

Americanism Educational League
Keeping the Flame



In the Spirit of
WALTER KNOTT

The wisdom of John Adams combined with the rough and ready energy of the American West made the American character: a way of life Walter Knott wanted to pass to new generations. Result: The Americanism Educational League

by William E. Saracino

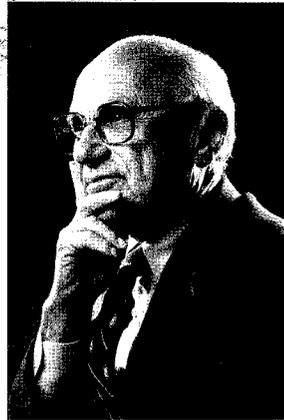
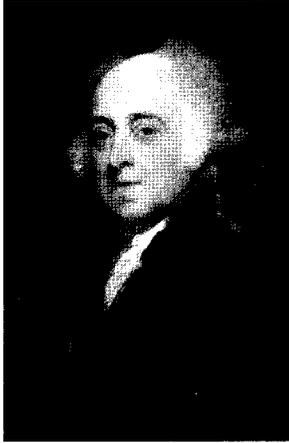
Back in the day when I was a sophomore in high school (okay, for the really nosy it was 1965), I entered a “free enterprise slogan contest” run by something called the Americanism Educational League (AEL). AEL was giving cash awards to the best slogans promoting free enterprise that could fit on a bumper sticker. Though I don’t remember my entry, I do remember being one of the winners. This entitled me to venture down to the Knott’s Berry Farm Independence Hall replica, there to receive a check for the then-princely amount of \$50.00 from one of AEL’s founding

fathers, none other than Walter Knott himself. Fast forward to 2005 when a friend tells me that a patriotism-centered organization was looking for an executive director. It turned out to be my old friend the Americanism Educational League, and I have been its E.D. ever since.

AEL was founded in 1927 by a group of businessmen, including Walter Knott, who were troubled by the spread of communism, fascism, and totalitarianism. They believed that to pre-

William E. Saracino is a member of the California Political Review editorial board and serves as a consultant to the Americanism Educational League.

IN CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.
 The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America.



America's Founding and such towering leaders as Adams and Friedman inspire and inform The Americanism Educational League and its work.

serve and promote our country's future, America's young people should be educated about the political, social, and economic values that made America free and strong. Since 1927, AEL's mission statement has remained the same: "to instill citizenship and patriotism in America's youth." AEL carries out that mission through programs aimed at schools, students, and teachers. All of its programs are offered free of charge. I thought a brief rundown might whet the interest of *CPR* readers. (For a full listing of AEL's programs, see: www.americanism.org.)

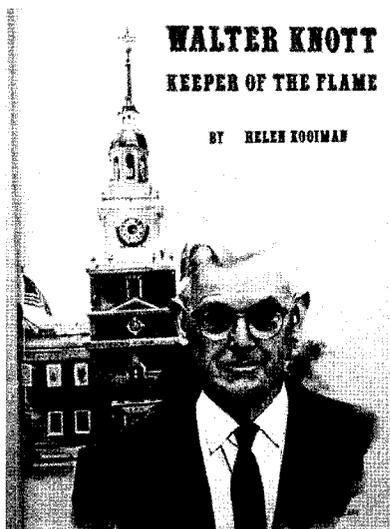
AEL's oldest program is a lending library, consisting now of more than 150 DVD titles on America's history and core values. Selections include Milton Friedman's brilliant defense of free enterprise, "Free to Choose," biographies of the

Founding Fathers, presidents, inventors, and explorers, critiques of socialism and centrally-planned economics, and John Stossel's series on the follies of big government. The DVDs are viewed by thousands of students each year.

Approaching its 30th birthday is AEL's collegiate essay contest. Trustees choose a timely topic each year – 2008's was the Supreme Court's *Kelo* decision; in 2009 it was government-run vs. private health care. With a total prize purse of \$15,000, 300 to 400 entries are received annually from a broad cross-section of schools, including some of the most prestigious colleges in the country. Many professors incorporate AEL's essay contest topic into their annual lesson plans. In fact the winner of the 2008 contest was encouraged to enter by her professor, who had been a winner of this contest in the 1990s. In partnership with California State University, Northridge, (CSUN), AEL co-sponsors annual student debates. The debate topic is the same as that year's AEL's essay contest, ensuring that some of the best student minds in Southern California will explore, research, and discuss our essay contest topic.

The Student Citizenship Award is aimed at elementary and middle schools. It rewards students for being active in their schools, communities, and families, encourages them to learn more about American history and provides them with a valuable "extra curricular activity" to include on their high school and college applications. Strong citizens make a strong country, and this program promotes that.

Cognizant of tight budgets, especially among private, charter, home, and magnet schools, AEL looks for unique educational materials to place in their libraries. The first effort involved a book, *The Heritage Guide to the Constitution*. Published by the Heritage Foundation, it is edited by former Attorney General Ed Meese with contributions from



more than 100 Constitutional scholars. The current item in this project is a film biography of President Ronald Reagan: "Ronald Reagan, Rendezvous with Destiny." Future offerings in the pipeline include the HBO film series adaptation of David McCullough's brilliant biography, *John Adams*, and classic free market economic texts by Frederick Bastiat and Friedrich von Hayek.

One of AEL's newer programs focuses on outstanding high school level civics, history, and American values teachers. The "Outstanding Teacher Award" recognizes the hard and diligent work of those dedicated individuals on the front lines, imparting knowledge about America to the nation's young people.

The League's "Thomas Paine Award" annually rewards excellence in collegiate level investigative journalism. Open to all college students (not just journalism majors), the award is given to the author of an article that has been published in a collegiate newspaper and/or on the Internet. Also on the college level, AEL supports Pepperdine University's "Youth Citizenship Seminar." Held each summer, the youth seminars bring several

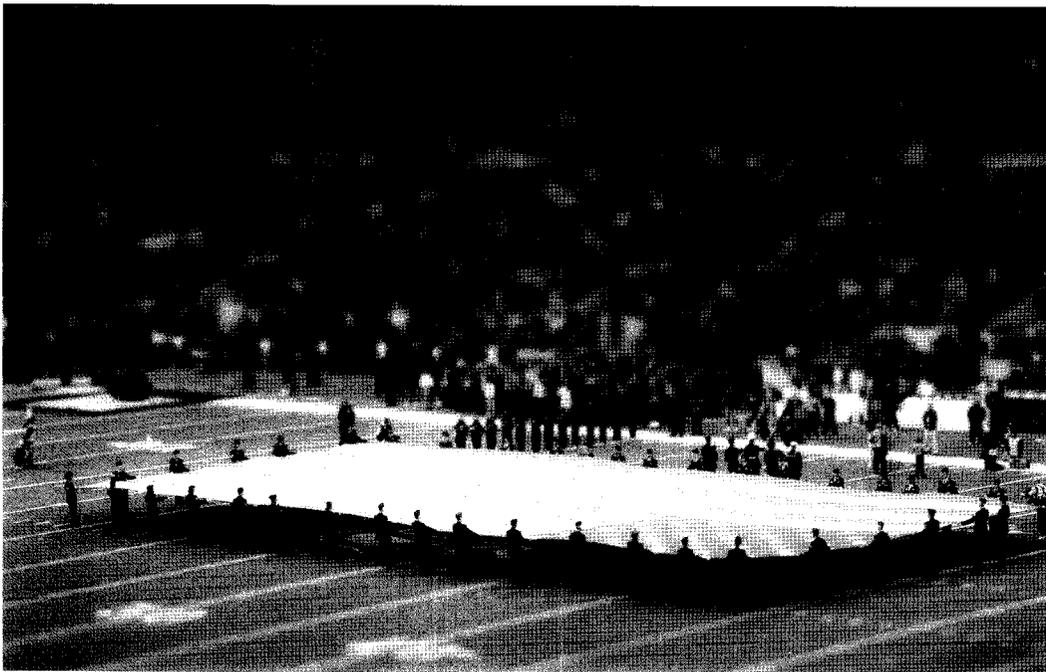
hundred high school students to Pepperdine's Malibu campus to study American history and discuss current political events.

Lead by an AEL "Outstanding Teacher" winner, the "First Job Interview" program prepares high school students for their first step into the working world. The program covers proper attire, attitude, communication, resume preparation, and real life examples of what to do – and not do. The final segment puts students through a mock job interview conducted by local business owners.

Finally, AEL's "Young Entrepreneur Award" recognizes and rewards entrepreneurs of high school and college age who have demonstrated a capacity for coming up with creative ideas and for taking the kind of responsible risks good entrepreneurs must show the gumption to take.

All of these programs and more are covered in AEL's quarterly newsletter and on the website. After reading the scope of all AEL does, I hope readers will appreciate my enthusiasm for this unique organization. Instilling "citizenship and patriotism in America's youth" is vital to the survival of the America we know. AEL is doing its part. I hope *California Political Review's* readers will visit us at www.americanism.org, and decide they want to help.

CPR



AEL teaches young people the true meaning of American patriotism.



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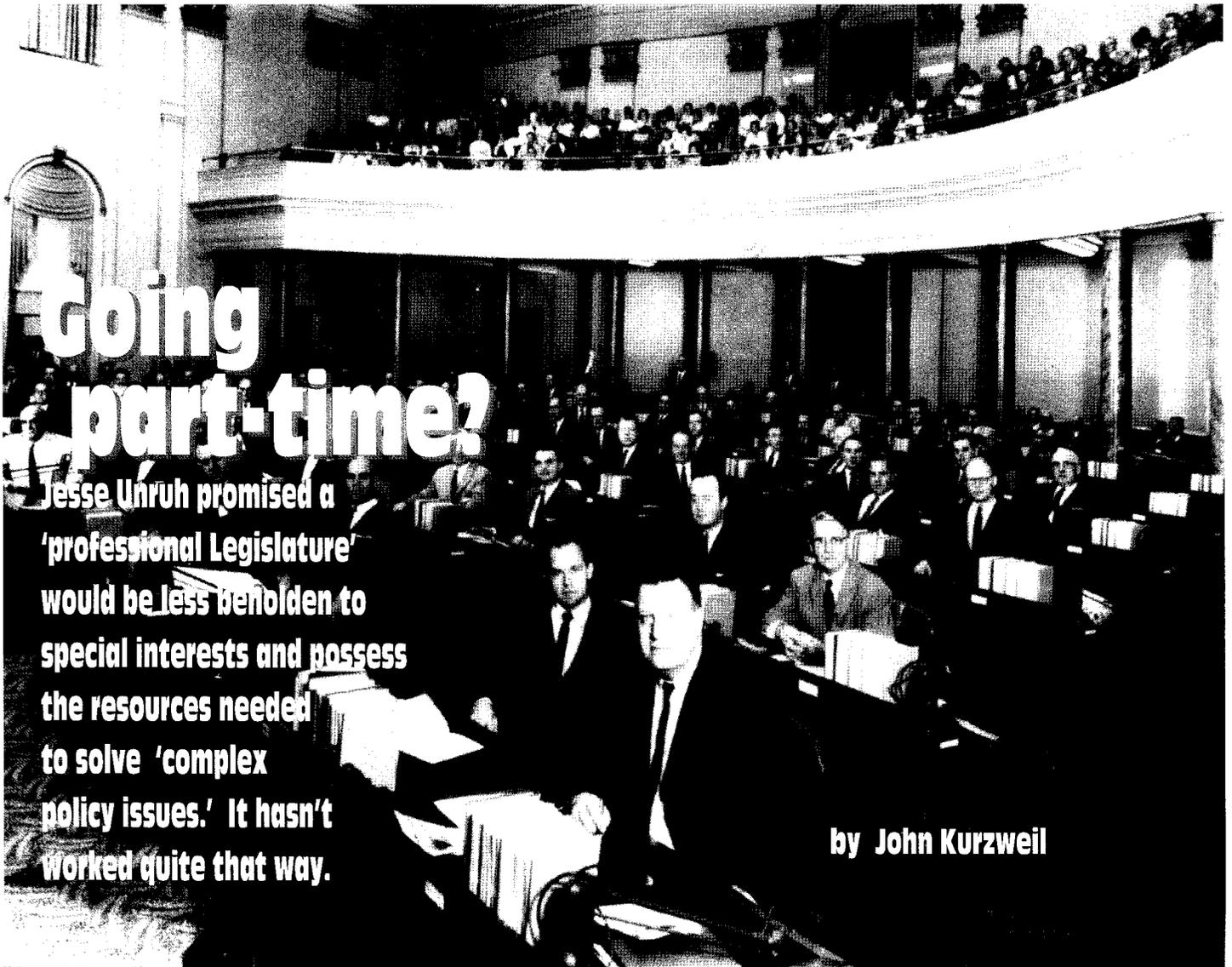
John Kurzweil

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Dysfunctional institution



Going part-time?

Jesse Unruh promised a 'professional Legislature' would be less beholden to special interests and possess the resources needed to solve 'complex policy issues.' It hasn't worked quite that way.

by John Kurzweil

The California Assembly, 1963-64 session. Seated, immediate foreground, is Speaker Jesse Unruh, nicknamed 'Big Daddy.'

Californians continue to show themselves far more conservative than liberal politicians, pressure groups, and the media would have us believe. In our supposedly "left-wing" state, nearly three-fourths of respondents (72 percent) last September told pollsters from the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) that "the state is heading in the wrong direction." In case anyone is unsure about that direction, it is sharply left. As Hector Barajas of the California Republican

Party put it two years ago: "... for the past 12 [now 14] years, Democrats have controlled both houses of the state Legislature. They have been in complete control of setting the legislative agenda and appointing the membership of every legislative committee, including those that deal with health care; transportation; education; aging; public safety; *and* budget, taxes, and revenue. We have arrived at today's budget crisis under decades of legislative control by the

John Kurzweil is California Political Review's editor.