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Saul Anuzis, Chairman Michigan Republican Party

Saul Anuzis is not your typical Republican. He is an unabashed Reagan-conservative with strong opinions about the role of government. But he is the son of an autoworker and once joined a union. He rides a Harley Road King, but he leaves the Harley home when he's campaigning so he can Twitter, Blog and Blackberry on the road. He is a Boy Scoutmaster and a hockey dad. And others describe him as "constantly in-motion", "whirlwind" and "man with a plan".

Saul is a true believer in the core principles of Republicanism; in fact, they are the reason he became a Republican. He certainly wasn't born into it. He grew up in a working class neighborhood in Detroit, and his friends were the kids of other autoworkers. He saw Ronald Reagan speak to those workers with a message of opportunity and American greatness that spoke to him as well. And he knows that until we reach those voters again, Republicans will not win.

Saul attended the University of Michigan, Dearborn, where he studied economics. To help pay his way through college, Saul loaded trucks and was a member of the Teamsters Union. It was in college that he got his first taste of politics. There, he helped found a College Republican chapter and served as Student Government President. In 1980, Saul was elected as one of the youngest delegates to the Republican National Convention. He went on to attend President Reagan's first inaugural ceremony that next January. Soon thereafter, he was elected Third Vice Chair of the Michigan Republican Party, and also served two terms as a Congressional District Chairman, precinct delegate and candidate for public office.

Throughout the 1980's Saul worked in the Michigan House of Representatives and the Michigan Senate for Senator Dick Posthumus of Grand Rapids. During that time, he helped lead the way to historic gains in the number of Republican seats in the State Senate – a majority that still exists today. Posthumus would eventually become Senate Majority Leader, Lt. Governor and the party's nominee for Governor in 2002. In 1988, Saul found himself drawn to Jack Kemp's free market/empowerment philosophy and played a key role in the Michigan effort for Kemp's Presidential run.

In 1990, Saul took a break from politics to focus on his family and join the ranks of small business owners. Today, Saul and his business partner own Quick Connect USA, a telecommunications firm providing local, long distance, VOIP, Internet, and data services to residential and small businesses throughout Michigan. Anuzis serves as Chairman of the company but is currently on a leave of absence and maintains no day-to-day responsibilities due to his role with the Republican Party.

In 2005 and again in 2007, Saul was unanimously elected Chairman of the Michigan Republican Party. In 2007, he was appointed to the Executive Committee of the Republican National Committee, and, he served on the Committee on Arrangements for the 2008 Republican National Convention. During his time as Michigan Chairman, Saul has actively cultivated relationships with members of the Republican National Committee all across the country. His daily blogs and regular updates are a source of up-to-the-minute information for Michigan activists and national GOP activists as well.

In addition, Saul is a regular contributor to many other right-of-center blogs, and has been recognized by many as one of the most tech-savvy GOP chairmen in the country, leading the way in the use of technology as a tool in political party communications.

Saul is particularly proud of his Lithuanian family's history. His parents and grandparents both received the Righteous Among the Nations award from Israel's National Holocaust Memorial, Yad Vashem, for helping, among others, three young girls escape from a Jewish ghetto during World War II.

After the war, the Anuzis family came to America, where a priest gave his father a set of 19 books on how to become an electrician, a difficult task for a man who was learning to read and speak English at the same time. His father then spent 32 years as a skilled tradesman and UAW member at the Fleetwood Fisher Body Plant on Fort Street in Detroit.

Saul is actively involved in several Lithuanian-American organizations and serves on several non-profit boards. He currently serves as the Republic of Lithuania's Honorary Consul to Michigan. He was also a Gubernatorial Appointee to the Michigan Jobs Commission and the Michigan Export Development Authority.

Saul has been married for 23 years to Lina (Alksninis) Anuzis. They have four sons. Matas attends Michigan State University, Tadas and Vytis are in high school at Lansing Catholic Central, and Marius attends Resurrection Middle School. The family resides in Lansing, Michigan.

Recent television interviews (click on text to view):

[Saul Anuzis Debates MI Democrat Party Chair, Mark Brewer – 11/1/08](#)

[Saul Anuzis on CBS Michigan Matters – “The Bailout” – 9/29/08](#)

[Saul Anuzis – MRP Chair, Debates Mark Brewer, MDP Chair – 9/8/08](#)

[Saul Anuzis on CBS Michigan Matters - “The Russian Bear” – 8/20/08](#)

[Saul Anuzis - Fox News interview with Neil Cavuto - Speaker Pelosi Protest – 8/8/08](#)

[Saul Anuzis – Hardball interview with Chris Matthews – GOP Presidential Debate - 10/11/07](#)

[Saul Anuzis – CNBC interview with John Harwood – GOP Presidential Debate - 10/10/07](#)

The following print profiles of Saul are attached:

9/17/07 **Wall Street Journal** - Profile of Anuzis Critique on Granholm Administration

5/2007 **HOOR Detroit Magazine** - Profile of Saul Anuzis

2/3/05 **Associated Press** - Profile of Saul Anuzis

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Jennifer Granholm

OPINIONJOURNAL'S POLITICAL DIARY

Commentary and Analysis on U.S. Politics

September 17, 2007

In today's Political Diary:

GOP's Future at Stake in Michigan Fight

Michigan's Republican Party is in the midst of an internal skirmish over, of all issues, taxes. The infighting came to public light in recent weeks when certain establishment-oriented party insiders began complaining that the state party chairman, Saul Anuzis, was sounding a message that's "too" anti-tax.

The state now faces a \$1.8 billion deficit and Mr. Anuzis sensibly wants that wiped out by cutting a bloated state budget, not tax hikes, but some Republicans in the legislature want to strike a deal with pro-tax Governor Jennifer Granholm. Mr. Anuzis' persistent proclamations against higher taxes have caused grumbling among party moderates, who complain he's "making it more difficult to work out a deal to resolve Michigan's nagging budget deficit," as the Detroit News recently reported. The moderates insist that it's inappropriate for a party chair to dictate the party's policy to elected officials.

Conservatives, for their part, can't fathom why Mr. Anuzis' behavior has come under attack in his own party. They fear it means liberal Republicans in Lansing are signaling their readiness to cut a budget deal with pro-tax Democrats at a time, peculiarly, when Democrats seem disposed to shoot themselves in the head on the budget. House Democratic Speaker Andy Dillon has become so frustrated with the refusal of Senate Republicans to negotiate on taxes that he just announced: "We are going to act alone." He wants to raise income and/or sales taxes in the state.

That budget solution would be an economic catastrophe for a state that already has among the nation's highest unemployment rates and highest number of mortgage foreclosures (despite having missed out on the housing boom that led to mortgage excesses in other parts of the country). Why Republicans would want their fingerprints on this economic suicide pact is a mystery to the conservative activists I interviewed in the state.

Democrats have been gaining electoral ground in this national battleground state in recent years, but today's tax fight could be a pivotal moment to define the differences between the two parties. Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform, says that Mr. Anuzis is a "party chair worthy of cheering." And Mr. Anuzis isn't backing down. "We have to hold the line on no new taxes," he tells me. By giving voters a real choice between lower taxes and more spending, Mr. Anuzis is doing exactly the right thing to bring Republicans back to majority status in Michigan.

-- Stephen Moore



Anuzis brings a different background to state GOP's top job

2/3/2005, 5:40 p.m. ET

By KATHY BARKS HOFFMAN

The Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — The Michigan Republican Party is on the verge of being led by a Harley-riding former Democrat who barely spoke English until the first grade.

Saulius "Saul" Anuzis, who grew up in Detroit in a blue-collar Democratic family that immigrated from Lithuania, is about to become the GOP's next chairman.

Anuzis, 45, wasn't initially interested in succeeding Betsy DeVos, a major GOP donor and fund-raiser who's stepping down after leading the party the past two years.

But in a contest that at times had candidates popping in and out of the race faster than you could say "red states," Anuzis has pulled enough party leaders and grass-roots activists into his camp to make his election at Saturday's state GOP convention all but inevitable.

"I'm pretty satisfied with the broad range of support we've been able to garner statewide," Anuzis — pronounced ah-NEW-zis — told The Associated Press during a recent interview. "I want a united party."

His switch to GOP politics began officially while he was a student at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, where he started the College Republicans club in 1979 after someone started a group supporting Massachusetts Sen. Ted Kennedy's Democratic presidential bid.

He left a few credits short of graduating, going on to manage the campaign of Sylvia Skrel for a special state House election in Livonia.

But his rise in GOP politics didn't really get under way until he hooked up with a young farmer from the opposite side of the state, a Kent County state representative named Dick Posthumus.

Posthumus hired Anuzis to work on the House communications staff, then made him his campaign manager when he ran for the Senate in 1982.

The assignment turned out to be something of a culture shock for Anuzis. His first day on the job, he found Posthumus at his farm with his hand clutched in the mane of a halterless horse that had gotten loose. Anuzis had no idea what to do when Posthumus, dressed in a suit and late for a meeting, told him to take the horse back to the barn.

"I'm a city kid from Detroit. I'd never seen a horse up that close," Anuzis says.

Fortunately, Posthumus' wife showed up, relieved him of the horse, and let Anuzis move into the family's basement for the length of the campaign.

Posthumus won that race, and Anuzis served as the new senator's administrative assistant, moving up to chief of staff when Posthumus became Senate majority leader in 1991.

Soon after, Anuzis decided it was time to move on. He'd twice run unsuccessfully for a House seat in Eaton County and, during a bruising fight, nearly succeeded in getting the state GOP to nominate former New York congressman Jack Kemp for president in 1988 rather than Vice President George H.W. Bush. Bush won the nomination, but Anuzis attended the Republican National Convention that year as a Kemp delegate.

In 1992, he started the first of two telecommunications companies he has owned over the past 13 years. He sold the first one in 2000, and now runs Quick Connect USA.

He thought his days in politics were over. But then he got a call late last fall suggesting he consider running for state chairman. At first he declined. But once he got in, he moved quickly, making hundreds of phone calls, crisscrossing the state and lining up support.

He says his time away from politics has been a healthy break rather than a reason he shouldn't run the party.

"We talk about family values, and I went out and lived them," he says. "Instead of going to Republican meetings and traveling around the state, I started going to Boy Scout meetings and coaching football."

Those ties to his family and to his heritage are important to Anuzis. The first in his family to be born in the United States, he has stayed close to his Lithuanian roots. His wife of 19 years, Lina, also is of Lithuanian descent, and all four of their children speak Lithuanian and have Lithuanian names: Matas, 16, Tadas, 14, Vytis, 12, and Marius, 9. A staunch Catholic, he sends his children to Catholic schools.

He also speaks with pride of the Righteous Among the Nations award his parents and paternal grandparents received from Israel's national Holocaust memorial, Yad Vashem, for helping three young girls escape from a Jewish ghetto and make their way from Lithuania to Estonia during World War II. One of those girls, now grown, nominated them for the award.

Anuzis tells a story of how his family was resettled after the war, first in a displaced persons camp in Germany, then in the basement of a church in Brooks, Minn. There, the priest gave his father a set of 19 books on how to become an electrician. He first had to learn to speak English, but he mastered both the language and the skill.

The family moved to Detroit when his father got a job at Fisher Body, joining a neighborhood filled with Lithuanians.

"I didn't learn to speak English until the first grade. I almost flunked out," Anuzis recalls.

These days, he spends his free time enjoying one of the most American of symbols: a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. He owns a 2003 Road King the company put out for its 100th anniversary, and teams up with his wife — who owns her own Harley — on rides that draw 55,000 motorcyclists.

Anuzis says his blue-collar background is similar to that of many Michigan Republicans, despite the party's country club image. He has been a Teamster, joining the union while he worked at UPS to put himself through college.

Tom Shields of Lansing-based Marketing Resource Group says Anuzis reminds him of former GOP Chairman David Doyle, who now works at MRG and brought a lot of nuts-and-bolts experience to the chairman's job.

"You saw opposition basically fade off when Saul announced" he was running, Shields says. "Everyone else had something they were not bringing to the table. With Saul you had the full package."

Anuzis knows it won't be easy running the Republican Party in a state that has voted for a Democratic presidential candidate four times in the past 16 years and where Democrats hold the governorship and both U.S. Senate seats.

But he thinks Gov. Jennifer Granholm and U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow can be beaten in 2006, and he's confident he can do what's necessary to help that happen.

"Republicans see a great opportunity," he says.

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Life of the Party

Saulius Anuzis was born to blue-collar immigrants, grew up in Detroit, and rides a Harley. So what's he doing running the state GOP? // By Jack Lessenberry // Illustration by Curtis Parker

His dad was an electrician from the old country who spent his career in the Fisher Body plant on Fort Street. Saulius "Saul" Anuzis was born in Detroit in the 1950s, grew up, joined the Teamsters, enrolled at U. of M.-Dearborn, but left after four years just shy of a degree.

Then he founded his own business, bought a big Harley motorcycle, and hugged his ethnic roots closely, marrying a fellow Lithuanian (Lina Alksninis) and giving their four boys Lithuanian names. He also encourages them to speak their ancestral tongue at home.

That's just the kind of man who was the bread-and-butter of the Democratic Party for decades. Forty years ago, a guy like that would no more have dreamed of voting Republican than of seeking to join Oakland Hills Country Club.

Yet Anuzis is the very visible, constantly in-motion chair of the Michigan GOP. When we caught up with him, he was busily messaging from his BlackBerry during a whirlwind tour of the Upper Peninsula, where he was asking GOP groups what they thought happened last November.

Past GOP chairs have often been multi-millionaires like the controversial Betsy DeVos, or patrician men like Mel Larsen, or policy wonks like Harvard-educated Spencer Abraham. Anuzis, however, doesn't pretend to be anything other than a bright, self-made businessman and political junkie who believes passionately in the pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps ideology of Newt Gingrich's Conservative Opportunity Society.

As his blog tagline says, "That's Saul, folks!" Not only does he love to roar up to a big political dinner on his "hog," he got Dick DeVos to ride a motorcycle on a barnstorming trip Downriver last summer.

If that won DeVos any votes, they have yet to be counted. Yet Anuzis was just re-elected — without opposition — to a second term as GOP state chair. What makes that doubly unusual is that his party got badly beaten in last year's elections, losing the ticket's top races by near-historic landslides.



an element nearly lost in politics today. When U.S. Rep. Sandy Levin's son Andy moved back to metro Detroit to run for a Troy-based state Senate seat, Anuzis showed up at the younger Levin's new home (then still being renovated by contractors) with a "welcome" basket that contained a map of the Senate district and lots of helpful information about Michigan. Naturally, he just happened to bring reporters and photographers with him. The message: Andy's a carpetbagger who doesn't live here, and just wants political office.

Election result: While statewide Democrats swept the district, GOP nominee John Pappageorge eked out a surprising 722-vote victory. An unknown Green Party candidate rolled up a surprising 3,129 votes. Did the stunt make a difference?

Well, Anuzis won himself another two years of chicken-dinner fundraisers and the task of persuading someone to volunteer to be slaughtered by popular U.S. Sen. Carl Levin next year.

At home, Anuzis' wife, a lovely 43-year-

There's an element of merry prankster in Anuzis, an element nearly lost in politics today. ... Anuzis showed up at the younger Levin's new home with a "welcome" basket that contained a map of the Senate district and lots of helpful information about Michigan.

Normally, such resounding defeats are followed by a leadership purge. But Anuzis lobbied behind the scenes, arguing, "This was a national election. The voters were angry at the war. They punished Republicans everywhere.

"Look at what Republicans did accomplish. We held on to the state Senate. This was the only major state where we didn't lose any congressional seats."

There's an element of merry prankster in Anuzis,

old who shares a birthday with George W. Bush, sighs playfully. "Either Saul is home all the time or he is never home," she says.

But why, by the way, did this son of immigrants become a ... Republican?

Blame Teddy Kennedy. That's how Anuzis tells it. His family hadn't been political. His parents, refugees from ravaged Lithuania, met in a refugee camp in Germany after the war. When they first arrived in

the United States, they lived in a church basement in Minnesota. His father struggled to learn English and teach himself the electrician's trade from a set of books a priest gave him.

The elder Anuzis managed both efforts and got a job as a skilled tradesman at the Detroit Fleetwood Fisher Body plant on Fort Street. They bought a house on DaCosta Street, had two daughters and then, on March 6, 1959, Saulius came along, to be followed by another boy. "It wasn't the kind of home where you talked much about politics," Anuzis says. What he does remember is that his family voted against President Gerald Ford. They thought he was too cozy with the Russians. When Ford said, "There is no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe," he was dead meat on DaCosta Street.

The next year, Anuzis went to college. Money was tight, so he decided to study economics at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. One day in 1980, he and his buddies were sitting in the school cafeteria and heard about a Teddy Kennedy for president club.

That, he says, made his skin crawl. "Maybe I didn't know yet what I was for, but I knew what I was against," he says. He saw Kennedy as a bloated aristocrat who had a free pass through life and thought he could get away with, literally, murder.

"A blonde in every pond," he says.

Anuzis and his pals took over student government with a reform slate, then founded the school's first-ever college Republican club. Two years later, he was working for Dick Posthumus. School? Well, uh, he says, "I just have to write one more paper and I'll have that degree. But every time I go to start it ..."

Anuzis left politics in 1990 to start his own telecommunications business. Today he is chairman of the Clarkston-based Quick Connect USA, which provides voice and data solutions for a wide variety of businesses.

The firm has been successful, judging from the beauty of his eclectic, rambling, added-onto 1932 home, on Grand River just north of Lansing's city limits. The family needs space; sons Matas, 18, Tadas, 16, Vytyis, 15, and Marius, "almost 12," all live at home.

The family motto, "Attitude is everything," is displayed above the kitchen door. It's a phrase Anuzis embraces so completely that he used to give his boys a dollar a day if they could recite super-salesman Zig Ziglar's Ten Rules for Success.

Anuzis knows his party needs a pep talk. "What happened is we lost our brand," he says. "The voters wanted to throw the bums out — and we became the bums." But he remains relentlessly upbeat.

"We need to embrace our principles, learn from our mistakes, and take back control," he says. Nobody really knows yet what will happen in next year's political wars. What is clear is that Anuzis plans to love every minute of it. ■

Lessenberry is a Detroit-area writer, political columnist, and Wayne State University professor. E-mail: editorial@hourdetroit.com.



McLain's Change of Tune Lacks Perfect Pitch

• Talk about throwing a curve. **Denny McLain**, the flamboyant pitcher who won 31 games for the 1968 world-champion Tigers and then served two sentences in federal prison, is at it again.

His recent autobiography, *I Told You I Wasn't Perfect* (Triumph Books, \$24.95), written with local sports journalist Eli Zaret, is filled with as many inconsistencies as there are in his controversial life.

McLain also wrote a book about himself in 1975, *Nobody's Perfect* (Dial Press), with Dave Diles. A comparison of the two books shows that, in a number of cases, McLain has pitched different versions of his own story. Guess we shouldn't be surprised; as his book titles confess: He's not perfect.

Here's a roster of McLain's "literary" change-ups.

In 1967, McLain was moonlighting as a bookie, working with a restaurant owner named Clyde Roberts. In the first book, McLain said he borrowed \$7,000 to get going. In the new book, he's revised his stats, saying he borrowed \$10,500.

In 1975, McLain recalled Roberts inviting him to start taking bets by saying: "Why should we keep losing our money like this? I know some guys who bet pretty good, and we could go into the *other* end of this business."

In the new book, he slips in a fast one. Roberts is quoted as saying: "Check it out. You're losing \$200 to \$300 a week on college and pro basketball. Since I know a lotta other guys who place a ton of action, why don't we start taking the action instead of giving all the money to the bookies?"

McLain also offers varying opinions on Al Kaline.

In 1975, McLain wrote: "It didn't surprise me, either, when Al decided to call it quits in 1973. Most truly great athletes know better than anyone else when the time has come to hang them up. Al has been a quality performer on and off the field...."

In his latest version, he's less charitable toward the Tigers' famous No. 6, writing: "As respectfully as I can say it about a Hall of Fame player, Kaline wasn't the most loved SOB in the clubhouse, and we did win the pennant without him [in 1968, when Kaline missed 52 games with a injury]."

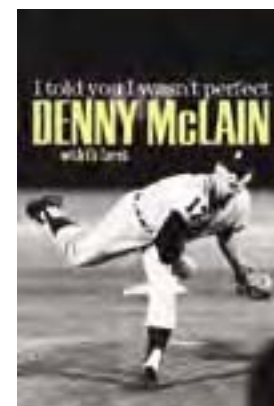
In 1970, while still pitching for the Tigers, McLain got into trouble for dumping buckets of water on two sportswriters.

In his first book, McLain described receiving help from teammate Joe Niekro. In the latest pages, the helper was identified as Tigers pitcher Joe Sparma.

In 1975, McLain remembered how one of his targets, *Detroit Free Press* baseball writer Jim Hawkins, had "just stood there" when he dumped the water. In 2007, McLain wrote Hawkins got soaked as he "sat down on the stool by my locker."

In the new book, McLain admits his fatal flaw is "twisting the truth to mean whatever served my mood of the moment."

At least he gets one pitch right over the plate. — Tom McCarey



"AS RESPECTFULLY AS I CAN SAY IT ABOUT A HALL OF FAME PLAYER, KALINE WASN'T THE MOST LOVED SOB IN THE CLUBHOUSE, AND WE DID WIN THE PENNANT WITHOUT HIM [IN 1968, WHEN KALINE MISSED 52 GAMES WITH A INJURY]."

— DENNY McCLAIN