

## QuOTeD – The Question of the Day Podcast

Transcript for episode: “To Persist”

URL: [QuestionPodcast.com/persistence](http://QuestionPodcast.com/persistence)

Sen. Paul Wellstone: Most of my politics, honest to goodness, I think comes from people who should be famous, but hardly anybody in the country knows their name.

Faith Kidder: We persisted. And I think that true persistence isn't necessarily pushy but it can be. But it's more just like not willing to give up. It's way different than stubbornness. It's more just like, this is what we're going to do.

Rebekah Smith (Host): You're listening to QuOTeD, The Question of the Day Podcast. I am Rebekah Smith. This is where we ask one question and then see where the conversation goes. In this episode we're talking about persistence.

Faith Kidder: The difference between the things working and the things not working out is... It's such a fine line.

Looking more at what it is that you believe about the situation than about what other people think. I think that's one of the keys to persistence. And I think that's what the Kucinich campaign was about. We believed in what we were doing. We didn't care about what anybody else thought.

So it all worked out, just as it should in the end.

[Music]

When you ran and got your microphone I was talking about how I had gotten a rejection letter back when I was a young single mother.

The big thing was the housing.

It was one of those government programs that was meant to help poor helpless single mothers figure out what they wanted to do with their life. You got career counseling and support and all that stuff. But I didn't need any of that 'cause I was already on track. I knew what I was doing and I had already applied to the University of Minnesota Nursing Program. So I was doing sciences and all sorts of classes that required a lot of studying. So I would get home from work at 11 o'clock at night and study until two in the morning and get up at six and get my kid ready for school. And then I would go to classes and then I would go to work at three. And then I would get him and take him home.

So when they saw me I was just a total basket case.

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They had just seen me when I was operating on three hours of sleep for two weeks straight. And they told me that I was disorganized, scattered and a poor candidate for ever being successful.

It was getting dark and I rose up from my stupor of just crying and having this all-out temper tantrum. And then I realized that they were wrong.

I was working full time, going to school, didn't own a car, raising a kid and had a pretty high GPA for somebody who hadn't finished much past ninth grade. And I was doing all this stuff. I didn't even own a car at the time. I had to bus everywhere.

They obviously hadn't looked at any of that. They just saw me in front of them sleep deprived babbling on about all my dental problems, which I did. And they probably just thought, "This lady is a raving lunatic!" And I can come off like that sometimes. But for the first time in my life I remember realizing that these people had it totally wrong. That they were wrong. You can't be scattered and disorganized and pull that kind of lifestyle off for a long time and actually be successful at it. I mean there was just no way that you could look at what I was doing and not go, "They were wrong!" I mean I knew they were wrong about me.

So that's what I think of persistence. I think it's really the willingness to believe and to follow your heart on things. And listen to your heart more than you listen to external or the voices that tell you that you're wrong or that this is impossible. So much is possible.

RJS: That was my friend Faith, Ms. Kidder. I know Faith from the Minnesota for Kucinich campaign.

FK: Well it was right after Wellstone died that I found out about Dennis Kucinich. It felt like an extension of...

Wellstone: We all do better when we all do better. (Smith, Jerry.)

FK: We all do better when we all do better.

Wellstone: To me the definition of community is "We all do better when we all do better." Whatever happened to community? (Smith, Jerry.)

FK: The night that Dennis Kucinich got one percent of the Democratic caucus in Iowa I was totally devastated and I thought, you know, I think we're done. And the next night we had a meeting here in Minneapolis so I drove back from Iowa. And I pulled into the Hmong Family Center

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we're we used to have our meetings and there wasn't a parking space. And I thought, "I wonder what's going on there tonight?" [Laughs] Oh my gosh, talk about persistence. This is like amazing. It was the largest meeting that we had ever had. [Laughing] And everybody said, "We're not done yet." [Laughing] We don't want to give this up.

RJS: If you like a good coincidence like I do, you're going to find plenty of them here. I'll try to point them out as we go along, starting with the late Senator from Minnesota, Paul Wellstone.

Brian Harmon: There was a memorial garden that was there commemorating Paul Wellstone who did his graduate and PhD work at University of North Carolina. So we were struck by that as we were walking by and did see a little plaque right next to that garden that commemorated both him and his wife Sheila. You talk about connections between the two places. John Biewen who we were talking about earlier grew up in Minnesota. Rachel Seidelman who runs the Southern Oral History Program down there spent...

RJS: It's not Seidelman, it's Seidman.

BJH: My apologies, Rachel Seidman. Rachel Seidman who runs the Southern Oral History Program, spent I believe like 12 years in Minnesota. So it's kind of interesting. We kept on running into these various Minnesota connections while we were in North Carolina.

RJS: I was in the bedroom ironing some shirts for Brian and listening to some interviews from the oral history collection at the University of North Carolina. And my ears perked up when I heard someone say

Arlene Dunn The most...

RJS The most...

AD public building...

RJS public building...

AD in the state of Arkansas...

RJS in the state of Arkansas...

AD that's owned by the public, is now a private club.

RJS was now a private club.

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The woman's voice I heard was that of Arlene Dunn, who was talking about her experience as a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. She was explaining how after the Civil Rights Bill passed in 1964, some restaurants tried to get around the public accommodations act by claiming to be a private club. As such, business would be exempt from the new law that said that services could not be denied based on race, color, religion or national origin.

In the following piece, Dunn and her political cohort Nancy Stoller talk about how the cafeteria at the state capitol in Arkansas tried a similar stunt. I call the piece "1964 - Do Something".

BJH: So as you're dealing with these oral history tapes, how did you deal with some of the concerns about the various quality, because....

### 1964 Do Something

Nancy Stoller: The NAACP had already challenged the segregation and the Public Accommodations Acts.

AD: The cafeteria in the basement of the Capitol building

NS: The cafeteria in the statehouse was segregated.

AD: The most public building in the state of Arkansas that's owned by the public was now a private club. That was their way of getting around the new law.

NS: But it was just languishing in court. Nothing was happening. Nothing was happening.

AD: In 1964 the Civil Rights Bill or the Public Accommodations bill was passed. And that went into effect on January 1 of 1965. On January 1 of 1965 or probably starting in December, lots of restaurants put up signs and suddenly became private clubs.

[Sound effect: Telephone ringing. Receiver is picked up.]

NS: Do something.

AD: Like many capitol buildings the basement is this very large open rotunda with a lot of marble...

NS: Do something.

AD: There was this quite narrow hallway to enter the cafeteria. We were walking down the rotunda and then we turned the corner to go in.

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[Sound effect: Keys rustling.]

And the guard stood up immediately and said, “Well you can’t eat here. This is a private club.” We said, “Well, we just ate here yesterday. Don’t you remember us?” He was of course very flustered. He was an old guy, probably a retired cop. I don’t know what he was. But he was quite flustered by this whole situation.

[Sound effect: Footsteps]

Finally the manager out and tried to reason with us. The Secretary of State actually came down to talk to us. He’s trying to tell us that they don’t really own this cafeteria that some company that’s leasing this piece of property and we should talk to them. And they thought that we would just turn around and leave. And we did not.

[Sound effect: Cash register]

NS: We can’t just let them get away with this. So we recruited more people and we came back the second day.

AD: In the meantime, you know we came at about 11:30 and now, now people are started to come down really wanting to eat. And some people, the first people that came down started to pull out their driver’s license or their business card or something saying, “I’m a member! I’m a member!” And they let a few people in.

[Sound effect: Cash register]

NS: Do something!

AD: But then they just stopped the whole thing because it was clear that we were not going to leave. Then they closed the doors to the cafeteria which were glass doors so we could see through what was happening in there. As the Secretary of State and the manager, they’re all just trying to talk us out of just walking... they’re trying to push us back a little bit and we’re just not going anywhere. We see a line of Arkansas state police behind the doors.

NS: The next thing we knew these state troopers come down the stairs and start beating the shit out of us and dragging us up the steps and throwing us out onto the steps of the capitol.

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AD: I think many of us thought, well okay, the next step is that we'll be arrested. You know we were all expecting to be arrested. This is, you know, what we're expecting to happen. But instead what happened is that they came out and they started pushing us and shoving us out of the corridor, shoving us to the floor, beating us with billy clubs. Pretty brutal with us. They were just trying to get us out. They kept pushing us all the way down this marble floor down to the marble staircase. When we got that far we did leave. So we left. Some people were hurt enough to have to go to the hospital.

NS: We felt we had to keep coming back. It was kind of scary.

AD: So we went back the next day with more people, maybe 20 or 25 people.

NS: They tell us to leave. You're going to be dispersed if you don't disperse yourself.

AD: You really can't come in here. You know you can't come in here. So try to be reasonable and leave. And we said, we're just not.

And on the third day, they were even more prepared. They had tear gas canisters with them. This is kind of like taking a whole double packet of hot mustard in a Chinese restaurant and just swallowing it. It's really painful and very uncomfortable. By the end of the week they closed the cafeteria. They would rather close the cafeteria than serve people of color. That was the message there.

So we decided to sue the state and said you can't close this cafeteria and you can't deny people to eat in this cafeteria. The NAACP legal defense fund prosecuted the case for us. Both Nancy and I testified. We got accused of being outside agitators. Nancy was from Virginia and she pulled out her quite southern accent to say where she was from and that kind of threw them.

Eventually the cafeteria was opened again.

NS: If it hadn't been for the direct action it wouldn't have happened. It would have just languished and languished and languished because somebody had to push it.

AD: In 1979 I was working for a little regional airline in Fayetteville Arkansas and I needed to go talk to the director of economic development for the state. We met for a little while and he said, "Why don't we go have some lunch?" We went over to the cafeteria in the basement of the

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capitol building. Even b 1979 Black people and White people were eating at the same table and talking to each other.

RJS: So that was one of three pieces that I made for the Sonic South event held by the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina. The idea was to put together something using interviews from their oral history archives. The theme was persistence and the works were supposed to feature women's voices.

If you happen to be reading the newsletter, you know that Brian and I made the trip to Chapel Hill to attend the Sonic South listening session where two of my pieces were played.

RJS: When was it, Brian?

BJH: May of this year.

RJS: I never imagined that we would actually go down there for the event but ..

BJH Yeah I thought let's go.

RJS: So it was fun to walk around campus.

BJH: One of the pieces had to deal with a worker's strike that had happened at the campus in the late 60's. So it made it kind of fun when we were wandering around in those spaces and in those buildings and you were saying, "Oh, yeah, this is the building where they used to go into... It sort of gave those places a sense of meaning that you wouldn't have had had you delved into those archives and really got to know a lot about what had gone on and had those people's voices in your head and all of that.

RJS: So you're talking about the cafeteria worker's strike in 19... I think it's '68. We're... Let's see. It's 2018 and it's been 50 years.

BJH The Pine Room that a lot of those people serviced is now gone. It was in the basement of this building that has now been turned into offices. And we were even kind of asking a couple of people about it who were down there and they didn't really have much recollection of any of it.

RJS It's so funny too because I'm like what? How can you not know? I was really expecting there to be a plaque. Some stone. Something that commemorated it. Maybe there's something but I didn't not see anything that said Pine Room.

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BJH And we did look for it.

RJS: We also got to see Manning Hall, which is where the Black Student's Movement was set up. And the strikers would go... It was right across the way of the cafeteria. The women, mainly women, I think, who worked in the cafeteria, would meet with the Black students that were supporting the strike.

So what we're going to hear in this next piece that I called "Ms. Smith and Ms. Brooks of the Pine Room" is the build up to the strike. We're first going to hear from Elizabeth Brooks followed by Mary Smith. The audio recording for her was a little bit rough, but I kind of like to work with what's given. And when you're working with oral histories, sometimes the quality of the tape isn't quite as good as you might have hoped. So, in a couple of cases I did insert my voice to provide some clarity. I hope that's not too distracting. We also very briefly hear from Mr. Ashley Davis. So there are three people in this piece, although I did use two different interviews that were done with Ms. Brooks. With that, here's Part I.

### Ms. Smith and Ms. Brooks of the Pine Room

Elizabeth Brooks: I have nine children. I had gone to work because my baby had started kindergarten and all the children was in school. So that really was my first real job.

Mary Smith: I was cooking. On my application I was listed as a dishwasher. They was paying me as a dishwasher but I was cooking every day a meal for the night.

EB: This started just among say, Mary Smith, Ester Jeffers, Elsie Davis, Sara Parker and myself. We were the second shift that worked in the Pine Room.

Ashley Davis: Guys who just got out of prison and stuff, hired as managers.

MS: And they don't know anything. Some of them had told me, "Well, Mary, what is that?" Be something just simple as cheese ravioli. Didn't even know what it is.

AD: Ms. Smith, I think, was ordering stuff. She was generally doing managing. What was happening was these ladies were now managing the cafeteria system, but none of them were made managers.



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- EB: Mary was like a mother to the group in the Pine Room. She had been employed there longer than any of us.
- AD: And they were making people do all kinds of stuff. Like they would make you come to work and work four hours in the morning – say from six to ten – split your day and then you would go back to work from two to six. Now that’s an eight-hour day, sure. But what do you do from ten to two?
- EB: There were so many of the worker’s there that had been there for two and three years that hadn’t been on permanent payroll.
- When I told them that I was going to see him about getting on permanent payroll they were standing there and shaking and they said, “You gonna get fired. You’re going to go up those steps and mess with Mr. Prillman.” Oh they were just beside themselves about it.
- We put all our workers on permanent payroll, oh he just done the works.
- Then as we got a little more persistent, he began to make promises.
- MS: Now even the management at the time and the way we’d been treated, I still respected and like them but I was worried. Oh I just hate to have to say this about this person or that... And I worried about that a lot
- EB: I just always ask questions, and try to find out why. I had to have an answer.
- The firing of one of the employees for no reason at all.
- Doris Ann Stevens, she was from Durham. She refused to lift heavy trays of dishes to the conveyer belt, which was real high. None of us had any intentions of lifting those trays of dishes.
- Each week our checks were being shortened and nothing had been done about it.
- MS: Sometimes they would be short 13, 14 dollars. You know they would just give them any kind of hassle.
- (RJS voiceover) You’ve got enough to get drunk on.
- You know they would just pass it off, everything you tried to talk to them about.

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EB: We first went to our supervisor and he told us it was coming from the payroll department. We made several individual visits to the payroll department.

They kind of, you know, made you feel real low. Just like you really didn't know what you were talking about or what you were doing.

He wrote it down and promised that we would hear something in a while. And we never did hear anything from there.

MS: (RJS voiceover) We didn't know anything about unions then.

EB: Preston Dobbins advised us to go as a group and ask for a meeting as a group.

We were getting a little fed up and we were getting a little angry too.

He met me around there at the timeclock and he pointed his finger in my face and he told me, he says, "I'm not ever going to ask you to do anything else. From now on, I'm going to tell you to do it."

We started to get together.

The Black Students had a place in Manning Hall waiting. They helped us get our list of grievances back together.

It may have been about three to four hundred students. They took trays as they come in and they just began to bang on the counter. Mr. White was the only manager or supervisor in the building and it almost frightened him to death. He looked at us and said, "What in the world is going on. So somebody said, "We on strike." So he says, "Mary Smith! Mary! Come back here to the office I want to talk to you." So I told him that you can't talk to Mary in the office. You'll have to talk to all of us. He called in Mr. Prillman who was the head director. He has a real heavy voice and I think that's one of the reasons that so many employees was frightened by him. So he came in there and he yelled out, "Mary Smith! Mary Smith! I want to speak to you." I told him, I says, "Well I'm sorry you can't speak to Mary Smith. You'll have to speak to the group." "Mary!" He called again. So then she told him she said, "Mr. Prillman, we're a group now and so you have to talk to all of us." So he turned around and he called Branch from Raleigh. Branch finally came in and he said, "Well what do you all want?" So we told him, we said, "We want a meeting." And he so he says, "Well, we'll have a meeting."

RJS: Some proof.

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- BJH: Proof of what?
- RJS: Read that.
- BJH: “He seemed poised to begin an academic career that would focus on finding practical solutions to policy problems. Yet Wellstone was hardly pursuing a conventional path on the road to becoming a professor. He was teaching courses to undergraduates and frequently involved them in protests.”
- RJS: It was natural to wonder whether Paul Wellstone would have been involved. And sure enough I found this in a book, it’s called *Paul Wellstone: The Life of a Passionate Progressive*, by Bill Loffy. Or Lofy. L-O-F-Y.
- Zach: I love this book. This book is a wonderful book. It excited me to read it from cover to cover. I think Bill has a wonderful voice as a writer.
- BJH: “In addition, Wellstone became increasingly involved in local organizing drives, including a volatile strike involving the university’s cafeteria workers. Since childhood, Wellstone had witnessed the stigmatization facing his mother and other cafeteria workers, and when the workers at Lenoir Hall, UNC’s main dining hall, went on strike after a wage dispute, he had an opportunity to stand up for their rights. At first, he tried to organize a boycott of the hall. When that effort failed, he tried a Saul Alinsky tactic. ‘There was a rule that said you had to leave the cafeteria,’ Wellstone later recalled. ‘So we would take our sweet time going through the line, sit at the tables, and just block the place up.’”
- Cool.
- RJS: Senator Wellstone.
- Wellstone: My father, the Jewish immigrant from Ukraine fled persecution from Russia and really emphasized to me the importance of human rights. And my mother, Mincha Danishevsky (sp) was a cafeteria worker. We didn’t have that much from. So from her it was sort of the whole focus on people who struggle to make ends meet and the importance of trying to be there with low and moderate income, working people. That was really important. And the second thing would be of being a student at the University of North Carolina at exactly the right time with the explosion of the Civil Rights movement and then the anti-poverty work, then the anti-Vietnam War movement. All of that was my – if you will – baptism to grassroots activism and to grassroots leadership.

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RJS: Elizabeth Brooks.

EB: There were lots of White supporters. Really I can't supply you with names because I have forgotten. There were so many that was real active and they worked real close with the Black Students also. One thing, they didn't jump in and try to make decisions. They offered their help and they let us decide in what way we could use it or need it and we appreciated this. And we had lots of the White students that were real active. Professors too.

Wellstone: Before I became a United States senator, it was 20 years in Minnesota teaching and community organizing. I did a lot of community organizing and through the community organizing work I have seen the capacity of regular people, ordinary citizens, which I mean in a positive way, to be their own leaders.

RJS: Bill Lofy.

Bill Lofy “...at this time the civil rights movement is exploding all around him. And Wellstone was learning the tricks of the organizing trade. He was learning about direct action and justice issues. Well he wasn't accepted into the University Of North Carolina's PhD program. His GRE scores were abysmal. It later turned out that he had a learning disability that prevented him from testing well. But see now, for Wellstone this was a clear case of injustice and it was an opportunity for him to apply the lessons that he had been learning and these justice struggles he had been watching to his own life. So he staged a sit-in. That was the only logical thing for him to do. He felt this was unjust and he was going to stage a sit-in in the dean's office and that is exactly what he did. The dean ended up reversing his decision, let Wellstone in. He finished his PhD at the age of 24 years old.”

RJS: So we just heard two pieces that touched on cafeterias. There was the segregated cafeteria post-Civil Rights Act at the Arkansas State Capitol. And then there was the cafeteria worker's strike at UNC. And when Leoneda Inge from North Carolina Public Radio asked me about my interest in the topic, I'm afraid I didn't have a very smart answer. It was just a coincidence. As for Wellstone's mother having been a cafeteria worker, I wanted to say that it was also a notable twist of fate. But it's probably more accurate to say that it was an influence.

Next up is Part II of Ms. Smith and Ms. Brooks of the Pine Room. In Part I we heard about the build up to the cafeteria worker's strike. Basically they were not getting paid what they were supposed to be getting paid.

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They weren't getting the benefits they were supposed to be getting. After so many days they should have been put on permanent payroll and they never were. Years would go by and nobody was on permanent payroll. And of course they were also shorting their checks and all of this stuff. What happens in this story is people are just plugging along like this. And then they hire Elizabeth Brooks who is the mother of nine, her last kid is finally in school so she takes a job. But the thing is, Brooks is not the sort to just suck it up.

EB: I have been raised that you do you say. My father was just real strict. If he promised you anything or he was supposed to do it, he'd done it. And if someone promised him something, he just didn't stop until he got it or he would find out why. And I think maybe some of this came from there.

RJS: Everybody was quite nervous about her taking a stand. They were afraid she was going to get fired. They were afraid they were going to get fired. After a little organizing, learning about unions, getting some support from the Black Students Movement as well as other students, they finally got management to agree to a meeting.

Part II begins with a list of their demands.

EB: The firing of Prillman. The twenty cents pay raise the rehiring of Dorris Ann Stevens. At the same time we wanted job descriptions. Job titles. We asked to have name pins. Because supervisors and managers would just walk in and blast out our name all over the place, Elizabeth, Ester, what may. So we asked for tags because if we had to them Mr. Prillman then we'd like to be Mrs. Brooks, Ms. Smith or whoever. We also wanted our back time pay.

MS: I just wanted somebody to know it was serious. To me it was really serious.

EB: Well at the time we didn't actually call it a strike. We had just planned it for that one day. We thought that would make them stop and listen to us.

We had workers that had been there for 20 and 25 years. They just thought what we were doing were crazy and we were going to lose our jobs. They just weren't going to have any parts of it.

We would see some of the Black Students each day and they would keep encouraging us.

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Don't back down. Stick to it.

They were polishing shoes. They were just doing anything that come along to raise money.

We had high school students that came over and had rallies. We had other college students from other colleges to come over. There were several just housewives with babies. The mothers would come out and pushing their babies in strollers and caring their babies on their backs and walking that picket line. We had asked for the whole university to go on strike. We would just ask for anything like it was asking for a drink of water. And you know the Black Students were right there encouraging us.

The next day classes began to form out in the open just one right after the other.

We didn't see any reason for National Guards there. So this kind of showed us just the type of people we were dealing with.

MS: You know it was just really frightening to see all those guns of the Chapel Hill policemen. They even clicked those guns one night. They were standing on top of cars. We was afraid but we were determined to go on.

EB: The University ended up paying 180,000 dollars in back time pay. This is really what turned on the other workers that did not participate in the strike. They came to us and apologized. And told us that if you ever decide to do anything else, we're gonna be with you. Because they are the people that got the eight and nine and twelve and thirteen hundred dollars. We didn't really get that much out of it.

AD: This settled the strike. They would make \$1.80 hour, which would become minim wage for the people who worked in the cafeteria.

MS: Then the University didn't have the foodservice that long after. We've really had it hard ever since. (RJS voice over) Sometimes I wonder, is it worse?

EB: Things were just gonna work out dandy. But soon after SAGA Food Company came in, they came in laying off people. I was offered – I think it was four dollars an hour – to talk with the other group and make sure that no one thought about striking.

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- MS: I've been through some hard times since that strike here. You know to stay here.
- EB: They really put the pressure on me. They shifted me around from place to place. They changed my schedule, which I was working that second shift because it benefited my family the best. They knew this. They had ways of finding out.
- MS: I don't know if they were trying to get rid of me or what.
- EB: They had their eyes on me when they came there on Mary Smith.
- Different students and whatever would come in and they would question how's it going, you know. Are you having any problems with this company and this type of thing. And they definitely didn't like me to... They didn't like... "I don't want you talking to nobody on my time." And he meant that. He was just, he just "I'm not going to have it." But I did have an hour for lunch. And I just run right across over to the student union and I talked that whole hour. And the next day there would a whole write up in the paper. And he would have me in the office. "I am not going to tolerate this. I am simply not going to tolerate this.
- MS: Elizabeth Brooks. She was fired. Now she's been selling Amway.
- EB: I have been raised that you do what you say.
- RJS: So what did you think of Chapel Hill?
- BJH: I enjoyed it. It's a very nice old campus. We kind of toured the older part of it. But it's very lovely. Very picturesque. *Silent Sam* was still up at the time. And it was up probably only a couple of more months after we were there. It is a statue that commemorates the University of North Carolina students who fought in the civil war. And people clearly, for reasons perfectly understandable, find it insulting to have this monument remain. And by the way, the thing that's important to note about it, it is in the central part of campus. So when your entering that part of campus, it's the first thing you see. So I think that's the other thing that played into the fact that people were upset about it. And within a couple of months it was taken down forcefully by protesters.
- RJS: The first time I had ever heard about Silent Sam was on the podcast called press record where they use oral history clips. And it's produced by the Southern Oral History Program. So I would check that out at S-O...

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BJH: SOHP.org

RJS: So yes, we saw Silent Sam. So there were a lot of sidewalk messages around campus. So you could tell something was going on.

Wellstone: The change in our country comes from the grassroots and the most important thing is that people become their own leaders, speak for themselves. Advocate for themselves. I think that's the best of leadership development.

BL: ...in the summer of 2002 the big issue was not Iraq. The big issue was Enron. And the Democrats were feeling really good about the way the campaign was going and for Paul Wellstone, boy there is no better topic to be running on than the issue of corporate accountability because he was one of the most outspoken watchdogs on that issue. So the terms of the campaign were very much on Democrats' favor. But of course to the lead up to the first anniversary of 9/11 the Republicans in the administration went on the offensive. I mean this is when Chief of Staff Andrew Card said in terms of rolling out the Iraq War Resolution, the Iraq War possibility, they didn't talk much about it in August. And the reason was that, and this is a quote from a marketing perspective, 'You don't roll out a new product in August.' So they waited and rolled out their new product shortly after Labor Day and they went on the offensive, both internally and domestically. And Democrats were on the run. And a lot of people were worried that Wellstone was, that Wellstone's campaign, unless he took a position in favor the Resolution that his campaign was in peril.

"The attacks began taking a toll. In September for the first time in the campaign Wellstone's internal poll showed him trailing his challenger, Norm Coleman", who was the Mayor of Saint Paul. "He would soon have to take a risky vote on the Resolution. As the vote on the Resolution approached, every Democratic candidate in the half dozen closest races for Senate, announced his support for the measure and political observers speculated that Wellstone's career was in peril. One top Democratic strategist", this is someone with the DNC, "was so convinced that the vote would cost Wellstone the election that he wrote Wellstone's campaign manager an angry email." Now keep in mind this is someone from the National Party and they're responsible for doling out money to the various campaigns. And here's what he said. "He said, 'It makes me almost physically ill to even contemplate spending money on a candidate that decides to commit suicide, however principled and otherwise defensible.'" As Wellstone said, he



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knew the potential consequences of his decision, and he acknowledged that he would have preferred to be dealing with other issues. 'With five weeks to go at the end of 12 years in the Senate, of course I wonder what the effect will be', he told a reporter. 'To me this is the personally and intellectually honest decision and that's the one I should make. And I don't really think I have any other choice but to make it, because how could you do otherwise? It's a life and death question and I'm not making any decision that I don't believe in.' When asked how he felt after making his announcement, Wellstone said simply, 'My soul is resting.'"

Now Paul Wellstone's soul would not be resting if he saw what was going in American politics and in our world right now. And I think if there was ever a time that Wellstone supporters needed to hear one of his rowdy speeches and needed to be brought, like I used to be watching him, brought to their tiptoes at the end, going out and wanting to know how they can take action, that time is now.

Funky Dennis Kucinich (Adapted)

George W. Bush

Good evening. I'm pleased to take your questions tonight.

Dennis Kucinich

We're not locked into these conditions that degrade the environment and jeopardize the future of our children.

Wellstone:

Homegrown economy. About self-reliant, self-sufficient communities.

DK:

Move into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

GWB:

And to discuss with the American people the serious matters facing our country and the world.

DK:

The Industrial Revolution is creating a kind of entrainment which attune people to

Wellstone:

About how to keep capital in communities about how to grow and promote small business.

DK:

We have received a cautionary note, my friends, with the attack on Iraq. Because that was about oil, pure and simple. Now let's tell the truth about this. If Iraq had no oil, we wouldn't have attacked Iraq. And I contend that the kind of thinking that is resistant towards developing new energy technologies is old thinking.

Wellstone:

We ought to make that a huge deal.

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- DK: We have to realize that our misguided policies have put us on a path of destruction.
- Winona LaDuke: This is a country that has, fortunately, no absence of solutions. What we have, however, is an absence of political will.
- Wellstone: This Energy bill that is coming over from the House, it really is outrageous.
- DK: Destruction of our integrity as a nation. Destruction of other people. Destruction of our planet. Because war itself is a form of ecocide. And the principles that animate this particular war is a corruption of the American heart.
- Wellstone: Outrageous.
- DK: What's emerging is a new type of thinking that views sustainability as profitable and understands that profits go up the smokestack and go out.
- Wellstone: If you'll form a community energy council which is broadly representative of the people in the community, we could reduce the bill, we could reduce your energy bill by ten percent in the first year.
- WD: Wind power for our communities and solar power for our communities. Not for corporations. For our communities.
- DK: Move into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We want to help create businesses, which are dedicated to sustainability, because that's where the money is going to be made. We have incredible inventive genius in this country. But how much of it goes to weapons production? I mean think about it. The same genius, which is currently dedicated to weapons production, to putting weapons in space, to creating more fire power, to creating more kill potential... What if instead we began to change the consciousness of this country towards real sustainability? Sustaining human life. Sustaining human health. Sustaining communities. Incentivizing renewable energies. Providing the possibility of real investments in solar, in hydrogen, in wind and all of those technologies that we already know about and in creating new energy technologies that we don't even know about.
- Wellstone: We ought to make this a populist issue. We ought to make this an Enron issue. We ought to make this an issue of "Who the hell framed this bill?" Who was there at the table? So far they don't want us to know. And

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what happened to the vast majority of people? We ought to hammer away at this.

DK: The National Aeronautics Space Administration has had marvelous success in moving forward with creating the potential to move human destiny further and further out into the universe. How much so are we capable of moving human destiny along on this planet by dedicating our technologies towards new energy production?

Wellstone: We ought to say that people should be sick and tired of a few of these conglomerates making all of this money, basically taking over the policy, which is disrespectful of our families, disrespectful of our communities, disrespectful of our environment, disrespectful of jobs, disrespectful in terms of small businesses having a shake...

WD: This campaign calls for a phase of nuclear power, a phase out of fossil fuels and a movement toward alternative fuels in this country.

Wellstone: We ought to turn the whole thing upside down or right side up depending upon your point of view. Raise a lot of hell about it. Don't let it be just some policy discussion. Make it real.

DK: Sustainability equals peace. We have to understand that the American people...

Michael Moore: This thing is over for Bush. It is over for him. He doesn't know it tonight, but it is so over.

[Sound of clock ticking]

BL: The irony of course is that if John Kerry had taken the same position that Paul Wellstone had in 2002, he would have had far less trouble in making a credible case against the Bush administration on the issue of the war. In fact I think that in many ways the 2004 election was defined by John Kerry's unwillingness to take a politically principled stand on the war.

## Leave a Message Project (LAMP)

My name is Jonathan, I live in New England, Massachusetts.

Nursing assistant at a hospital in Boston, so I'm a constituent of John Kerry's

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Thirty-six from Ohio and I'm a homemaker.

Calling from Honolulu, Hawaii

Northern California.

I'm 70.

Organic farmer.

I live in Ashland, Oregon.

Thomas.

Paula. I'm 46 years old and I'm from south eastern Minnesota.

Bloomington, Minnesota.

Anchorage, Alaska.

Fargo, North Dakota.

I would like to see John Kerry distinguish himself...

From Bush on the issues of, especially Iraq.

I want the Patriot Act repealed.

Talk about when we're going to exit Iraq. How we're going to exit Iraq.

U.S. out of Iraq.

Stop trying to take over Iraqi assets.

My main concern is the national debt. I think that the military expenditures are running up the national debt to astronomical amounts.

And to hold the military and Pentagon accountable.

I want this insanity in Iraq to stop.

No more empire building.

Let us have a feeling of security that is not wallowing in fear.

How can we stop terrorists from feeling the way they do towards America, as opposed to swatting them down one by one with bombs.

Become a peace candidate.

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My positive feelings about Senator Kerry came from his anti-war activity following Vietnam.

In opposition to President Bush's war candidacy.

Immediately pull our troops out of Iraq.

Bring in the United Nations.

I would like John Kerry to take more of a peace stance and a long term view of what kind of world we are creating.

Bring in all the countries of the world.

I want to get out of NAFTA and WTO and I want universal health care.

NAFTA and CAFTA and WTO. We need to get out of all of those immediately.

Environmental friendly legislation.

Turn the peacekeeping over to Arab countries.

Taking a much more even handed approach towards the Israel-Palestine issue.

There's a lot of discouragement because of his not taking a proper stand in regard to all the soldiers being killed left and right and all of the Iraqi civilians dying.

John Kerry has to really change his tune, certainly to get my vote.

I literally know dozens of people who would love to vote for John Kerry but are not ready to do that because he is not different enough from George Bush on the issues of national security, terrorism and the handling of Iraq.

Unless he makes a stand against Bush, I will be voting for Nader...

and it's not the Bush administration way. And that's how Kerry and the Democrats can distinguish themselves. And we're waiting to find out.

BJH:

John is actually from Minnesota. He's now working for the Center of Documentary Studies in North Carolina and he does a podcast called Scene on Radio. I first encountered John Beiwen where I work at Children's Hospitals and Clinics in Minnesota. Angela Kate Geptford (sp) who is the chief of medical education, has been very interested in issues

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around race, inclusion, gender and all of that. So December 2017 she brought in John Beiwen to talk a little bit about what was going on in his podcast. Well it turned out that the competition you were in had three judges and one of the judges was John Biewen. I went over to introduce myself to him. He was kind of blown away by how small the world it was.

Wellstone: Most of my politics, honest to goodness, I think comes from people who should be famous but hardly anyone in the country knows their name.

EB: Mary Smith, Esther Jeffers, Elsie Davis, Sara Parker and myself.

AD: This was the center of the strike right there. It started with these ladies in the Pine Room.

BJ: Whatever happened to Faith?

FK: Within a day or two I got my acceptance letter from the School of Nursing, which was an extremely competitive program. It was one of the highest rated programs in the country at that time. I had a letter saying that I was accepted at the same time I was getting rejected for being a poor candidate for being successful. So, you know, whatever. I went the next day and told some people what happened. The people who had supported me in applying for this program. The people at the University, the people who had encouraged me to do it. The assistant mayor at that time was a woman by the name of Jan Hively and they got me a meeting with her. And they had to rewrite the programs to get the Section 8 certificates that people hadn't claimed released to people on the waiting list. And they went and did that. And they got me into the program.

Right around the same time I applied for welfare because my son was having trouble in school and I was told, oh you can't... nobody gets welfare these days because you know... It was during the Regan era and it was... whatever. But they did have this program where you could go get your four year degree. But you had to go see a counselor so I went to see this guy. And I told him that the only thing that was standing in between me and my nursing degree was the fact that my son was having a hard time in school and he had been kept back a grade. And I was having to choose between working and supporting him and going to school. And the guy said to me, "And this is causing you a lot of stress." And I said, "No it's not. It's just, you know, kind of hard." And he said it to me about six times before I realized that he was trying to get me to say that it was causing me stress. So then I started crying and said

“Yes, yes it is!” And he stood up and he said, “Okay come with me.” And he gave me a whole stack of paperwork that I had to hand in every quarter with my grades. And he said, “As long as you hand in your grades and you have good grades, we’ll keep you in the program so...

Between that and my housing certificate, I was actually able to live on my welfare grant and go to school and be able to have enough money to buy my son, you know, clothes and food, and pay for my thirty percent of my rent. It just paid for everything. Then I didn’t have to, I didn’t have to struggle so hard trying to figure out what to do with him while I was in school for the most part. And it allowed me to support him better. ‘Cause before that I was working in the evenings and he was in daycare every evening that I was working. And then he was at my dad’s during the weekend when I worked. I would take the 5 bus over to Chicago Avenue where I worked as a nursing assistant and I’d put my son on a bus, on the 94 and my dad would pick him up in Saint Paul. And that’s how... People think it’s crazy now that people would do that but I know what it’s like now... I guess the good thing is that I know what it’s like to really be scraping to put it together and I totally understand it. Even though, I’m pretty decidedly middle class and I have a really, really good life, I try not to forget that it wasn’t always like that and that it isn’t easy for people.

So I think it’s about persistence. Persistence is important. But it’s also about, remembering that there’s a lot of people with a really hard row to hoe and I feel that... I don’t know. There were so many times when it felt like the universe just opened up and things just worked out like getting that certificate and getting on welfare and not having to work quite so hard so I could actually... I don’t know if I could have done it if I had to do it for five years. That would have been really incredibly hard to work full time and go through nursing school and raise my son. So I feel really, really grateful all that I’ve gotten and I know this is about persistence, but I think that’s the other thing is we don’t do this alone.

EB ...housewives with babies. The mothers would come out and pushing their babies in strollers and caring their babies on their backs and walking that picket line.

FK So I graduate in June and I bought my house the end of October. And the Republican realtor who got me the program to get my house, he was like “Ronald Regan would be so proud of you because you lifted yourself up by the bootstraps.” And I was, “No. I didn’t.” Everybody who was alive in the United States and paying taxes between 1983 and 1988,

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thank you because you lifted me up. And I think that's the other thing is that you can say it's persistence but... Persistence is holding a thought that something is possible but it doesn't happen alone and there's a lot of spirits that bring it all to happen.

BL: Another element of Wellstone's legacy was the imperative of finding joy in politics. Rare was the occasion when Wellstone was conflicted by indecision. I think he delighted in that freedom. He was someone who was sort of unbound by indecision. He didn't spend a lot of time sitting up at night wondering where he came down on the core issues and on his core beliefs. And I think he delighted in that freedom. And as many people have noted, Wellstone was really the prototypical happy warrior like his hero Hubert Humphrey. He was someone who relished a political battle but did it with a smile on his face and as he used to put it, with a twinkle in his eye. And I think that if there's any legacy that Wellstone will leave behind, it's a legacy of integrity of persistence, yes of passion, and I think not least of all, as Zach mentioned before, of hope. (Paul Wellstone: The Life of a Passionate Progressive. C-SPAN.org)

RJS: You've been listening to *QuOTeD, The Question of the Day Podcast*. I am Rebekah Smith. Thanks to everyone who contributed to this episode I do appreciate it. This is just one part of what I want to present to you. The other part you can find over at the website, QuestionPodcast.com where you can find links to various articles and clips in the show notes. Thanks so much for listening. I do appreciate it. Until next time take care.

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