

# Bill Kraus: WIPPS Lifetime Achievement Award for Civic Leadership acceptance speech

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*This is the text of a speech delivered by veteran Wisconsin politico Bill Kraus upon acceptance on April 4 of the first Lifetime Achievement Award for Civic Leadership from the Wisconsin Institute for Public Policy and Service. WIPPS celebrated its 10th anniversary with an event in Wausau. The text below reflects the views of the author, and these opinions are neither endorsed nor supported by WisOpinion.com.*

I've been a big fan of what Eric and WIPPS have been doing for 10 years.

WIPPS tackles big ideas with very little money which is admirable.

Even more amazing is that everything they do is fact based. You remember what facts are I'm sure.

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Anyway.

I'm proud and pleased to serve on their board.

But I do have trouble explaining why they chose me for this honor. It must have something to do with what my wife refers to as my checkered past.

My 66 years in and around politics and policy have been influenced by many people, some of whom are in this room.

My list of thank yous start with the dynamic duo from Marshfield: I met Mel Laird and his high school classmate Bob Froehlke in post WWII law school in 1946.

Bob and I made it all the way through to graduation. Mel went into the State Senate to replace his father who had died in office.

We joined forces again in 1952. We all lived in the 7th District and Mel was running for Congress.

The creative Bob Froehlke showed me how to organize a campaign and Mel demonstrated how to run as a Republican, keep your distance from Joe McCarthy, and win.

This was my first crack at politics, the only game for adults.

I was hooked by the people and their passion and the game itself. You win you lose. It's over.

My next big thank you goes to Ody Fish who was running Warren Knowles' campaign for governor in 1964 and picked me to run it in the 7th District.

It was not a great year for Republicans. Lyndon Johnson beat Barry Goldwater by over 400,000 votes in Wisconsin, but Ody eked out a 13,000 vote win for Warren.

Ody then asked me to run the state campaign for Warren in 1966.

1966 was a triple header for several of us. Warren won and Tommy Thompson was elected to the Assembly for the first time.

And Bob Williams who was a life long idea machine for Laird and countless others orchestrated Bill Steiger's close win in the 6th District that year.

Bob Williams and I were partners in crime for 65 years for candidates for offices from city counsel to Congress, to state government including the Supreme Court and beyond.

Then along came a UW chancellor named Lee Dreyfus who wanted to be governor. He joined the Republican Party in December of 1977 so he could run in 1978.

By this time money had become more important in campaigns and his campaign didn't have any.

But we had something better than money. We had Bob Williams and his amazing

ideas, Marsha Lindsay's TV news show, and Lee himself who figured how to woo that 40% of the populace that does not regularly vote for anyone.

The crucial primary campaign had a \$100,000 budget and no TV commercials. We won 60-40.

My checkered credentials include many, many more wonderful people, a lot of dumb German luck, and years of associating with people on both sides of the aisle which i don't have time to thank by name.

But I thank you and WIPPS for recognizing all of them by giving me this great honor tonight.

Let's make the world a better place.