“Politics is about the improvement of people’s lives.” — Paul Wellstone.

“What’s important is that we do something.” — Sandra, a beautiful Anglo-African lady.

“Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind; and the third is to be kind.” — Henry James.

“In the end there are no ‘losers’. Some winners just take longer to develop.” — NYTimesLife: The Lover Who Never Gave Up: CharlesSchultiz: ‘Last Date’, J.Cramer.

“It’s very hard to predict what’s going on on the ground in politics from one day to the next.” — Prof. John Witte, who taught me how to use a word processor in ’78.

“In many years to come, people will be able to look back on your work and see that you are a great leader. Your work demonstrates the ways all of our lives are interconnected.” — Prof. Richard Kyte, Viterbo U. Reinhart Edtr., BritJourn.ofPhotog.

“Bob… did it without a PowerPoint presentation, video clips, graphs, or studies… It was simple. Just know what you are doing and do it well. Eventually people will notice and look to you for direction…” — Daniel J. Marcou on a lesson from Carlson’s Raiders’ Veteran/Scout Leader Bob Dwyer.

“People will follow you….” — Michael Buble, also Claire and the Crosby.

“Politics is about the improvement of people’s lives.” — Paul Wellstone.

“I want to thank you for the good work you do continually to document the faces of people in our community, depicting the importance of all lives—big and small, recognized and unrecognized. Your work demystifies the ways all of our lives are interconnected.” — Prof. Richard Kyte, Viterbo U. Reinhart Edtr., BritJourn.ofPhotog.

“I very much appreciate having [yourSpiritofAmerica1] as part of my library.” — Amer.Spirit/2xPulitzer-winning author David McCullough.

“Politics is about the improvement of people’s lives.” — Paul Wellstone.

UW-Madison alum and Pulitzer-winning author Eudora Welty (1909-2001) — a Jackson, Mississippi native — knew her vocation of writing superbly well. Eudora’s mother was a school teacher, and the daughter soon developed a love of reading, reinforced by her mother who believed that "any room in our house, at any time in the day, was there to read in, or to be read to." Her father, who worked as an insurance executive, was intrigued by gadgets and machines and inspired in Eudora a love of all things mechanical. She later would use technology for symbolism in her stories and would also become an avid photographer, like her father.

My own education received a great boost at UW-Madison too, where I earned my first university degree (in History) in 1973, the same year Ms. Welty won her Pulitzer (for “The Optimist’s Daughter”). I earned subsequent degrees as well, in other good places, but my 11 years living in Madison aided my work considerably.

The place I’m focusing on in this book most is my birth-city, La Crosse, WI, which Mark Twain included in his memoir, “Life on the Mississippi,” referring to ours as a “choice town”, given our beautiful natural scenery, clean, well-lighted streets, and stately architecture. Inspired by Mr. Twain’s strong interest in the lives of young people, I’ve never shied from including young people decently among my photo- and writing-subjects, or the residents of La Crosse generally, either.

One thing this photo-book exemplifies is US youngsters’ roles in the 2008 Presidential campaign as it passed through La Crosse. Seeing and photographing so many Americans in that great year’s Dream of Democracy, I realized recently, youngsters, and to be sure, hope, played greater parts than usual that year, as Americans elected our first black President. My own interest in voting officially, though, did not originate early. Yes, our nun-teacher asked us in 1960 to “vote” for Kennedy or Nixon, yet I don’t recall voting officially until ca. 1992. But ca.1970, I witnessed UW-Madison student protests versus the Vietnam War and knew what political issues could amount to.

I’d already begun donating my photos and writings to good national and international archives by Feb. 2008, when Chelsea Clinton, Mike Huckabee, John McCain, and Michelle Obama campaigned in La Crosse – Feb. 12, 14, 15, and 18 respectively. Barack Obama would visit that October, as well as Sen. McCain again. That February, my second article appeared in Smithsonian magazine, which helped advance very positive contacts for me with the Smithsonian Institution.

Of course, “youngsters” can be defined as younger than adults, and is here too. But Chelsea Clinton had just earned her M.Phil. at Oxford in 2003, and initiated her public face early in 2008, speaking on behalf of her mom’s presidential candidacy at UW-L, etc. She was a “youngster” too (i.e., thinking with fresh ideas), as were the Obamas, a couple considerably older but who appealed enormously to young people. Even Mike Huckabee and John McCain, older still, appealed to young and old voters alike, and children. Though La Crosse has long had about 50,000 residents, US Presidents have made it a stopping-point more than a century. Grover Cleveland was first, stopping here 25 minutes aboard a train Oct. 10, 1887. Teddy Roosevelt and William Howard Taft were next. Many people like to see US Presidents and potential US Presidents. I’ve so far photographed five Presidents plus other Presidential hopefuls. Youngsters enjoy being part of this mix, along with “oldsters” interested in how the world works.

Moving ahead to 2017 – the year I first claimed to be Wisconsin’s most-prolific living author – though my dad passed in 2015 there has been much for me, my family, and friends to be grateful for, since that momentous 2008 presidential campaign year (however there was a near-economic depression too in 2008), including my son’s notable military service (2009-2012), my parents’ 65th Valentine Wedding Anniversary (2015), and Matt’s magna cum laude BSEE graduation in Philadelphia from Drexel U.(2017). Also, my writings earned two Pulitzer-nominations (2011 & 2013), and the number of my published books, articles, plays, and poems mushroomed, including my books about New York City, Washington, DC, and overseas. Our family gatherings on holidays, etc., continue to boost morale, too. My sister Diane hadn’t invited me to her family’s Thanksgiving meal for a couple of years, but did again in 2017. She even asked me to do what my dad used to, carve the turkey. Near meal’s end, Diane said “Now that we’ve set a precedent, you’ll have to carve the turkey every year,” to which I replied, “if you’ll cook it every year.” My 67th birthday party two days later was well-attended also. Hopefully, life will continue in decent shape for all of us through this Christmas and beyond, as we pursue positive realizations of that Enduring Dream–the Spirit of America–which still has lot to recommend it. —DvJM, Nov.-Dec. 2017.

The Perfect Christmas Tree—Written by Rose Caroline Muskat Marcou (CD/MuskatKidsCa.1942, Joe&Rose&JiffyLeft; CaptionB135Roman&IdaMuskatweddingday, ca.1924).

As a child, our family of Mom, Dad, & we 7 kids lived near Martinsville, WI, in a rural, fairly wooded area in Dane County.

It was a bright, bitterly cold morning the week before Christmas, when the world was at war everywhere except at home. One of my brothers asked Mom at breakfast if he, Joe 13, and I, Rose 11, could go out to find a tree. At first she said “no,” but finally relented and cautioned us not to go too far.

We bundled up warmly and left on our venture, excitedly. We walked and walked quite a distance over hills and vales, across the road into a neighbor’s woods. We finally spotted a beautiful spruce, both agreeing that this was our perfect tree. Joe saw it off and we left to start home. We were tireing and cold and anxious to show family our prize.

We walked a long distance but could not find the road. Mom had wrapped a sandwich for a snack. We ate that with a little snow for moisture. We sat on a large stump to rest and then moved on with the tree.

Fearing we were lost, I started crying and stated, “I can’t walk any farther.” Joe urged me on up the next hill, and from there, we saw the Beacon Tower (which would be lit up at night but was visible, unlike, by day too) at Ashton, about 5 miles from home, where our Aunt Annie and Uncle Arnold lived. I knew Mom’s prayers helped us. We arrived home safely, as the sun was setting, very tired, but happy, with our Perfect Spruce.—Written in early Dec. 2017 by RCM&M &1st published soon after in the La Crosse Tribune in amended form w/aid from Mike Tighe, Dan J. Marcou, & Rusty Cunningham.—The version for SA53 was edited by DvJM.
Tyke w/flag & 2 ladies, Huckabee rally, LaXCtr., 2-14-08 (DvJM).
Obama Couple on sidewalk mattress across from McCain line, UWL, 2-12-08 (DvJM).
Next 8 photos: Chelsea Clinton speech for mom, UWL, 2-12-08 (DvJM).
Next 7 photos: 1st J.McCain rally, Radisson Hotel, LaX, 2-15-08 (DvJM).
Next 4 photos: Michelle Obama rally for Barack, UWL, 2-18-08 (DvJM).
Next 17 photos: B. Obama rally, 2nd&Pearl Sts., LaX, 10-1-17 (DvJM).
DvJM w/ camera, 1st John McCain rally, Radisson Hotel, LaX, ca.1980 (Photo by Steve Kiedrowski).
Pennsylvania Sunrise seen from Amtrak train, ca.April 2010 (DvJM).
My bro Dan demonstrates counter-pressure move on fellow policeman Ferd Roth III, YMCA, LaX, ca.1980 (DvJM).
Schoolkids on walking daytrip, LaX, 12-19-17 (DvJM).
Supertatoes by Paul Frederick, LaX, 11-23-17 (Thanxgiving (DvJM).
Diane & Rocky Skifton by stove, LaX, 11-23-17 (DvJM).
Early BD gifts from Diane & MKate, LaX, 11-23-17 (DvJM).
DvJM carving turkey, LaX, 11-23-17 (Pic by Diane M. Skifton).
Dustin brings his mom’s lefse to Robyn Skifton’s mom, Diane, LaX, 11-23-17 (DvJM).
Kitchen still-life w/S for Skifton Family, LaX, 11-23-17 (DvJM).
My grand-nephew Christopher Roberts, LaX, 11-23-17 (DvJM).
Dan Skifton’s CW bugler boy cap & bugle w/ Shine with the Light of Jesus insignia, LaX, 11-23-17 (DvJM).
Mom Rose Marcou & Katie Tempt w/ Griffin the dog & food, LaX, 11-23-17 (DvJM).
Melanie Skifton in doorway, LaX, 11-23-17 (DvJM).
(L-R) Danny S., Paul Frederick, MaryKate M. Tempt, & Katie Tempt w/ Griffin the dog, LaX, 11-23-17 (DvJM).
Robyn & Dustin, a couple, LaX, 11-23-17 (DvJM).
Dan Skifton looks into camera as driver, LaX, 11-23-17 (DvJM).
My 67th BD group portrait, Pizza Docs, LaX, 11-26-17 (DvJM).
My 67th BD groupselfie meR, Pizza Docs LaX 11-25-17 (DvJM).
“W” Birthday Cookie day UW beat MN in FB 11-25-17 (DvJM).
Vicki Marcou & Rose Marcou® PizzaDocs LaX 11-25-17 (DvJM).
Salvation Army Tree, Rotary Lights LaX 11-26-17 (DvJM).
Sunrise along Miss. River by 2 bridges, LaX, 11-26-17 (DvJM).
Two bridges & reflections, Miss. River, LaX, 11-26-17 (DvJM).
Anthony Zimmerman’s Hiawatha Statue up-close at front, LaX, 11-26-17 (DvJM).
Message from Heaven, RotaryLights, Riverside Park, LaX, 11-26-17 (DvJM).
Elmer Petersen’s Eagle sculpture plus a Christmas angel on a streetlight, LaX, 11-26-17 (DvJM).
Two large toy soldiers by Rotary Lights request for food & money donations, LaX, 11-26-17 (DvJM).
Mike Martino’s trio sculpture waving to young lovers by Miss. River, LaX, 11-26-17 (DvJM).
A gal named Jackie sitting on riverbank, LaX, 11-26-17 (DvJM).
Melanie Skifton with her keyboard gift she knows how to play, Holmen, 12-24-17 (DvJM).
Fine figurines & reflections, Holmen, 12-24-17 (DvJM).
Warren,hisRt66book, & Mary KM Temp, Holmen12-24-17 (DvJM).
Believe in Secret Santas & PhillyMom on TV, 12-24-17 (DvJM).
Many Marcou family members gathered round Kate Marcou Temp’s dining room table, Holmen, 12-24-17 (DvJM).
UWL Communications Dir. KJ Lang before Mariah Idrissi talk, UWL, 10-23-17 (DvJM).
Ambulance & EMT for Richard Dungar, LaX, 11-1-17 (DvJM).
Former Mayor John Medinger w/ Rep. Steve Doyle, Golden Egg Roll Cafè, LaX, 12-1-17 (DvJM).
Lisa, Dentist Joe Kotnour’s receptionist, LaX, 12-1-17 (DvJM).
Christmas wreath by sign, LaX Cathedral, 12-2-17 (DvJM).
(L-R) UWL Therapeutic Recreation crew: Prof. Lindsey Kirschbaum, Nicole, Andrea, Bethany, Ashley, LaX, 12-5-17 (DvJM).
Linda & Kneesha the dog, LaX, 12-16-17 (DvJM).
Kristie® & her mom, Linda, LaX, 12-16-17 (DvJM).
Young lovers, sunset Miss. River, LaX, 11-26-17 (DvJM).
Merry Christmas From Heaven

I love you all dearly.
Now don’t shed a tear,
I’m spending my Christmas
With Jesus this year.