

by Bill Kauffman

# Mr. Marrou Goes to Juneau

**A**t 8:00 A.M., Representative Andre Marrou of the Alaska House of Representatives kisses his wife, Eileen, good-bye and skips down three flights of stairs at Juneau's Driftwood Lodge, gingerly stepping over a squashed banana and an empty bottle of beer. It's a five-minute walk to work, usually in the damp, gray weather for which Juneau, Alaska, is infamous.

The bearded Marrou, who looks like a cheerful Lenin, studies the day's legislative agenda from his sixth-floor office in the Court Building, overlooking downtown Juneau and the Gastineau Channel. At about 10 minutes to 10, he trots across the street to the grim confines of the Alaska State Capitol (design: mid-century junior high school).

Wearing the standard legislative tweed jacket and tie, the 47-year-old Marrou looks much like the 39 other representatives converging on the House floor for today's 10:00 session. Except for his two lapel pins: an American eagle on the right chest, and on the left a skull, scarved in a red bandana, boasting the Hell's Angels motto "Ride Hard, Die Free."

As Marrou strides down the corridor leading to the House chamber, Finance Committee Chairman Al Adams throws him a mock-Nazi salute, bellowing "Liberty, Freedom!" Marrou ignores Adams, an Eskimo who is perhaps the most powerful man in the House, and takes his seat at the last desk in the last row, just in front of the table occupied by the press corps. (The location has its advantages—easy access to both the



Fourth Estate and the bathroom.) A yellow Post-it note is stuck to Marrou's desk. It's his credo, scrawled in a particularly frustrating moment. It reads: "Statism Rules—But Liberty Should."

Marrou recites the morning Pledge of

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**What can a Libertarian do if elected to office? He can at least become "the conscience of the legislature."**

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Allegiance loudly and with evident conviction. His eyes dart once or twice to liberal Democrat Peter Goll, who enrages some representatives by allegedly (ah, libel laws) refusing to salute the flag. A nervous, thin-lipped young man who could pass for a yuppie Frank Burns, Goll has a whiny voice, stirs coffee with his pinky finger, and is "the kind of guy people automatically hate," as one staffer puts it.

The legislature disposes of its routine business and takes up a bill to create a \$1-billion Alaska Research Development Endowment, a bureaucracy whose purpose will be to subsidize natural-resources research and "unlock knowledge," in the words of Al Adams.

Marrou rises and is recognized to speak. (Which may be the most common occurrence in Juneau. "He's occupied more floor time than half these guys put together," marvels Democratic elder statesman Red Boucher.) Adams's plan to "unlock knowledge" is his target.

"Who says knowledge is locked up?" roars Marrou, heedless of his wife's plea earlier that morning to "talk a little quieter." He continues: "Is it in a chest somewhere, with a padlock? All we gotta do is just leave people alone and they'll do just jim-dandy. That's been the history of the world.... This bill appalls me. It's the worst bill we've had come before us. The vote should be 40-0 against."

The two members of the capital press corps present are smiling as Marrou sits down. It may be the speech (they know the bill will not be defeated 40-0), or it may be a drawing Marrou passed back minutes before, while an "art in public places" bill was being debated. It's a sketch of a screw driving into an IRS logo. "Screw the IRS," the rendering is titled, "Art by A.V. Marrou, Alaskan Artist." One reporter scribbles back, "What does the V stand for?" Without missing a beat, Marrou jots his answer. "Vicious."

The Speaker of the House wishes to close the debate and vote on the measure, but Marrou is up one more time. "Cooperation between state and industry," he says, his voice dropping, "is exactly how Nazi Germany operated." The Speaker is staring back at him, head resting on his chin, seemingly bored by Marrou's disquisition on fascist economics. The vote is taken. Twenty-three in favor, 14 against. The measure passes. Marrou, at least, has improved on yesterday's showing, when he wound up on the losing end of 34-6, 33-6, 29-10, 32-6, 32-8, and 29-9 decisions.

When the papers report on Andre Marrou's speeches the next day, they'll designate him "L-Homer." It's jarring to non-Alaskans the first time they see it. For Marrou is neither Democrat nor Republican—he is a Libertarian. In fact, he is presently the only state legislator in the country from the Libertarian Party.

**L**ike 80 percent of all adult Alaskans, Andre Marrou was born somewhere else. Southwest Texas, that is, which he left at age 17 to study chemical

engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He stayed in Boston for 17 years, until "in 1973 I came to Alaska with all my worldly possessions."

Marrou settled in Anchorage, a city of 250,000 that contains half the state's population (and is scornfully referred to as "Los Anchorage" by urbanophobe pioneer-types). He became a jack-of-all-trades, working as a cordwood salesman, disc jockey, and technical advisor on the Alaskan pipeline, before leaving the city and spending two years with his new wife, Eileen, in the woods. For those two years the Marrous lived what Alaskans call the subsistence life, chopping wood and picking berries in the solitude of Perl Island and Bear Cove.

The Marrouvian odyssey ended in Homer, a town of 2,500 located 200 miles down the road from Anchorage, at the tip of the Kenai peninsula. Actually, Homer is down the road from every city in the continental United State—it is the final stop in America's contiguous highway system. As Joe McGinniss described it in his fine "I survived Alaska" book, *Going to Extremes*: "If you got in your car in New York City and started to drive, Homer would be as far as you could go."

While living in Anchorage, Marrou discovered the fledgling Libertarian Party when a woman handed him a party brochure at a Small Business Administration seminar. "About two weeks later I read it," Marrou recalls, "and I was dumbfounded that this was exactly what I believed in." What he and the Libertarian Party believe is encapsulated in the Jeffersonian maxim that "that government is best which governs least." In practice, that translates into support for unfettered free enterprise and individual rights and opposition to government grants of favor and privilege.

Marrou soon became disenchanted with the Libertarians' incessant quibbling over fine points of doctrine—"there was a lot of philosophical debate going on and there was no attempt to bring people into the party." In his disgust, he and his wife fled into the woods, away from people and politics and everything else. Rustic reflection begat a new resolve. "I did a lot of thinking while chopping wood," remembers Marrou, "and I decided that I was not going to roll over and allow the establishment to run over me. I was going to do what I could to help the cause of liberty." Thus inspired, he and Eileen emerged from the woods and set their sights on entering the belly of the beast.

Marrou ran for the Alaska legislature in 1982, coming in second in a field of three. In 1984, he ran again, beat the incumbent by 56 votes out of some 11,000 cast, and set out for the old mining town of Juneau.



## Marrou and top aide Jack Sanderson plot strategy in their room with a view.

**J**uneau is a politician's dream. Located in southeastern Alaska, in the chain of islands and inlets known as the Inside Passage, the city is inaccessible by road. Visitors arrive by ferry or by plane, the latter mode requiring a tricky descent through cloud-enshrouded mountains. (Travelers who are even a wee bit chary of flight are advised to booze it up



PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK KELLEY

well before landing.)

The preponderance of Alaska's population (read: constituents) is thus several hundred miles away from a capital that can't be approached except by the most expensive forms of transportation. No need, then, as a politician, to worry that the hoi polloi might take an undue interest in your actions.

Once a legislator gets to Juneau, he finds himself "isolated and surrounded by bureaucrats," in Marrou's words. Forty percent of the workforce of this city of 25,000 labor for some level of government, and the town's picturesque setting is sullied by a rash of ugly government buildings housing state agencies that perform functions you don't even want to think about. To keep his sanity in this sanctum of statism, the good Jeffersonian at least has recourse to a variety of fine drinking establishments: Bullwinkles ("For a Good Time in the Old Town Tonight"), Lucky Lady ("Juneau's Famous Irish Pub"), Red Dog Saloon ("Work Is the Curse of the Drinking Class"), etc., etc.

There is considerable sentiment in Alaska to move the capital from Juneau to Willow,

a tiny town north of Anchorage. Voters approved the move in a referendum several years ago, but funds for the move have never been appropriated. One fear is that the politicians would squander millions of dollars turning Willow into an arctic Brasilia, complete with lavishly appointed quarters for state officials and civil servants. Marrou, an ardent supporter of the move, envisions the capital of Willow as such: "You put up one quonset hut for the Senate, one quonset hut for the House, and one quonset hut for the governor, and that's the capital." Not that he's unwilling to compromise with legislators who have more-regal tastes—"You could give it a city name, if you like," he concedes.

**B**ut the "isolated little island of socialism" Marrou so despises is a political anomaly in Alaska. Voters in the rest of the state exhibit the healthy hostility to government one would expect from settlers on the final frontier. Hell, there's even a secession movement,

Joe Vogler's Alaskan Independence Party, that advocates breaking away from the USA and declaring Alaska an independent country. ("It's a great idea that won't work," opines Marrou, noting that the matter was settled in 1861.)

The Libertarian Party has found Alaska far more hospitable to its message than any state in the Lower 48. Two Libertarians, Dick Randolph and Ken Fanning, preceded Marrou in the legislature, and 1980 Libertarian presidential candidate Ed Clark carried 12 percent of Alaska's vote, including all 29 votes cast in the town of Chicken. Randolph's spirited 1982 race for governor attracted 15 percent of the vote and inspired the Republican National Committee to broadcast anti-Libertarian radio ads around the state. This November, Marrou is up for reelection, running on a statewide slate with seven other Libertarians.

What explains the success of the anti-government movement in Alaska? Marrou avers: "Alaskans generally came up here to get away from whatever they didn't like in the Lower 48. By and large, when you ask them it turns out they didn't like the oppressiveness of government in the Lower 48, so they came up here to get more *freedom*." He continues: "Things go fine for a year or two, until it finally dawns on them that Alaska is a very socialist state."

He's not exaggerating. In Alaska the "government owns almost everything," Milton Friedman has written, including the land. The percentage of Alaskan land that is in private ownership (under 5 percent) is less than the percentage of land devoted to private plots in the Soviet Union. Widespread resentment against the federal and state landlords has handed the Libertarians, who propose to allow individuals to homestead the land, a golden populist issue. Which they've exploited with some success: a Libertarian-sponsored "Tundra Rebellion" initiative, which instructed the state government to seize federally owned land as a first step toward privatization, passed overwhelmingly in 1982. (The initiative was subsequently ruled unconstitutional by the state attorney general.)

Complementing the virtual state monopoly on land is the embarrassment of riches that has flowed into state coffers since the discovery of oil 15 years ago at Prudhoe Bay, on state-owned land on the Arctic coast. Oil revenues account for over 85 percent of Alaska's budget, which has mushroomed from \$100 million in pre-oil days to more than \$3 billion today. "With \$3 billion," sputters Marrou, "we oughta have our own navy, our own air force, and our own marine corps." Instead, they have an army of well-paid bureaucrats—50,000

state and local government workers whose average salary exceeds \$32,000. The recent decline in oil prices may act as an oleaginous Gramm-Rudman, forcing cuts in state spending, but then again it may not. Democratic Governor Bill Sheffield and the usual cast of progressive thinkers are cautiously suggesting the restoration of a statewide personal income tax, which was repealed in 1979 after a tireless campaign by former Libertarian Representative Randolph.

**T**here are no grizzled prospectors in the Alaska House of Representatives. Nor are there chair-tossing brawls; disputes are settled by the electronic tally board. No one carries a gun or drinks whiskey in the chamber, and the debate is no more raucous than a Young Republicans' Parcheesi party. There are fewer lawyers (6 of 40) than in most legislatures, and more beards (10 of 40), but the Peter Golls far outnumber the Clint Eastwoods.

When the newly elected Marrou arrived in Juneau in January 1985, the first thing he did was meet with Speaker of the House Ben Grussendorf, a Sitka Democrat. "He said there were two things that he expected of me," remembers Marrou. "He said that he expected me to be the conscience of the legislature, and he expected me to generate a lot of ideas."

Marrou assured Grussendorf that he'd generate ideas, and he has—he introduced 75 bills in his first term, more than double the second most prolific legislator. But Grussendorf's other request took him aback. "The fact that the Speaker expected me to be the conscience of the legislature really stunned me. It brings up the next logical question: What the hell did they do for a conscience when there was no Libertarian there?"

Ask Marrou about the fortitude and character of his Housemates and he's off to the races. Other representatives have "come up to me and congratulated me and said things like, 'Andre, that was a great speech, I feel the same way, we've been needing someone to say that for years.' My answer is, 'Well, gee, you can do it too. I don't have to be the only hero around here. You can

get up and say what you believe in.' But they're just afraid. Why they're afraid to stand up for what they believe I don't know. They're so afraid that sometimes they'll send me notes asking me to talk on various subjects for them, which I'm willing to do if it's pro-individual liberty and anti-govern-

sive dissent. "There are diseases in other states," Taylor pointed out, "that we haven't even heard of up here because we have licensed barbers." Taylor's argument carried and his side won; Alaska was saved from the unspeakable horror of unlicensed cosmetologists.



### **"What the hell did they do for a conscience when there was no Libertarian here?"**

ment. But it astounds me that they're afraid to get up and talk for what they believe in."

No one has accused Marrou of being reticent. His practice of speaking on virtually every bill that restricts freedom or expands government has drawn mixed reviews. "He's a great speaker," allows *Anchorage Times* newsman James Wasserman. Another veteran capital correspondent is less kind: "I've had guys tell me that after a while they start to tune him out....He makes some good points but they think he should be more selective."

Marrou has heard the criticism but shrugs it off. "I try not to talk on every bill," he says, "but they put up such garbage that I feel it's incumbent on me to do what I can to protect individual liberties by telling people what a ridiculous bill it is."

Other representatives have a far higher tolerance for absurdity. When Marrou dismissed a measure that would extend the life of a state board that regulates barbers, hairdressers, and cosmetologists as "another of those silly bills that shouldn't even see the light of day," Rep. Robin Taylor, a Wrangell Republican who sits at the desk in front of Marrou, rose to offer a persua-

expressed in the Declaration of Independence have not been extirpated from this land, despite the best efforts of our governing class. He jokes and kids with his colleagues during recesses, but Marrou's passionate speeches sometimes have the quality of a jeremiad. "He's the conscience of the legislature," says Minority Leader Terry Martin with a smile. "He gets up there and says things we don't want to hear. Plays on our consciences, just like a priest. But this isn't church."

Nor is Marrou a miracle worker. But his influence seems to work in mysterious ways, as Minority Leader Martin recently found out when he asked the Minority Caucus (11 Republicans and Marrou) to endorse a bill recriminalizing marijuana. (Alaskans may legally grow and own up to 4 ounces of the killer weed.)

When Martin brought the bill up, recalls Marrou, "I thought, 'Oh boy, here's where we separate the goats from the sheep. I'm going to be the only one out on this.' In fact, if failed. Out of 12 members, he got only 5 votes." That's right—a majority of conservative Republicans in the Alaska House of Representatives support legalized dope.

**N**one of the 75 bills Marrou has introduced have become law. Two—a measure to deregulate concert promoters and a bill extending "good Samaritan" liability exemption to emergency medical technicians—passed the House and died in the Senate. His other 73 bills range the antistatist gamut, from repealing motor-fuels taxes to transferring state lands to homesteaders to repealing a legislative pay raise.

As a minority of one, Marrou understands that he's no power broker. Rather, he acts as a sort of Ghost of America's Past, descending on the chamber each day to remind Alaska's legislators that the sentiments

In part, one suspects, because an eloquent voice for liberty haunts the chamber.

**M**arrou is having lunch at the Capitol Cafe with Walt Furnace, an Anchorage Republican who is perhaps Marrou's closest friend and ally in the House. Furnace is a burly, amiable black man, a Texas native who came to Alaska in 1963 with the Air Force and never left. Between bites of his liver-and-onions, Furnace discusses his colleagues' profiles in cowardice.

"Some of these guys have prostituted themselves so many times..." he shakes his head, voice trailing off. "Man, you *gotta* vote your conscience."

Much to Furnace's consternation, the whoredom is bipartisan. "The problem with Republicans," he says in a near-whisper, "is they don't have the *guts*" to vote against pro-government bills. "Most of the stuff we pass here," he leans back, chuckling, "the world wouldn't end tomorrow if we didn't pass 'em. There's just too many laws."

Marrou excuses himself from the table. Furnace is asked what his colleagues think of Marrou. He smiles, and offers the by-now standard refrain: "He's the conscience of the legislature—and people don't like that."

No, they don't. But watching Marrou wage his lonely battle for liberty, one can't help but admire him. Day after day, he defends the ideals of 1776 in the best way he knows how. He rises to speak on almost every bill, even though many of his colleagues wish he would just shut up. He loses almost every vote.

He's involved in a tough race for re-election against opponents who attack him as "ineffective."

To the paternalists and the often venal, unprincipled types who dominate politics, he is the Randall "Tex" Cobb of Alaska, a fighter who hasn't a chance but refuses to hit the canvas so long as he has a breath to draw. But to the men who founded this country—the Patrick Henrys and Thomas

Jeffersons and Samuel Adamases and the other patriots who valued freedom over power and the individual over the state—Andre Marrou would be as familiar and as welcome as the sunrise. He is a modern true Son of Liberty; that such a man is an oddity speaks volumes about the state of our union.

an amendment to the ice classics bill. This time his amendment, and speech, is scrupulously nonideological. He is proposing to allow the Kenai Chamber of Commerce to hold a "goose classic," in which bettors may predict the return of various types of geese to the area.

An amendment of this sort would pass most legislatures without much fuss. But most legislatures haven't consciences, men who stubbornly refuse to compromise and who insist on calling socialism, and authoritarianism, and statism, by their proper names.

The Speaker asks the members to cast their votes. The light next to Marrou's name flashes green, as does Furnace's and a batch of others, mostly Republican. An equal number of lights flash red. The vote is 18 in favor, 19 opposed. The renegade has got his comeuppance.

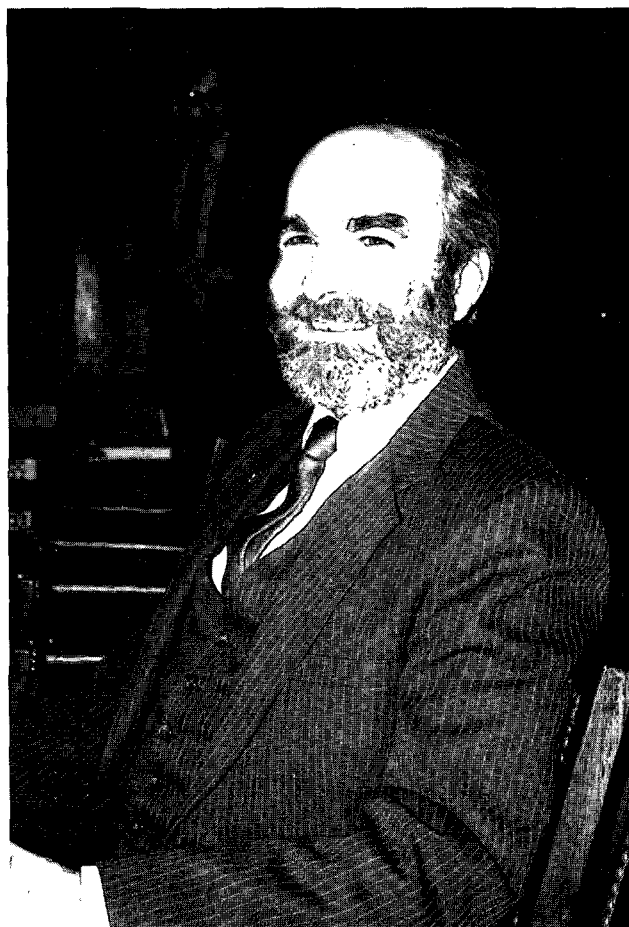
But then...preppette Drue Pearce, the glamorous Anchorage Republican, stands and is recognized. She asks that her vote be changed from no to yes. *Peripeteia!* Now Marrou has won, 19-18. Scattered applause breaks out in the chamber. Representatives wheel around on their swivel chairs, laughing, saluting. Red Boucher shouts, "Goose Marrou!" and everyone laughs some more. Marrou, beaming, passes a note back to the press table. "See. We *Can* Win."

**T**he spring legislative session drones on into its last week. Legislators and staff are busy with moving plans, subletting apartments, and getting drunk at the Elks Club. The day before the first tourist boat of the season sails

into the Gastineau Channel, Andre and Eileen Marrou will take the ferry up to Skagway, then drive home the scenic route, through Yukon Territory towns like Whitehorse and Dawson. Two weeks later they'll reach the end of the line, the dead end to end all dead ends, home sweet home, Homer. **■**

Assistant Editor Bill Kauffman, Washington-based, gets to Alaska on occasion.

## A solitary voice for liberty haunts the chamber: is the chamber listening?



**T**he House turns to consideration of "ice classics" legislation. Ice classics is a form of gambling wherein one purchases a chance to predict the exact moment that the ice breaks on several Alaskan rivers. The most popular such game, the Nenana Ice Classic, annually awards more than \$100,000 to the winner.

Marrou is on his feet again, offering

*Fifty-eight thousand brothers and friends and fathers died in Vietnam. I don't want my son sent to some far-off war 15 years from now against his will.*

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## **Duty, Honor, Country — But No Draft**

**L**ike the weeds in my garden each summer, calls to resume conscription are perennial and pervasive. Cultivated by long-time draft supporters and by new proponents of national service, support for some form of compelled service can be found across much of the political landscape. The sentiment seems at home in the mid-1980s, a part of the repudiation of the post-Vietnam syndrome. But it's a wrong-headed sentiment, the product of narrow, alien thinking.

While policymakers must fashion adequate military forces, they must not ignore personal, individual freedom. How, I wonder, can people with a professed interest in preserving the Constitution, people who care about American liberty, so disregard the freedom of the individual? How can they feel empowered to claim the lives of our

sons in service to the state?

For many of us, the issue of conscription in 1986 cannot be considered in isolation from its practice during the Vietnam war. For those of us who came of age in the Vietnam era and were threatened by the draft, or those who had brothers, fathers, or sons "selected" and sent to war, the issues of the draft and Vietnam are inextricable. Indeed, reconsideration of the latter may be driving reconsideration of the former. The war is thought of these days by some as a noble cause. Columnist Richard Cohen does well to warn us, however, "More dangerous by far than the post-Vietnam syndrome is the pre-Vietnam syndrome, in which dash and valor and Green Berets

**by Greg Todd**

were supposed to solve problems politicians could not."

Most of the men of my generation avoided or evaded the draft during the Vietnam war, as I did. My case was not dramatic. A student deferment shielded me until I graduated from college, at which time the draft call in my locality stopped two numbers short of my own. I only got as far as the physical examination, and by then a regimen of beer, popcorn, and exercise had ensured that my skinny body wasn't what the Selective Service coveted.

Some of my contemporaries who ducked the draft now argue in favor of reintroducing it. In the current era of more-monochromatic patriotism, they've changed their minds; in today's light they see a draft as somehow egalitarian and ennobling. As if to prove their repatriation, they swear now that conscription is a good thing; now that they have