential new route to a viable presidential candidacy had been developed in 2000, however. "Skip Iowa and go straight to New Hampshire." This "skip Iowa" strategy, pioneered by John McCain in 2000, attracted much attention from the press and the political cognoscenti.

The "skip Iowa" strategy met a quick demise only four years later in the 2004 presidential election. Two major candidates, U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut and former Army General Wesley Clark, announced they were going to bypass the Iowa caucuses and concentrate their time and campaign money in other states. Both contenders appeared to be following John McCain's example from 2000, when he skipped Iowa and then used the time and money he saved to help score a big victory in New Hampshire.

Joseph Lieberman was regarded as one of the more moderate candidates for the 2004 Democratic nomination. A longtime U.S. Senator from Connecticut, he had strongly supported the war in Iraq. Members of Lieberman's campaign staff told the press the Iowa caucuses attracted too many liberal anti-war voters for Lieberman to have a chance of winning. "There's no victory in being fourth in Iowa," one Lieberman adviser said. Another staffer added: "It's safe to say that Iowa is not now, and will never be Lieberman country."

Wesley Clark's campaign aides said there was insufficient time for

the former general to assemble the intricate and highly personal type of campaign organization required to win the Iowa caucuses. Instead, Clark would pursue a strategy similar to that of the United States military in the Pacific during World War Two. The strategy was named "island hopping." It involved bypassing certain islands fortified by the enemy and only attacking a limited number of islands considered essential for winning the war. For the Clark campaign, this meant deciding "not to focus resources on Iowa and instead focus them on New Hampshire" and selected other crucial presidential primaries further down the line.

Political leaders in Iowa were quick to criticize Lieberman and Clark for dropping out of the Iowa sweepstakes in 2004. It was pointed out that no candidate who ever bypassed the Iowa caucuses, including John McCain in 2000, had ever captured the Democratic nomination for president. "The day after Iowa will be huge news," said Thomas Henderson, a county Democratic leader in Iowa, "and those guys will be out of the picture." This view was supported by Joe Trippi, a veteran campaign manager. "It's a very dangerous strategy to skip" Iowa, Trippi said. "And if you guess wrong by not competing in Iowa, there will never be a way to put that [genie] back in the bottle. There really isn't any room to recover."

Despite all the advice to stay in the race in Iowa in 2004, Joe Lieberman and Wesley Clark disbanded their Iowa campaign staffs and turned their attention to other states with early dates on the 2004 primary and caucuses calendar. The withdrawal of these two candidates from Iowa, both of them considered major contenders, turned out to be a fatal mistake. Lieberman and Clark dropped completely from political view as the 2004 Iowa caucuses became the key election in the race for the 2004 Democratic presidential nomination.

The early front-running Democratic candidate in the Iowa caucuses in 2004 was Howard Dean, the former governor of Vermont. He built an early lead in national public-opinion polls by taking an outspoken stand against incumbent Republican president George W. Bush on the issue of the war in Iraq that Bush had initiated. Dean called for an immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq. That strong stand endeared him

to the powerful anti-war element in the Democratic Party. By December of 2003, Howard Dean was so far ahead in the national public-opinion polls that many pundits and commentators considered him the certain Democratic nominee for 2004.

At that point, a second major Democratic contender, U.S. Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts, decided to concentrate all of his campaign time and his campaign money on Iowa, and only Iowa. To raise money quickly, Kerry mortgaged his expensive town house in Boston and spent the funds on television advertising in Iowa. While Kerry was pursuing this singular strategy concentrated only on winning Iowa, Howard Dean was running a campaign more suited to winning in a large number of states scheduled later on the presidential caucuses and primaries calendar.

In one of the great surprises in U.S. presidential nomination history, John Kerry upset Howard Dean in the 2004 Democratic Party Iowa caucuses. The "bounce" that Kerry received from winning Iowa carried him to victory in the New Hampshire primary eight days later. Howard Dean's campaign, which had looked like a certain winner just one-month earlier, suddenly fell apart. John Kerry won most of the succeeding Democratic presidential caucuses and primaries and gained the 2004 Democratic nomination for president. He then lost the general election to incumbent Republican President George W. Bush.

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John Kerry's surprise victory in Iowa in 2004, and the rapidity with which that victory gained him the Democratic nomination for president, had a tremendous impact four years later in 2008. Iowa was no longer a "gateway" or a "warmup" for New Hampshire. Iowa, because it was held first, had become the more important of the two political events. In 2008, therefore, all the major candidates in both political parties mounted major campaigns in Iowa. "Spend the previous year living and campaigning in Iowa" became the standard advice for winning the Iowa caucuses and thereby gaining a major party nomination for president.

The early frontrunner in the race for the 2008 Democratic Party presidential nomination was Hillary Clinton, a U.S. senator from New

York who was the wife of Bill Clinton, president of the United States from 1993 to 2001. Because she had been the first lady at the White House for eight years, Hillary Clinton presented herself as the most experienced and politically-savvy of the Democratic candidates. At her campaign speeches and rallies, Hillary Clinton handed out signs with the word "Ready" printed on them. The signs were to symbolize that, as a sitting U.S. senator and the wife of a former president, she was the best-prepared of the Democratic hopefuls to be president in her own right.

Hillary Clinton grew up in suburban Chicago. She attended Wellesley College in Massachusetts. She met Bill Clinton when they both were students at Yale Law School in Connecticut. Following their marriage, Hillary accompanied Bill back to his home state of Arkansas, where he served multiple terms as governor before being elected president of the United States in 1992. Hillary Clinton noted that, far from being a stay-at-home wife, she was an active participant in her husband's election campaigns and in his governorship and his presidency. She styled herself as having both the smarts and the on-the-job experience to be president.

The most important thing about Hillary Clinton was that she was well-known to the United States electorate. That was both a plus and a minus in her upcoming campaign for president. Voters seem to like to cast their ballots for candidates that are familiar to them and have been active in politics for a long time. The downside to being so famous, however, was that Hillary Clinton automatically earned the enmity of anyone who disliked her husband's presidency or disapproved of her husband's personal behavior.

For most of the year prior to the 2008 Iowa caucuses, Hillary Clinton's campaign for president was organized around the word "inevitable." Because or her great fame and her impressive list of past accomplishments, her campaign was designed to leave the impression that she would be the inevitable victor in her quest for the Democratic presidential nomination. It was hoped that, by the time Iowa held its precinct caucuses on Thursday, January 3, 2008, Hillary Clinton would have built such tremendous momentum that her triumph in Iowa would be beyond doubt.

By December of 2007, however, just one month before the Iowa caucuses, something had gone terribly wrong with Hillary Clinton's "inevitable" strategy. A relatively unknown and inexperienced candidate, U.S. Senator Barack Obama of Illinois, was suddenly nipping at Hillary Clinton's heels in the Iowa public opinion polls. After leading in the Iowa polls for almost a year, Clinton's numbers suddenly were sinking and Obama's were rising rapidly.

Barack Obama first emerged on the national scene at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. An Illinois state senator at the time, he was the Democratic Party nominee to run for U.S. senator from Illinois in the 2004 November general election. Obama gave a speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention that was both inspirational in theme and extremely well-delivered. The speech was so good it made Obama an overnight sensation in U.S. politics. When he was easily elected to the U.S. Senate that fall, Obama immediately came under pressure to run for president. He gave into the pressure and announced his candidacy, despite the fact that he would be running for president as a freshman U.S. senator with next to nothing in the way of Washington, D.C., experience.

The son of a white mother and a black father, Barack Obama was the first African-American to run for president of the United States and have a serious chance of actually winning the office. Ironically, he was running against Hillary Clinton, the first woman to run for the White House who had a real opportunity to get to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. The historical implications of the contest, in terms of both race and gender, were not lost on either the news media or the public.

There was a third major candidate in the race, but he seemed somewhat humdrum compared to Hillary Clinton, a woman, and Barack Obama, an African-American. The third candidate was former U.S. Senator John Edwards of North Carolina, who had been the vice-presidential candidate in the Democratic Party's unsuccessful effort to get Republican George W. Bush out of the White House in the 2004 presidential election. Although a millionaire lawyer himself, Edwards fashioned a populist campaign around the idea that wealthy corporations were stealing from average middle-class Americans. Edwards, as presi-

dent, would see to it that working people got a better shake.

During the spring and summer of 2007, Hillary Clinton seemed to be taking a victory in Iowa for granted and oriented her statements more toward the general election campaign in the fall of 2008. Clinton took tough foreign policy stands, particularly against Iranian plans to develop nuclear weapons, that seemed reckless when seeking the nomination of a political party with a large and powerful "peace wing." Then, in October of 2007, Clinton made a major stumble. Asked her opinion of a proposed plan by the state of New York to issue driver's licenses to illegal immigrants in the United States, Clinton sounded like she was for it, against it, and then really did not answer the question. The incident cast doubt on the idea that she would be ready "on Day One," as her campaign literature said, to make tough and courageous decisions.

In the meantime, Barack Obama had developed what political reporters were beginning to describe as the most inspiring stump speech ever given in a presidential campaign. Obama was becoming the master of a soaring rhetoric laced with inspirational themes and hope for the future. He attacked the extreme partisanship and lack of civility that had come to dominate politics in Washington. He spoke of an American future based on working together and cooperation rather than Republicans-versus-Democrats infighting. Obama's speeches and rallies began to draw large and enthusiastic crowds. Polls showed he was getting particularly strong support from young voters and wealthy voters.

As caucuses day neared and the race became more intense, Barack Obama was endorsed by legendary talk-show host Oprah Winfrey. An African-American woman with a giant following of both white and black women for her afternoon television show, Oprah's endorsement of Obama was covered by the press as a major development in the campaign. The Hillary Clinton forces responded by expanding the campaign role of their big attention-getter, former-President Bill Clinton, who began speaking throughout Iowa on his wife's behalf.

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The Republican contest in the Iowa caucuses in 2008 was as exciting as the Democratic one. One major candidate, former-Mayor Rudy Giuli-

ani of New York city, elected to bypass the Iowa caucuses and adopted what most observers considered a radical strategy for winning the 2008 Republican presidential nomination. Fearing that his big-city image and feisty character might not play well in heavily-agricultural Iowa, Giuliani concentrated his campaign on winning the more populous states with large urban populations, such as California, New York, and New Jersey. Those states would not be holding presidential primaries until the first Tuesday in February of 2008, a full four weeks after the Iowa caucuses.

Although he would not be actively campaigning in Iowa or expecting to poll many votes there, Rudy Giuliani would be a political presence looming in the background in Iowa. He first gained fame as a United States district attorney in New York city, where he aggressively prosecuted corrupt elected officials, Mafia-connected crime families, and financial fraud on Wall Street. He then served as a crime-fighting mayor of New York, significantly reducing crime rates in the city.

Giuliani's biggest moment came, however, on September 11, 2001, when Middle Eastern radicals hijacked two commercial airliners and flew them into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York, causing the two towers to collapse and killing about 3,000 people. It was Rudy Giuliani, the city's mayor, who oversaw the heroic response of New York police and firefighters to this terrible tragedy. It was Rudy Giuliani who, with clear resolve and a firm hand, rallied the citizens of New York to recover from the 9-11 attack and go forward with confidence.

With Giuliani voluntarily relegated to the sidelines in the Iowa caucuses, the leading contender early on appeared to be Mitt Romney, a successful business entrepreneur who recently served one term as governor of Massachusetts. Mitt Romney was blessed with one of the better-known names in Republican politics in the United States. His father, George Romney, gained fame as president of an automobile manufacturing company, American Motors, where he pioneered and popularized the development of a smaller, more fuel-efficient automobile named the Rambler. The elder Romney went on to serve three-terms as a very popular governor of Michigan.

Mitt Romney, George's son, first came to national attention when he took charge of the Olympic Games in Salt Lake City and rescued them from potential financial disaster. As governor of Massachusetts, Mitt Romney turned out to be a political moderate, particularly on social issues. He supported abortion rights, he favored efforts to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, and he worked to solve state financial problems in Massachusetts by raising fees, on such things as gun licenses, to the tune of $240 million. Conservatives labeled those fee increases as hidden tax increases.

Once he became a candidate for president, however, Mitt Romney underwent an ideological change of heart. In an effort to appeal to the economic and social conservatives who are such active participants in Republican presidential caucuses and primaries, Romney announced that he was opposed to abortion, that laws concerning sexual orientation should only be enacted at the state level and not the U.S. level, and that his fee increases in Massachusetts fell on particular groups and did not have "a sense, a feeling" like a broad-based tax increase.

Mitt Romney was lambasted by his opponents and the press for his flip-flopping from liberal to conservative. His sharp ideological shift from left to right was considered manipulative, self-serving, and quite unbelievable. Romney appeared on NBC's "Meet The Press" in an effort to defend himself. He claimed that he switched positions because he learned from experience. He chastised politicians who took strong positions on issues and refused to change their view when they learned more facts. Romney concluded by saying that, once elected president, he would not flip back from right to left on the issue positions he was taking in his presidential campaign.

There was another problem for Mitt Romney. He was a member of the Church of Latter Day Saints, better known as the Mormons. This should not have been a problem in a nation with freedom of religion as one of its firmest principles. In Romney's case, however, he was running for the presidential nomination of the Republican Party, and a substantial number of Republicans are evangelical Christians and have serious doctrinal conflicts with the Mormons. Members of the Church of Latter

Day Saints do not believe in the three-in-one Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as traditional Christians do. The Mormons have their own particular religious text, the Book of Mormon, which they consider sacred along with the Judeo-Christian Bible. In addition, Mormons believe that God has a physical body similar to human beings.

The news-media played up that Mitt Romney was a Mormon and that his religious beliefs clashed with the teachings of evangelical Christians. Article after article traced Romney's upbringing in the Mormon Church and then ticked off the major points on which Mormons and evangelical Christians disagree on religious doctrine. As the issue played ever more prominently in the printed press and on television news, Mitt Romney and his political advisers anguished over whether to confront the issue with a major public statement on Romney's part about his religion.

On December 6, 2007, Mitt Romney mounted the podium at the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library in College Station, Texas, and directly confronted the issue of his religious affiliation. He endorsed his Mormon faith, saying that he both believed in it and endeavored to live by it. He pledged not to be under the influence of church authorities, however. He said that as president he would carefully keep governmental affairs separate from religious affairs. He noted there was a common moral heritage in the United States that came from a variety of different religious beliefs. It was that moral heritage that he would promote in the White House.

A third candidate in the Republican presidential race, former Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas, was ready-made to compete with Mitt Romney for the caucus votes of evangelical Christians. Huckabee was a former Baptist minister who had gone on to a career in politics. He had a folksy manner and a country-boy aura that many Iowans found appealing. He livened up his political rallies by playing the guitar. He took strong stands on right-wing political issues, arguing strongly that the United States should put an end, once and for all, to illegal immigration.

As caucuses day neared, Mike Huckabee began to draw large and enthusiastic audiences to his political speeches. He also began catching up with Mitt Romney in the public opinion polls. The news-media

marveled at how a candidate who entered the race with no national reputation and very little money and organization had been able to advance, in only a few short months, to being one of the frontrunners. Huckabee's instant popularity was characterized by some of the news media as the "HuckaBoom."

Huckabee's popularity with evangelical Christians, of which there are many in Iowa, was given most of the credit for his incredible rise to be a major contender for the 2008 Republican nomination for president.

The final week before the caucuses, however, some of the bloom was taken off the Huckabee rose. He made statements about Pakistan and illegal immigration that suggested he had limited knowledge of U.S. foreign policy issues. He decided not to run an advertisement on television in Iowa that attacked Mitt Romney, but he went ahead and showed the TV ad to the reporters covering the campaign. Apparently he hoped to get news coverage of his charges against Romney that he was unwilling to put on television.

Instead of campaigning in Iowa on the night before the day of the caucuses, Huckabee flew to Los Angeles and made a guest appearance on Jay Leno's nationally-televised late-night talk show. Huckabee was criticized for leaving Iowa at such an important moment, but he noted that many more Iowans would see him on the Leno show than would see him campaigning in person in Iowa that night.

There was one other notable Republican candidate on the ballot in the Iowa caucuses, but similar to Rudy Giuliani he opted to forego active campaigning in Iowa. That was U.S. Senator John McCain of Arizona, who was seeking to repeat the trick he pulled off successfully in 2000. He would bypass Iowa, concentrate all his effort and energy in the New Hampshire primary five days later, and further his campaign for president by winning big in New Hampshire. McCain did do some campaigning in Iowa, allegedly just to keep from doing so poorly in the Iowa caucuses that it would hurt him in New Hampshire.

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The Democratic Party in Iowa uses a unique system when holding its presidential precinct caucuses. After some discussion and debate

about the merits of the various candidates, the caucus attenders are asked to form groups according to which candidate for president they are supporting. It actually is a situation where Hillary Clinton supporters are instructed to stand over near the cloak room and Barack Obama voters are told to gather under the picture of George Washington.

Once they are in place, the people standing in each candidate's section are counted. If voters grouped together for a particular candidate do not constitute 15 percent or more of the total number of Democrats attending that particular caucus, they have to find another candidate to support who does have 15 percent. This 15 percent "threshold," as it is called, eliminates the minor candidates and concentrates all the votes on the major candidates. As soon as each of the remaining candidates has at least 15 percent of the caucus goers standing in his or her group, the results are counted again and telephoned to Democratic Party election central in Des Moines.

Actually, some Iowa caucus goers get to give their opinions before they get into their caucus location. That is because the television networks and other news organizations conduct "entrance polls," the Iowa version of an "exit poll." Since everyone votes in their caucus at the same time, the news media poll the voters as they walk *into* the caucus. This greatly speeds up reporting and analysis of the caucuses results in the news media.

The result of entrance polling is that political junkies can be watching a Democratic caucus being televised live on C-SPAN, the all-politics all-the-time channel, while over on Fox News or CNN the winners are being announced and the results analyzed based on entrance poll results.

The big winner of the Iowa Democratic presidential caucuses in 2008 was Senator Barack Obama of Illinois. Not only did Obama win the caucuses, but his major competitor for the 2008 Democratic nomination for president, New York Senator Hillary Clinton, finished third behind second-place finisher former-Senator John Edwards of North Carolina.

A record number of Iowa Democrats had turned out to participate in the caucuses, creating long lines of people at schools and firehouses waiting to sign in. The high Democratic turnout was attributed to the

exciting nature of Barack Obama's campaign and the desire of younger, first-time caucus goers to vote for him.

Obama received roughly 36-percent support, compared to 31-percent for Edwards and 30-percent for Hillary Clinton.

The news-media, as they customarily do, enthusiastically reported Barack Obama's big win in Iowa. The *New York Times* noted that the victory of an African-American candidate in a mainly white state such as Iowa "stood as a powerful answer to the question of whether America was prepared to vote for a black person for president." The press also noted that the flocking of first-time voters to Obama, which was indicated by the "entrance polls," bode well for his prospects in the general election against the Republicans in November.

Hillary Clinton styled herself as the candidate of experience coming into the Iowa caucuses. Barack Obama identified himself as the candidate of change. Political commentators repeatedly made the point that "change" had significantly bested "experience" in the 2008 Iowa caucuses, and it was Barack Obama's message of change that most Democrats seemed to want. Suddenly there was considerable speculation by political pundits that Barack Obama was now the odds-on candidate to win the Democratic presidential nomination. It was predicted that Obama would seal the deal with an equally big win just five days later in New Hampshire.

On the Republican side, the results were equally startling. Iowa Republicans, who simply conduct a straw poll at their caucuses, voted strongly for former-Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas. In second place was former-Governor Mitt Romney of Massachusetts, who spent much more money and time trying to win Iowa than Huckabee did. Senator John McCain of Arizona ended up in a tight race for third with former-Senator Fred Thompson of Tennessee, who similar to McCain campaigned in a lackluster manner in Iowa.

Mike Huckabee polled around 34 percent of the Republican caucuses vote compared to Mitt Romney, who garnered about 25 percent. John McCain and Fred Thompson each had approximately 14 percent of the Republican ballots cast.

"Entrance polls" revealed that nearly 60 percent of the Republicans

attending the 2008 Iowa Republican presidential caucuses were evangelical Christians, and the vast majority of them said they were going to mark their ballots for Mike Huckabee. It appeared that the religion issue, covered extensively by the news media, propelled the relatively unknown and underfinanced Huckabee ahead of the more famous and big-spending Mitt Romney. The former-Massachusetts governor also hurt himself by flip-flopping on the abortion issue and gay and lesbian rights, two subjects which are of great importance to evangelical Christians.

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Political pundits used to maintain that results from the Iowa caucuses mean very little to nothing. Every four years, however, once the Iowa results are tallied, there is always something to be learned from Iowa's unique exercise in early presidential voting.

One point came through loud and clear in Iowa in 2008. If there was such a thing as an "Iowa bounce," Barack Obama had collected a really big one. The first-term Illinois senator's dramatic win over former-First Lady Hillary Clinton boosted his campaign mightily and made him the runaway frontrunner in the quest for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination.

The long-term effects were less clear for the Republican caucuses. Mike Huckabee had scored a big win, no doubt, but his "Iowa bounce" was in question because Huckabee had very little money or organization with which to push his campaign past Iowa. Huckabee's prospects looked particularly dim in the New Hampshire presidential primary, just five days away, where Republican voters were considered more moderate and less-countrified than those in Iowa. There also were many fewer evangelical Christians in New Hampshire than in Iowa. In addition, the man Huckabee defeated in Iowa, Mitt Romney, had been governor of Massachusetts, a state immediately adjacent to New Hampshire.

In 2008, the Iowa caucuses did exactly what they are famous for doing. Two little-known candidates, Barack Obama for the Democrats and Mike Huckabee for the Republicans, came out of relative obscurity and, by winning the Iowa caucuses, were transformed into major candidates for president of the United States. Obama and Huckabee joined

Jimmy Carter and Gary Hart on that growing list of less-than-significant names that became big names by "bouncing" out of Iowa.