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Doughnut? Not while I'm on the job

BY BEN JACOBSON
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It has been nearly eight years since the first — and likely the last — time in my life in which I refused an offer of a doughnut.

When you think about it, it was incredibly brave of me. I was inches away from a man who, at the time, had real potential to assume the country's highest elected office. And when he offered to share one of his recently acquired carbohydrate-filled treats, I politely declined.

I don't use the word "hero" lightly. Generally, I believe that title should be reserved for emergency responders, civil rights activists and generous fast-food employees who super-size my French fries for free.

But in this case, I truly was a hero, a paragon of journalistic ethics on par with Woodward and Bernstein or the Boston Globe's Spotlight team. If a Franco brother doesn't eventually play me in a movie adaptation of my story, I'll be pretty ticked.

I'm not a name-dropper, so I won't identify the political candidate who, during an exclusive one-on-one interview, offered me a doughnut

(hint: his name rhymes with Shmitt Shromney). But it does illustrate the incredible opportunity we have as Iowans to engage in the national political scene.

Iowa, a state primarily notable for annual dairy-based bovine sculptures and keeping the suspender industry alive and thriving, becomes the toast of the political world for a few months every four years. Politicians swarm the state like well-dressed locusts, each attempting to charm the corn-fed locals into caucusing in their favor.

Months ahead of the February 2020 caucus, Dubuque has hosted big-name Democrats like Joe Biden, Pete Buttigieg, Amy Klobuchar, Richard Levine and Eddie Carr.

And because there are approximately 6,025 candidates this election cycle, they'll just keep coming and coming. In fact, there are so many Democrats hoping to unseat Republican President Donald Trump, you probably didn't even realize at first that Richard Levine and Eddie Carr are not politicians, but, in fact, are fictional characters from Michael Crichton's 1995 novel, "Jurassic Park: The Lost World."

I kid, but seriously, it's pretty cool. And it's even cooler for folks like me, who, by virtue of our jobs, get to interact with these politicians, often one-on-one. Though we tend to waste those

opportunities by asking them about current events and issues of local significance rather than important topics, like what did they think about the "Game of Thrones" finale?

This will be my third caucus cycle as a journalist (my second in Dubuque). And it's shaping up to be the most eventful one yet, even though no one has yet offered me a doughnut.

So I guess my point — if you can believe that I had one all along — is that we should not take this opportunity for granted.

There are many arguments for why Iowa should not wield such political influence. Our statewide population is only a fraction of the total of the biggest U.S. cities, and we're demographically homogeneous, about as diverse as a Nickelback "Greatest Hits" album.

But the fact is, we do have incredible power and it's imperative that we don't squander it. And fortunately, from my observation, all evidence suggests that the Iowa electorate is incredibly well-informed and prepared.

So keep it up Iowa. Ask the tough questions and hold these folks accountable. And, in case anybody's offering, I wouldn't say no to a doughnut.

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Going to the drive-in

Classic theaters remain after the credits

BY JOHN KRUSE • john.kruse@thmedia.com

MAQUOKETA, Iowa — It's an iconic scene from the 1960s.

A car rolls in and finds a spot in a sea of vehicles.

A massive white board stands before them as a hidden projector splashes images on the screen.

Some get out and watch from the grass or the hood of their car. Those with pickup trucks might climb in the back. Others might watch from the comfort of the driver's seat.

At the drive-in theater, everyone can come together to watch a movie under a ceiling of stars.

Children play at the 61 Drive-In Theatre in Delmar, Iowa, near Maquoketa. **See a video about the drive-in at TelegraphHerald.com.**

KATINA ZENTZ • Telegraph Herald

Dennis Voy remembers those days well, and he especially recalls the ability of drive-in theaters to create lasting memories.

So, while drive-in theaters have practically become a relic of the past, Voy's 61 Drive-In Theatre stands to this day, playing a movie every night in the middle of a farm field for anyone willing to make the drive out.

"It's just a great family experience," Voy said. "People grew up going to drive-in theaters, and I think they want to share that with their kids."

When Voy purchased 61 Drive-in Theatre in 1972, there was plenty of competition to go around.

Five drive-ins were to the south in the Quad Cities. Two were in Dubuque, according to Voy.

Dubuque's two drive-ins are long gone. One used to reside near the Kennedy Mall Shopping Center, where Shopko currently is located. The other was found off U.S. 52, on John Deere Road, according to Telegraph Herald archives.

Then came the age of home video and multiplex indoor theaters, and drive-in theaters began to dissolve away, unable to compete with the new age of movie watching.

Today, Voy's drive-in is one of only four remaining in Iowa, but it's that rarity that has made his theater a highly-sought tourist attraction.

"There are people that drive hours to see a movie here," Voy said. "They'll

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Children play tetherball at the 61 Drive-In Theatre, one of only four left in Iowa.



The concession stand offers the usual array of movie treats.



A family lounges before the start of an outdoor movie.

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