

## Prologue:

# The Wizard and the Lizard

Even when he was Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, David Duke felt he was destined for something bigger. The Klan was just one of a number of organizations that Duke had joined, been actively involved with, and discarded when they no longer fit his purpose.

As a student at Louisiana State University, Duke had studied German so that he could read *Mein Kampf* in the original. Each April 20, he celebrated Hitler's birthday with a party. He draped his dorm room with swastika flags and wore a Nazi uniform around campus.

Duke was equally comfortable in the uniform of an ROTC cadet. One of his instructors praised Duke's "outstanding leadership potential." But then "we started receiving information on him from the Department of Defense, .. Here was a 19-year-old kid getting money from Germany."

The money was for American Nazi activities. The Pentagon rejected Duke's application for an advanced-training program and refused to commission him as an officer. That rebuff caused Duke to

channel his leadership potential into the Ku Klux Klan. In just a couple of years, he rose to the Klan's highest post, Grand Wizard, in 1975. This meteoric ascent was a matter of his being in the right place at the right time. The previous Wizard had just been gunned down in a motel parking lot.

Duke stood out in the Klan almost as much as he had at LSU. He preferred to appear in a crisp business suit and tie rather than a hood and robe. He adopted the corporate-sounding title "National Director." One of his more surprising actions as Klansman was to write a book called *African Atto* (1973), under the pseudonym Mohammed X. He sold it by mail order, taking out ads in black newspapers with the heading WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME WHITEY CALLED YOU *NIGGER*? The book was a martial arts manual. Duke told people that its real purpose was to compile the names and addresses of the blacks who ordered it-for Ku Klux Klan records.

In 1980 Duke abruptly left the organization. His story is that he realized the Klan would never be taken seriously as a political force. It was time for the defenders of the white race to get out of the cow pastures and into the hotel suites. People who knew Duke in the Klan have a different story. "We had to get David out," explained Karl Hand, formerly Duke's lieutenant. "He was seducing all the wives . . . He had no qualms about putting the make on anybody's wife or girlfriend, and the flak always came back to me, because I was his national organizer.

The immediate cause of Duke's departure was his attempt to pocket a quick thirty-five thousand dollars by selling the top-secret Klan membership list to an enigmatic character named Bill Wilkinson. Wilkinson presented himself to Duke as a Klansman intending to set up his own splinter organization. In fact, he was secretly an FBI informant. Wilkinson videotaped Duke *dickering* over the price, then threatened to play the tape at a KKK meeting. Possibly the whole thing was an FBI sting-or possibly Wilkinson saw a freelance opportunity. Duke left the Klan after that.

Duke had never held a regular job and was not keen to start. Naturally, he turned to politics. Plastic surgery and a blow-dryer transformed him into something resembling a game show host. Starting in 1975, he began running for local offices in Louisiana. In 1980 he founded his own organization, the National Association for the Advancement of White People. He discovered that there was good money to be made in fringe nonprofits. After Duke and some Klansmen were arrested at a demonstration in Forsythe County, Georgia, he raised nineteen thousand dollars from white supremacists nationwide to pay a fifty-five-dollar fine.

In 1988 Duke ran for president of the United States, entering several primaries as a Democrat. No one took him seriously except for writers of offbeat feature articles. He then ran as a Populist and got 47,047 votes.

In 1989, Duke downsized his ambitions to run for the Louisiana legislature. Not only did he win, but he won against former Republican governor Dave Treen. This coup encouraged Duke to run for the U.S. Senate in 1990. He lost. Then in 1991, he decided it was time to try for governor of Louisiana.

Edwin Edwards “**p**lays the system like a violin. He had an uncanny knack of charging headlong to the brink and knowing exactly where to stop ... and he doesn't even try to cover his trail, he's that cocky.” These were the words of U.S. Attorney Stanford Bardwell, Jr., one of the many prosecutors who indicted Edwards and saw him wriggle off the hook. Some called Edwards the most corrupt politician in a corrupt state.

Edwards was born dirt-poor in an cypress-wood farmhouse his father built with his own hands. He attended Louisiana State University and became a successful trial lawyer in Cajun country. Entering politics as a populist Democrat, he made a successful run for governor in 1972, winning on an alliance of the Cajun and black vote. In the gov-

ernor's mansion, so close to the flow of money and power (the two great aphrodisiacs), he was like a kid in a candy store.

His plump patrician face, ruddy nose and cheeks, graying hair, and salacious wit perfectly fit the part of an aging roué. "Two out of ten women will go to bed with you," ran one of Edwards's maxims, "but you've got to ask the other eight." Edwards inherited the Louisiana tradition of influence peddling and used it to live lavishly. His most expensive habit was gambling. The New Orleans *Times-Picayune* reported that Edwards

is granted up to \$200,000 casino credit at the stroke of his pen . . . He is classified by his favorite hotel-casino-Caesars Palace-among the 0.25 percent of its customers whose importance as gamblers makes the company unwilling to share credit information with other casinos. Caesars even waives its maximum bet limit when Edwards steps to the table, . . . He eats his meals on the casinos' tab in the Strip's poshest restaurants. He sunbathes on casino-owned yachts at Lake Tahoe. He glides around town in casino limousines, and he and his entourage stay at luxury suites in the most popular hotels. All for free.

What can Edwards get from the Vegas casinos? "Anything he wants," a former Caesars Palace employee said.

"I like to gamble," Edwards admitted. He was able to get away with an he did because of a good ol' boy charisma that charmed journalists, voters, and grand juries alike. A reporter once asked Edwards if it wasn't illegal for him to accept a reported twenty-thousand-dollar bribe from South Korean lobbyist Tongsun Park Edwards replied, "It was illegal for them to give, but not for me to receive." Or as Edwards asked another time: "What's wrong with making money?"

One of Edwards's most puzzling contributions to Louisiana politics was the open primary, more evocatively known as the jungle primary.

Candidates of all parties run against one another in a no-holds-barred primordial contest. The two candidates with the most votes go on to a runoff election for the office.

The open primary)', proponents say, gives more power to voters and less to decision makers in smoke-filled back rooms. *That* was the part that mystified the pundits. It defied belief that such a consummate player as Edwin Edwards would have backed a high-minded reform without considering what was in it for him.

In 1972, Louisiana's registered Democrats outnumbered Republicans twenty to one. That made the primary system used in other states ludicrous. The real fight was for the Democratic nomination. The final Democrat-versus-Republican election was a formality, a waste of time and money. With the open primary, both the primary and the runoff were meaningful, hard-fought elections.

No one believed that this rationale was sufficient to outweigh an obvious negative: Edwards was a Democrat, and his jungle primary would help the Republican Party.

A slew of Democrats would run in each primary'. There would probably be only one Republican. The Republican would automatically corner the conservative vote, while each Democrat would have to scratch and claw for a scrap of the liberal vote (and for liberal campaign money). That would almost guarantee that the Republican made it to the runoff. The Republican could spend his campaign dollars where they counted-on the runoff election.

So what was in it for Edwards, a liberal Democrat? The only theory that made sense was worthy of Machiavelli. Under Louisiana law, the governor cannot run for a third consecutive term. Edwards, who was reelected in 1976, was out of the game when his second term expired in 1980. The law did not preclude a third term (or more), as long as it wasn't three in a row.

According to this theory, by backing the open primary Edwards was looking several moves ahead, to 1984. Believing it would be easier to beat an incumbent Republican than a younger, less baggage-encumbered

Democrat, Edwards knew (made sure?) that there would be no heir apparent in the Democratic Party. With the open primary, the Democratic vote would be more fragmented than usual, and Edwards could therefore count on the split Democratic vote to lead to the election of a Republican-someone to house-sit the governor's mansion for him. Then, in 1983, he would reunify the Democrats and sail to an easy third victory.

If this really was Edwards's plan, it was a bigger gamble than the ones he was making at the craps tables. No Republican had been elected governor of Louisiana since Reconstruction.

This "theory" describes exactly what happened. In 1979, five Democrats ran, and only one Republican. The front-running Democrat, Louis Lambert, was the most liberal of the group. Under the old, party-controlled system, the Democrats surely would have chosen someone more moderate than Lambert. As it was, Lambert ran in the runoff against Republican David Treen, and Treen won. He became Louisiana's first Republican governor since 1877.

And in 1983, Edwin Edwards had no problem making sure that Treen's first term would be his last. He told the press that Treen was "so slow it takes him an hour and a half to watch *60 Minutes*." As Election Day approached, Edwards boasted that he couldn't lose unless he was caught "in bed with a dead girl or a live boy." He won the runoff with 63 percent of the vote.

Is it possible that Edwards planned all this, back when he launched the open primary? Columnist John Maginnis recalls an enigmatic comment Edwards made in 1978 to a Republican Women's Club. The club members were pleased that the then-new open primary was helping Republicans get elected. Edwards said, "You are happy with the open primary now, but there will come a day when you will not be." Without explaining the statement, he left the room.

Edwards celebrated his victory over Treen by flying six hundred supporters to Paris for a week of gourmandizing. At ten thousand dollars a head, the trip paid off Edwards's four-million-dollar campaign debt. To top it off, Edwards won fifteen thousand dollars at Monte Carlo's craps tables. "Give me a wheel barrow for my money," he told the croupier.

The *bon temps* quickly passed. The petroleum taxes that had subsidized Louisiana state government in the 1970s were no longer enough to keep personal taxes low and enrich Edwards's cronies. With the Louisiana economy tanking, the voters were less forgiving of Edwards's indiscretions. Federal prosecutors began nipping at his heels.

In 1981, before Edwards's return to power, the government indicted one of his closest associates, Charles Roemer II. An FBI sting revealed that Roemer was taking bribes from New Orleans mob boss Carlos Marcello. At the trial, prosecutors played covert tapes of Marcello bragging about his ties to the Edwards administration. "He's the strongest sonofabitchin' governor we ever had," Marcello said of Edwards. "He fucks with women and plays dice, but won't drink. How you like dat?"

Edwards escaped prosecution. It was Roemer who took the fall. During his fifteen months in prison, FBI agents plied him with offers of release if only he would deliver the goods on Edwards. Roemer served his time in silence.

In 1985, Governor Edwards himself went on trial. According to indictments, he had shaken down four hospitals for \$1.9 million in bribes in order to secure licenses. He needed the money badly. He had racked up two million dollars in debts to Nevada casinos. A Caesars Palace executive told the court of making trips to the governor's mansion to collect suitcases full of cash.

The trial ended in a hung jury. The prosecutors tried again, and Edwards was acquitted.

In 1986, Governor Edwards advanced a plan for jump-starting Louisiana's economy by bringing in casino gambling. The legislature rolled their collective eyes and rejected it.

When Edwards ran for his fourth term, in 1987, he discovered how thin his Teflon had worn. "A \$100,000 contribution to Edwards was once considered an investment," wrote John Maginnis. "Now it's an open invitation to the grand jury."

Edwards's jungle primary turned cruelly against him. He came in second to a young Democratic challenger who happened to be the son of the man who had gone to prison for him. Charles "Buddy" Roemer III got 33 percent of the vote, versus 28 for Edwards. Seeing the handwriting on the wall, Edwards dropped out of the race. Most believed that his political career was finished. *Shreveport Journal* columnist Lanny Keller declared, "The only way Edwards can ever be reelected is to run against Adolf Hitler."

Keller had no way of knowing how prophetic those words would be.

**The man who** defeated Edwards was handsome, Harvard-educated, and sixteen years his junior. Buddy Roemer knew a lot about politics. He had even worked on Edwards's first campaign for governor. In the mid-1970s, Roemer was one of the state's most successful political consultants. He then served four terms in Congress. In the 1987 race for governor, Roemer took on one of the best political strategists, Raymond Strother, to manage his own campaign. Strother deftly distanced Roemer from the crimes of his father and of Edwards. "The choice is between Edwin Edwards, who's gone corrupt," went one of the 1987 TV ads, "and Buddy Roemer, who's trying to start a revolution."

The voters favored the revolution over Edwards's ethically challenged status quo. Roemer delivered on most of his promises. He cleaned up state government to a degree many Louisianans hadn't thought possible, and he made measured cutbacks suited to a time of austerity. Of all the candidates Strother had managed, only one compared in his estimation-Arkansas governor Bill Clinton. "I was representing them both at the same time, shuffling back and forth between



Baton Rouge and Little Rock," Strother remembered. "Roemer had all the equipment, more so than Clinton. He was at least as smart as Clinton, maybe smarter . . . But as far as skill, intelligence, vision-Roemer was better than Clinton. The ingredient missing in Clinton is not his intellect, not his memory, but his creativity. Clinton is not creative. Roemer is creative,"

In October 1989, Roemer's wife, Patti, left him, taking their nine-year-old son, Dakota. Roemer had what the media called a midlife crisis. With the governor's mansion suddenly empty, he took to wearing a rubber band around his wrist. When he felt tense or hostile, he snapped the rubber band against his pulse point, murmuring, "Cancel, cancel." The personal soul-searching found echo in his political life. On March 11, 1991, Roemer had one of his "creative" ideas. He announced that he was becoming a Republican.

The once solidly Democratic South was edging right. Roemer was aware that Edwards's jungle primary squeezed candidates in the middle. "I felt the Republicans almost had to put up somebody," he explained, "and that somebody gets 15 percent of the vote. My 15 percent." He reasoned that it was smarter to run as a Republican, locking in the conservative vote while preserving his moderate base.

Another reason to turn Republican: Roemer had presidential ambitions. He confided his calculations to friends. George H. W. Bush would win reelection in 1992, Roemer believed. That would leave the field open for a Republican in 1996. The party had no one to succeed Bush. Roemer dismissed the vice president, Dan Quayle, as an intellectuallightweight unsuited to lead the nation. Roemer's private scenario was that *he* could come out of nowhere, win some primaries, and cop the 1996 Republican nomination. With this vague White House fantasy on his mind, Roemer made a serious tactical error. He crossed Billy Nungesser.

## GAMING THE VOTE

Nungesser was a creepy character who wore red suits to match his slicked-back red hair. He ran a catering business in New Orleans. He was also chairman of the Louisiana Republican Party.

Roemer's mistake was going over Nungesser's slicked-back head and discussing the party switch with White House chief of staff John Sununu. Nungesser felt that this disrespected the majesty of his private empire. He thereafter made a point of not cutting Roemer any slack. Nungesser's state party insisted that Governor Roemer was *not* automatically going to be the Republican nominee for governor. Nungesser decreed that all candidates, Roemer included, would have to sign an affidavit promising to drop out of the race should they *not* receive the party nomination,

Roemer had no intention of signing any such document. The Republicans held their state caucus anyway. In what amounts to an act of spite, they nominated Congressman Clyde Holloway as the Republican candidate for governor. A staunch conservative, Holloway was popular with fundamentalists. Hardly anyone believed he had a chance of winning the election.

One of the few people talking up Holloway's chances was Edwin Edwards. "If Clyde runs, Roemer won't make the runoff," Edwards predicted. "Clyde's a real Republican." Edwards was hardly a disinterested observer. He was running yet again, for the fourth time that Roemer had denied him.

Holloway would be easier to beat than Roemer. Edwards therefore passed on to Holloway a tidbit that his opposition research had turned up. Three years previously, Roemer had told the Baton Rouge *Advocate* that he had voted for Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis. "Dan Quayle helped me make up my mind," Roemer was quoted as saying.

The dig at Quayle wouldn't sit well with Roemer's adopted party. As a Democrat, Edwards couldn't use it, but Holloway could. Anything that helped Holloway would take votes away from Roemer. That, in turn, would help Edwards's chances.

Despite Edwards's tossing him a few bones, and despite the dubious blessing of Billy Nungesser, Clyde Holloway limped along. He never broke decisively into the double digits in the polls. The candidate to watch was David Duke.

Duke had also reinvented himself as a Republican. Like Roemer, he was running without the party's support. Duke's challenge was what he described as his "past." For that, he had the greatest all-around cover story in American politics. He announced that he had found Jesus.

Duke's power base was angry, white, and poor. Many if not most of these people identified on some level with Duke's bad-boy image. But for swing voters not entirely comfortable with a Klansman Nazi governor, Duke provided an out. He said that the swastikas and cross burnings were youthful indiscretions, before he found true religion. Anyone who doubted that did not understand the redemptive power of his walk with the Lord.

Duke had been preparing the ground for some time. Prior to the mid-1980s, he would sound off to journalists on his favored topics of the Holocaust hoax, the genetic inferiority of the nonwhite races, and the person-from-history-I'd-most-like-to-have-dinner-with, Adolf Hitler. That stopped. It was replaced with calls for abolishing welfare and affirmative action.

"I was too intolerant," Duke told Larry King on his show. "I thought the problem was with blacks instead of the welfare system." When challenged to recant his old positions, Duke did, more or less. At a Kiwanis Club forum, he was asked:

Q. Do you believe blacks are genetically inferior to whites?

A. Not inferior but different. I think blacks have different talents.

Q. Do you believe there is a conspiracy by Jews?

**A.** No, I don't believe there is a conspiracy by Jews.

**Q.** Do you believe the Holocaust occurred?

**A.** Yes, there was a Holocaust in which Jews and Christians perished.

Duke's most convincing point was that only he could know what he felt inside. The journalists who doubted his conversion were speculating. The most they could establish was that Duke's "past" was not all that remote. A taped interview from the mid-1980s surfaced in which Duke said that Jews "probably deserve to go into the ash bin of history." A 1989 photo showed Duke shaking hands with the vice chairman of the American Nazi Party,

One of Duke's biggest gaffes came when a TV moderator asked him what church he attended. His answer was the Evangelical Bible Church. Reporters were unable to locate any local church by that name.

Duke had another problem, one endemic in Louisiana politics. "After a rally, the women would flock around him," said **Jim** McPherson, who had worked on Duke's Senate campaign. "He just took his pick." Duke's tastes ran to Aryan and young. The young part was an issue even in Louisiana. When Duke was in the Louisiana legislature, an irate father showed up to warn him to stay away from his seventeen-year-old daughter, or else.

Aide Linda Melton quit the Duke gubernatorial campaign in disgust. Duke missed an important meeting because he was "out till three or four o'clock **in** the morning in a real sleazy, sleazy, I mean we're talking redneck sleazy, after-hours club in West Monroe with some really trashy-looking girl."

A CNN reporter interviewing Edwin Edwards suggested that Duke had surpassed him as a womanizer. "Duke is not a womanizer," Edwards corrected. "He is a little-girlizer." The reporter had a point, though. This time around, the sixty-four-year-old Edwards was exploring monogamy with his twenty-six-year-old girlfriend, Candy Picou.

Duke's Shreveport coordinator, a former Klan organizer named David Touchstone, fretted about the age of Duke's dates. He proposed twenty-five as the cutoff point. Campaign worker Billy Hankins agreed. "I told him, 'David, I think maybe 20 is too young.' Duke didn't want to hear that. He was sitting on the floor and he was rubbing his eyes. You could see he was tired, and he was frustrated by this whole thing. He said, 'Look, isn't it enough that I'm trying to save the white race, can't I see who I want to see?'"

The staff was able to persuade Duke by reporting a rumor that a pipe fitter's union was planning to have an underage girl get to Duke and plant ecstasy on him. Said Hankins, "That settled us down some."

In an early survey taken by Robert Teeter, pollster for President Bush, Buddy Roemer was ahead with 33 percent of the vote. Edwards had 27 percent, and Duke had 12 percent. Holloway and other minor candidates were far behind.

Roemer's lead was slim for an incumbent governor running against a man with outsize integrity issues. Blame the jungle primary. The Republican vote was split between Roemer, Duke, and Holloway. Edwards was the only strong Democrat.

In anticipation of the runoff, pollster Verne Kennedy asked voters whom they would vote for between Roemer and Edwards. In early August, Edwards was leading Roemer 51.7 percent to 48.3 percent. A month later, Roemer took the lead, 46.0 percent to 42.7 percent.

Those last two figures add up to well under 100 percent. A surprising thing about the race was the large number of undecided voters, as much as 24 percent in one late-summer poll. Why were people undecided? Roemer was an incumbent, Edwards had been governor for three terms, and Duke, as the prize exhibit of the media's latest freak show, had probably gotten more press than either of them. What more information did people need?

Edwards took first place in the primary, winning 33.8 percent of the

vote. Duke came in a strong second (31.7 percent). That meant that Governor Roemer, with only 26.5 percent, was out of the running.

The campaign then entered its truly pathological phase. Louisianans had to decide whether to vote for Edwards or Duke. For some, this was like deciding whether to die slowly in a bear trap or gnaw off a leg.

Edwards called in the hottest political consultant in America, James Carville. Carville was a fellow Cajun, and he swore like a Cajun. Like most star consultants, he owed his fame to his batting average. Over the previous five years, Carville had elected Democratic governors in Pennsylvania, Kentucky, and Georgia. There were other tight races this season, and Carville was in demand. He did not have much time to devote to Edwards or Louisiana. The good news was that he was confident that Edwards would win. It was a matter of getting the biggest margin of victory possible, of demonstrating that Louisiana repudiated Duke's divisiveness.

Speaking of that, the most alarming fact was this: *most whites favored Duke*. It was only by adding in the black vote that Edwards achieved a majority. Edwards was instructed to avoid being seen with large crowds of black people. The rationale was that the swing voters would be mildly racist whites. It was important that they *not* turn on their TVs and see Edwards surrounded by cheering blacks.

Edwards was soon raking in money and endorsements from people who hated his guts. They hated Duke's guts more. "David Duke thinks he hates Jews now," one Jewish fund-raiser for Edwards was quoted as saying. "Wait til we're through with him:" Ex-governor Treen-butt of the *60 Minutes* joke—endorsed Edwards. So did the New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, which had long pilloried Edwards's wretched ethics. The press even wrested an endorsement out of President George H. W. Bush. Remember, Edwards was a Democrat *and* a crook. But if he, Bush, lived in Louisiana, he would vote for Edwards.

The most agonized statement came from Buddy Roemer, appropriately enough on Halloween. "I have sat at my desk and cried at the anger,

and shock and shame," Roemer began. "I cannot. will not, must not vote for David Duke. **It** would be suicide for Louisiana. And since my choices are only two, Edwards gets my vote. He does not get my endorsement."

("I'll tell you what happened," Edwards explained. The day after the primary, Roemer "said he was still talking with people about what to do. Which is silly because he knew there was nothing else he could do. We set a meeting. He calls back. He's not finished talking to people. Okay. Fine. Finally, I go to meet with him. He has a legal pad of notes. He's going through all these machinations and details like he's writing the fucking U.N. charter. He says he's not ready. I say, '[O]kay, that's fine, do what you want to do.' Then he calls me at night and says, 'Let me read this to you.' I say, 'Buddy, I don't give a shit.' He says, '**No**, I want to get it right.' So he reads the whole fucking thing. And then he says he may want to change a few phrases.")

As David Duke became a national celebrity, the questions got tougher. On *Meet the Press*, Tim Russert asked, "Mr. Duke, can you name the top three manufacturing employers in Louisiana?"

Duke couldn't. After an uncomfortable silence, he said, "We have a number of employers in our state. I couldn't give you the names right off."

The next question was how many people in Louisiana lived below the poverty line. Duke didn't know that, either. "I don't carry around an almanac with me."

In a televised debate for Louisiana Public Television, Edwards held up a map that had appeared in the newsletter of Duke's National Association for the Advancement of White People. It showed a future America, after the NMWP had moved the ethnic groups around to where it thought they belonged. One surprise was that the Cajuns were to be relocated to Vermont. "As spokesman for the Cajuns, we aren't going to go," Edwards said. "**It's** cold up there."

The Duke story kept getting weirder and weirder. Bob Hawks, a former Duke campaign manager, told the press that Duke never prayed or talked about religion except when he was campaigning. Klansman Karl Hand said he had seen Duke's pornography collection, and it contained pictures of black men making it with white women. The most eye-opening tale was of Duke's apparently tangential involvement in a 1981 American Nazi plot to take over the Caribbean island nation of Dominica and establish a cocaine factory there.

The bizarre tone of the election was captured in two bumper stickers: YOTE FOR THE CROOK-IT'S IMPORTANT and YOTE FOR THE LIZARD, NOT THE WIZARD. The bumper stickers made the case for Edwards better than anything Carville could do. There was nothing to say in favor of Edwards and no point in pretending there was. But Duke was worse.

A few non-Duke supporters disagreed. "There were many smart, well-intentioned people who saw Duke as the lesser of two evils," wrote blogger Elliot Scott, "not because he was necessarily less evil, but because he was *so* evil that he was actually safe. Edwin Edwards is a crook, a very well-connected, very capable crook. Duke is just crazy (and, yes, also a crook)."

Louisiana energy executive L. L. "Bud" Feikert told *Newsweek*: "I'm going to hold my nose, steady my hand-and it will be shaking-and pull that lever for Edwin Edwards."

Just over 61 percent of the voters did about that on November 16. Edwards won his fourth term. Despite this, 55 percent of whites voted for Duke. Buddy Roemer offered this postmortem: Edwards, who "for twenty years created a hunger for integrity, was saved in the end by **having** a man run against him who had less integrity."

In his final term as governor, Edwin Edwards delivered about what the voters must have expected. He reinstituted the system of patronage that had been briefly interrupted by Roemer. One of his first acts was to appoint a new head to the Orleans District levee board, the commission responsible for maintaining the levees that protect New Orleans from floods. The new appointee, Robert Harvey, was an attor-



ney whose qualifications included writing a five-thousand-dollar check to the Edwards campaign.

Under Roemer, the levee board had forced the Army Corps of Engineers to agree to build higher levees. Under the new administration, inspections were lax. Edwards had other priorities, such as bringing casino gambling to New Orleans. A new gambling bill passed the legislature. Robert Harvey lured Bally's into opening a riverboat casino at a dock owned by the levee board. In due course the FBI was investigating Harvey for padding the levee board payroll.

Over the next decade, the board was preoccupied with corruption probes and petty feuds with the Army Corps of Engineers. When Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, the levees failed catastrophically. More than 1,500 people died, and New Orleans was nearly wiped off the map.

By then, Edwards was in federal prison. In 2000 he was convicted of taking bribes from riverboat casino operations and sentenced to ten years. He had married Candy Picou, and when he was sentenced, he suggested she get a divorce rather than wait for him. Picou refused, vowing to bear Edwards's child, "We have some frozen sperm from my reverse vasectomy," Edwards told the press, "and I suppose after I leave here, she'll probably resort to trying to use that."

As he entered prison, Edwards made the last promise of his public career: "I will be a model prisoner as I was a model citizen,"

In 1992, David Duke ran for president as a Republican. His momentum vanished as mysteriously as it had appeared. He opened a bar in Metairie with his former campaign manager and studied to become an insurance agent.

In 2002, Duke pleaded guilty to tax and mail fraud. He had mailed thousands of white supremacists and Nazi sympathizers, telling them that he was about to lose his home and life savings. Hundreds of thousands of dollars poured in. In reality, he had already sold his home at a profit and had a number of investment accounts. Duke's financial problem, if he had one, was that he had frittered away money in gambling casinos,

In one sense only, the American system worked. Now that they are convicted felons, neither Edwin Edwards nor David Duke can ever run for U.S. public office again.

Politics may be more colorful in Louisiana, but what happened in the 1991 governor's race is not unusual. When three Republicans run against one Democrat, the Democrat has an advantage that has nothing to do with character, ideology, or qualifications. Republican voters can't vote for all three Republicans. They have to pick one. This can mean that each Republican gets fewer votes than he might have gotten. This phenomenon is called vote splitting. It occurs with party primaries followed by a general election; and when there are no primaries at all, just a single election. In our two-party system, the most familiar form of vote splitting is the spoiler effect. When there is a tight race between the two major candidates, a third-party "spoiler" candidate can take enough votes from one of the front-runners to hand the election to his rival. This happened in the 2000 presidential race, when Green candidate Ralph Nader tipped the balance from Al Gore to George W. Bush in Florida, and thus determined the election. Vote splitting is an invisible hand misguiding the whole electoral process. The consequences are weakened mandates, loss of faith in the democratic process, squandered dollars, and sometimes squandered lives.

This book asks a simple question: Is it possible to devise a fair way of voting, one immune to vote splitting? Until recently, any well-informed person would have told you the answer was a most definite no. They would have cited the work of Nobel-laureate economist Kenneth Arrow and his famous impossibility theorem. In 1948 Arrow devised a logical proof saying (*very* roughly) that no voting system is perfect. Arrow was not talking about hanging chads, confusing ballot designs, hacked electronic machines, or any type of outright fraud. Such problems, though serious, can be fixed. He was talking about a problem

that *can't* be fixed. He showed that vote splitting and worse paradoxes can corrupt almost any reasonable way of voting.

This led to decades of lowered expectations, if not outright despair, over voting. Building a significantly better voting system seemed to be impossible. In recent years, scholars have begun to revise this pessimistic view. There are better ways to vote, including some that fall outside the scope of the impossibility theorem entirely. One of the most promising is known as range voting. In December 2000-the month the Supreme Court was deciding whether Bush or Gore would be president-Temple University mathematician Warren D. Smith published an extensive computer simulation study comparing the merits of voting methods. He showed that range voting achieves the greatest overall voter satisfaction, by a large margin, of any widely proposed system. No less important, it stands up better than any other system to attempts to manipulate the vote.

You are already familiar with range voting. It is used in many Internet "polls" and consumer surveys. We use range voting for rating movies, restaurants, athletes, eBay vendors-"everywhere," adds the economist Claude Hillinger, "except where it would matter most, in political elections." That generations of voting theorists had overlooked a practical idea ingrained in popular culture is one of the odder tales in recent scientific and political thought.

The need for a better way of voting has never been more acute. Vote splitting is increasingly part of campaign strategizing. In 2004 Republican donors briefly made headlines by funding a nationwide effort to help Ralph Nader make state ballots. The hope was that Nader would again take crucial votes from the Democratic candidate (John Kerry), perhaps winning a state or two for George W. Bush. The most instructive way to look at this tactic is not as a Republican or a Democrat but as a political consultant. That means keeping a close eye on where the money came from and what it bought. John Kerry spent \$310 million on his 2004 campaign. George W. Bush spent \$345 million, and Ralph

Nader spent a mere \$4.5 million. Yet Nader had tipped the 2000 election and threatened to do so in 2004. This presented an arbitrage opportunity. A relative pittance diverted from Bush's war chest to Nader was judged to be an inexpensive insurance policy. Though it turned out to be unnecessary-Bush won reelection without need of the Nader effect-politics is a game of calculated gambles.

Since 2004, the gaming of the spoiler effect has burgeoned and become thoroughly bipartisan. **In** the 2006 elections, no fewer than five key races had Democratic money funding spoilers to hurt Republicans, or vice versa. The funds not only aided ballot drives but also paid for TV, radio, and print ads the spoilers could not otherwise have afforded.

Political consultants are hardworking, committed people who get a bum rap about a lot of what they do. But in this case, it's tough to paint what they're doing as anything but villainous. Like terrorists co-opting a government list of soft targets, today's political consultants are exploiting the mathematical vulnerabilities of voting itself. Instead of persuading people to vote *for* their candidates, they are persuading them to vote *against* them-and sometimes winning because of that. Were these new campaign techniques a genetically engineered tomato, they might command *more* attention than they have. They have gone largely unnoticed by the public, the media, and nearly everyone except the campaign strategists and their clients.

The story of vote splitting is one of political hardball. It is equally a tale of attempts to improve the world through logic (and how rarely *that* works out). In both cases, the story properly begins with Kenneth Arrow's lauded, feared, and long-misunderstood impossibility theorem.