

TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNALISM ACADEMY

# Covering Klobuchar, caucus night in Iowa

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*Editor's note: This is the second of two parts of the experiences of Ben and Jack Iboshi, the teenage sons of Wartburg College graduate Laura Thalacker. This picks up right after they and Waverly Newspapers editor Anelia K. Dimitrova covered a rally at Electric Park Ballroom in Waterloo for former South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg.*

We covered a Sen. Amy Klobuchar event at the Cedar Falls Woman's Club. This was a much smaller venue, with fewer members of the press attending. Once again, Jack and I asked attendees about their experiences. Many people said they had been to the earlier Buttigieg event.

We also talked to several supporters who had switched to Sen. Klobuchar after Sens. Kamala Harris and Cory Booker dropped out of the race.

"I used to campaign for Senator Harris, and the two, they're similar. They're both in the judiciary committee. They're both [former] prosecutors. So it was an easy choice for me after Senator Harris [dropped out]," said Steve from Waterloo.

Plenty of people were still undecided. As with the Buttigieg event, the crowd was mostly older and largely white.

When Klobuchar walked into the room, before getting on stage, she went through the aisle shaking hands. This gave the event a more intimate, friendly feel than the earlier Buttigieg rally. The Lieutenant Governor of Minnesota, Peggy Flanagan, introduced Klobuchar and talked about her record of winning elections in Minnesota.

When Klobuchar spoke, she focused on her electability, as well as her ability to empathize with people. She discussed her conversations with voters who had supported President Trump in the past who regretted their vote and were supporting Klobuchar instead. Klobuchar also talked about substantive policy issues, including discussing her own family's personal experience with the logistics of long term care for her elderly father. Punctuating her speech with humorous comments and anecdotes, Klobuchar connected with the audience and seemed down-to-earth, genuine and sincere.

After the speech, I stayed in the back of the room to interview voters to get their impressions. A younger voter, Jered from Cedar Falls, said he had narrowed his choice to Senator Elizabeth Warren or Klobuchar.

"The main [deciding factor] is just the per-

son's character. I think Amy's sincere and interacting with Elizabeth Warren, I think she's sincere," Jered said.

I found this to be an interesting contrast to the older voters I had interviewed, who seemed more policy focused.

While I was interviewing voters, my brother Jack, was following another piece of advice from Anelia — "make quick decisions and act." Jack rushed to the stage and asked Klobuchar, "Do you think impeachment has divided or unified the country?"

Klobuchar listened to Jack's question, and like Buttigieg, did not treat Jack like a child or dumb down her answer.

"Well, I think it's the right thing to do and I think people will get that. They get that we cannot have a President who thinks he is a king and we might as well give him a crown and a scepter," responded Klobuchar.

Jack then followed up with a question about hope for our generation.

"The hope is that, once we have a new President, we can actually get things done. And, I am a strong believer . . . this is all about your generation because we have to get gun safety, and climate change and school funding. Those are the big issues for your generation and I am ready to work on them," answered Klobuchar.

On Monday night, Feb. 3, we were assigned to cover the Ward 1 caucus at Waverly-Shell Rock Middle School. In advance, we prepared by reading news articles about caucus rules and mechanics.

When we first arrived, Jack and I interviewed people as they entered. There was a wide variety of candidates people were planning on caucusing for, but it seemed like the main issue for everyone was beating Donald Trump in the general election.

"What I like about (former Vice President Joe) Biden is his ability to win the election," said Robert Wharram from Waverly.

"I'd actually vote for any one of those Democrats. Whoever gets the nomination, I will vote for them," said Sherri Nolte from Waverly.

The caucus began shortly after 7 at night. The caucus chairperson explained the rules and reminded people to keep discourse civil. The caucus chairperson said he wanted things to go smoothly so "we're celebrating in November." The caucus was orderly and there did not appear to be any controversy in how it was run.

Before the first alignment, representatives for each candidate were given the op-



ANELIA K. DIMITROVA PHOTO

Ben and Jack Iboshi interview a Waverly caucus-goer immediately before the Iowa Caucuses Monday in the Waverly-Shell Rock Middle School commons.

portunity to make two-minute, persuasive speeches on their candidate's behalf. Not all candidates were represented in the speeches, but the vast majority of those who spoke argued that their candidate could beat President Trump in the general election.

The chairperson announced that there were 166 caucus-goers in attendance in Ward 1, meaning that a candidate would be viable if he or she had 26 supporters. The first alignment started and ran over the allotted 15 minutes as people talked, attempted to persuade each other and made their way to the designated area for their candidate. I found this fascinating to watch, almost like a sporting event.

Midway through the first alignment, there was an informal tally of the numbers. At that point, a number of candidates, including Senator Bernie Sanders, Tom Steyer, Andrew Yang and Representative Tulsi Gabbard, were not viable. Some of their supporters began moving over to other candidates. By the end of the first alignment, Buttigieg, Warren, Klobuchar, Sanders and Biden were the only viable candidates, with Buttigieg having the most supporters and Biden having the least of the viable candidates.

At the start of the second alignment, the two remaining Steyer supporters and the only remaining undecided person all moved

over to Klobuchar. No other candidates picked up new supporters during the second alignment. With the addition of those three people, Klobuchar gained enough support to receive another delegate. The final results: Buttigieg received 3 delegates with 50 supporters, Klobuchar and Warren each got 2 delegates with 32 and 31 supporters, respectively, and Sanders and Biden each were awarded one delegate, with 29 and 26 supporters, respectively.

We left the caucus site at around nine that night, thinking the overall results would be available soon. As of writing this article, two days later, the Iowa Democratic Party has not yet released all results. This reinforces another lesson from Anelia—"things can be unpredictable."

Overall, working as cub reporters for the Waverly Newspapers was a fantastic opportunity to learn about journalism and the political process. It made me appreciate how hard journalists work and has given me a new respect for the profession. Jack and I are thankful to Anelia for guiding us through it all. She taught us so much along the way and her lessons will stay with me as I continue pursuing journalism. And, I am forever grateful that we were able to have a front-row seat to history in the making.

**Thank You**

The **Larry Hosto family** would like to thank all the amazing people for making the Pancakes 4 Larry event happen. Larry really wished he could have been there, but he was there in spirit spreading the love, enjoying the company and sharing stories. A special thank you to all the Masons and Masonic Lodge for making this event possible and serving a delicious breakfast. Thanks to all that organized this event, all the volunteers, people who donated items for the wonderful bake sale, silent auction, all those who donated via the Gofundme, at the benefit and through beautiful cards and messages. A major thank you to all the co-workers from Oelwein, Independence, Waverly and Vinton newspapers, and the wonderful friends of the Oelwein Jaycee Chapter. You have touched our hearts, assisted in drying our tears, and truly made this difficult time a little more bearable. Larry always believed in the power of community, the graciousness of God and fighting as long as he could.

**God bless you all!**




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