

## **WEAC LEGISLATION - POLITICAL ACTION -1970s-1980s**

### **Part 2. WEAPAC AND POLITICAL CANDIDATE FUND RAISERS**

As staff and leaders of WEAC, we frequently held or attended fundraisers. Some fundraisers were sponsored by WEAPAC as political dinners for WEAC members and others. Political Action staff including Bruce Oradei, Frank Burdick, George Williams, Ruby Jackson and Carolyn Armagost were usually in charge of these events, which were attended by WEAPAC-endorsed candidates. It was one way to build grassroots support for endorsed local and state legislative candidates. Grassroots support was critical, as there no way WEAC or any other union could match the money spent for candidates endorsed by large corporations or wealthy contributors. Their candidates were most often running as Republicans, while most, but not all WEAPAC-endorsed candidates were Democrats.

As the S.E. regional coordinator I attended a fundraiser at the Italian Community Center for a candidate who was running for mayor of Milwaukee. It was well attended by local politicians, as well as the teachers from MTEA, including a few who were my colleagues when teaching in Milwaukee. As I was talking with two former colleagues, a large black man approached me and called me by my first name. I didn't recognize him immediately although he looked somewhat familiar. He smiled as he realized I didn't recognize him right away. As he threw his arms around me and gave me a big bear hug, I remembered his name, and greeted him. "Henry! What are you doing back in Milwaukee?" The last time I had seen him was nearly fifteen years earlier when he was getting ready to move to Atlanta, Georgia. He said the candidate running for mayor was a personal friend and he was there to support him. He told me briefly about his home in Atlanta and we talked about the many times we had hunted pheasants at his place, ruffed grouse at "The Land" and played volleyball in my backyard with students from Roosevelt Junior High School. We also talked briefly about our mutual friend, Joseph Kennedy who had just died. Joseph was a colleague, who also taught at Roosevelt Junior High School in Milwaukee. It was through Joseph that I met Hank, when Hank came to the school to talk to the students at Roosevelt.

As we were wrapping up our conversation, he asked me why I hadn't ever asked him for his autograph. I was a little embarrassed but said I didn't want to bother him as I knew he was probably swamped with requests. Henry asked, please give

me your address and I will send you an autographed baseball. A week later, I received a baseball in a nice enclosed case with his name autographed on it, Hank Aaron.

