

## **Adlai Stevenson III shakes out the family scrapbook for new book**

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Adlai Stevenson III says his legendary family has political ties to the state's most famous son of all, Abraham Lincoln.

"There might never have been a President Lincoln without Great Great Grandfather Jesse Fell," said Stevenson, speaking recently inside the Adlai Stevenson Center on Democracy near Libertyville.

Stevenson, 78, chairs the center, based at his parents' farmhouse. Writings on Lincoln and Fell are in his new book, "The Black Book," which combines Stevenson's own outlook on modern politics with wisdom gleaned from the family scrapbook.

"(The scrapbook) was stuffed with The Guv's and Adlai I's voluminous notes jotted on memos, place cards, napkins, whatever was at hand," Stevenson writes in an introduction.

His volume is called, "The Black Book" after the binder that held the family's notes and clippings and fell to his father, Adlai II, known in the family as "The Guv."

Adlai II was elected governor of Illinois in 1948 and twice drafted in the 1950s for unsuccessful runs for president against Dwight Eisenhower, a popular hero of World War II. His grandfather, Adlai I, was vice president under Grover Cleveland, 1893-1897.

Fell - an earlier ancestor whose life overlapped Adlai I's - was Lincoln's political sponsor. It was Fell's idea to stage debates, according to an account by Adlai I, although when they were first suggested, Stephen A. Douglas said no.

Eventually in 1858, Douglas and Lincoln held their famous series of debates as they campaigned for the U.S. Senate seat from Illinois. The fame these brought Lincoln - even though he lost the Senate race to Douglas - made it possible for him to run for president in 1860.

At the end of the chapter on Lincoln is an "autobiographical sketch" that Lincoln wrote at the request of Fell, who used it to promote Lincoln's candidacy for president. This manuscript was in the Fell family until 1947 when it was given to the Library of Congress.

"The Black Book" was privately published by the Stevenson family as a gift to Adlai III and is available for purchase at [Adlai3.com](http://Adlai3.com) and [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).

"I've talked to several publishers," said Stevenson. "They say, 'What is it - memoir, history, biography? It doesn't fit. What is the core audience?'"

One wanted me to rewrite it. If I rewrite it, it won't be the black book."

Stevenson, who currently runs a small investment management company focused on China, was an Illinois senator from 1970 to 1981 and ran unsuccessfully for governor in 1982 and 1986. Much of his work in Asia has been with not-for-profits.

He thinks "The Black Book" offers a contrast between the political values of the past and the present.

He believes that money has largely corrupted politics, although he added a preface to the book heralding the election of President Barack Obama - even though the presidential campaign last cycle cost \$2 billion.

"My father ran for governor from this home," Stevenson said. "He was a New Deal bureaucrat. The campaign cost \$157,000, and then he reformed state government. They didn't pay to play. They sacrificed to serve.

"Four years later he was nominated to run for president without any primary. He didn't spend a penny," he said.

The Stevenson Center for Democracy was created to try to find answers to the challenges democracy faces, such as how people in the so-called "information age" can be educated about complex issues.

"I am trying to contrast the past that created the country and this money-drenched politics, which I'm afraid is undermining it," he said.

The campaigns are too long, based on slogans and "likability" and fundraising is dependent on polls, Stevenson said.

Politics were more civil even during his own decade in the U.S. Senate, said Stevenson, noting that he and the former Sen. Charles Percy, a Republican (and who turns 90 on Sunday, Sept. 27), were considered moderates and "saw eye to eye."

While Stevenson loved being in the Senate, he really wanted to be governor of Illinois.

"I was influenced by my father," he says. "Also, to get your hands on the levers and make a difference in a state that had been very good to us for a long time."

Stevenson put many of his own political thoughts in the book. He believes "you don't win wars unless it's a great war of national defense like World War II," and he's a great supporter of the United Nations.

And he admits "The Black Book" draws from a few other sources, especially a book written by his great grandfather, Adlai I, who he notes has been labeled "a creative historian."

But was the country better off when candidates were chosen by party leaders rather than through primaries and caucuses?

"Anything's better than what we have now," Stevenson said. "That's how Abraham Lincoln was picked. Every great President was a candidate of the organization.

"I'm supporting conventions, not the backroom. At my first Democratic convention in 1948 the politicians were challenged by a young mayor of Minnesota (Hubert Humphrey) to do their duty and adopt a Civil Rights policy. And they did."

### **Odds and ends from 'The Black Book'**

- "Lincoln was often the despair of his generals because of his lenient treatment of soldiers absent without leave. He explained, 'If the good Lord has given a man a cowardly pair of legs, it is hard to keep them from running away with him.'"
- Mark Twain wrote a poem about the name Adlai (correct pronunciation, "Ad-lay") in reference to Adlai Stevenson I, U.S. vice president:

"Philologists sweat and lexicographers bray,

Yet the best they can do is to call him Ad-Lay.

But at longshoremen's picnics, where accents are high,

Fair Harvard's not present, so they call him Ad-Lie."

- The name Adlai came from the Old Testament. Adlai was the father of Shaphat, who oversaw King David's flocks.
- The father of Adlai Stevenson II was Lewis Green Stevenson, who not only did not carry the famous given name, he also never held an elected office. He was, however, appointed Illinois Secretary of State 1914-1917.
- Stories about Adlai Stevenson II, for whom shoes with holes worn in the soles became a symbol during his presidential campaign, are legion. "The wit was spontaneous," said his son. "I think it was because he was totally innocent. He said things that were not very politic. A woman came up to him in an elevator and said, 'Every thinking person in the country will vote for you.' And he responded: 'That's not enough, I need a majority.'"
- Shooting commercials for Adlai II's presidential campaign - some of them staged at the farmhouse - were often a trial for the crew, said his son. "He used to get very impatient. The crew was filming him commuting to Chicago (from a North Shore train station). They would say 'One more time.' And he just kept going."

- "The governorship can be used as a platform to comment on national interests," says Adlai III. "My father did. People came from all over the world to meet this unusual product of the prairie and the regular Democratic organization. He was a diplomat, knowledgeable about international affairs and architect of the United Nations, which we need more than ever."

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