

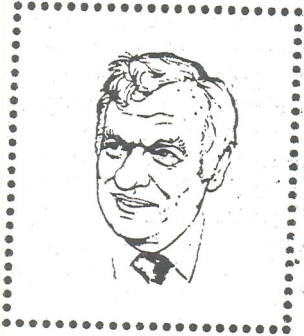
Charles McCabe Himself

The Newt's-Eye View

New York

JIMMY BRESLIN, the police reporter and novelist, was talking about his friend Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill, the House majority leader:

"During the 1960 presidential campaign, O'Neill was an advance man in Missouri for John F. Kennedy and in the course of his duties he came upon Augie Busch, the beer baron, who offered to round up 30 people for a \$1000-a-head breakfast meeting if Kennedy would show up. O'Neill called Kennedy, who quickly asked the crucial question about the proposed meeting. 'What time should I be there?' The breakfast was arranged at an airport motel and Kennedy arrived, stepped into the room, received the money nod from O'Neill, and then said to the guests. 'If you'll excuse Congressman O'Neill and me for a moment.'



"The two of them went out and jammed into what O'Neill remembers as the world's smallest men's room. 'Now I have 12,000 in cash and 17,000 in checks, what do you want me to do with it?' O'Neill asked.

"Give the checks to Kenny O'Donnell. I'll take the cash.'

"O'Neill handed Kennedy the cash and watched it disappear into the inside jacket pocket. 'Geez, this business is no different if you're running for ward leader or President of the United States,' O'Neill said to Kennedy."

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BRESLIN was talking to a trio of the saved, in the back of a fish house on 34th and Third. There were Jim Shanahan, a former Boston reporter and now vice president of Americana Hotels; Msgr. John Clancy, a brilliant young fellow who runs some kind of school of international diplomacy up at Columbia University, and myself. Breslin's latest book (on Watergate) is called "How the Good Guys Finally Won" and is dedicated to James Shanahan.

Breslin takes a newt's-eye view of politics. He doesn't think there is anything that can be called high politics. It's all low politics. It starts in the wards and the districts and it never changes. The point about political reporting, in Breslin's view, is never to forget that.

The President of the United States, no matter who he may be, had to sell himself again and again to get there. The thing to do is to remember that, too. The way it was in Queens when Breslin was a kid is the way it is. Everywhere and forever.

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HE WENT ON to talk about Henry Kissinger, putting his hand on the hot wire, as usual. "I don't think there's a guy in this country who knows as little about Americans as this guy, and that's trouble. I don't care what his policies are in Vietnam or Cambodia or the Middle East. I worry about the fact that he has nothing to do with this country. He has nothing in common with the hardhats and the bartenders and the cops in Queens — the guys that he is sending into battle."

How true that is, I thought. Our Secretary of State was born in Germany and brought up in Washington Heights of this city, on which he firmly turned his back from the very beginning. He aligned himself with the Harvard College-Nelson Rockefeller axis for the rest of his life, until he scored big under Nixon. To this day, Henry's game is not football or baseball, but soccer.

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THE TABLE agreed, on my nomination, that the tabloid *Daily News* had more to do with what is going on in this city and this country than the grand grey magnificence of *The New York Times*.

Breslin said, "This town is made up of guys from Odessa and Galway and San Juan. *The Times* has nothing in common with any of them. It shows. The Polish Jews have nothing in common with the Sulzbergers and their like who came over in 1848, with a heavy German cultural history behind them. The Polish Jews remember massacres, not Goethe!"