

*Collegiality • Citizenship • Generosity*

## **Ambassador Charles T. Manatt**



*“Born not for ourselves, but for the whole world.”*

*—Chuck Manatt’s High School Motto*

**A**mbassador Charles Manatt is the founder and senior partner of the law firm Manatt, Phelps and Phillips, LLP, and former Chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

Born in Chicago in 1936 but raised in Audubon, Iowa, this son of a farmer and schoolteacher first tasted politics at age fifteen. The event was on April 14, 1952, in the nearby town of Carroll, Iowa. Chuck paid three dollars to attend a teenage-targeted Democratic Party fundraiser to support the Adlai Stevenson’s presidential campaign. Chuck graduated Iowa State College in 1958, along with Kathy, his wife of over fifty years whom he had known since the fifth grade. He served with the U.S. Army in the Quartermaster Corps and JAG. Shortly after graduating with his law degree in 1962 from George Washington University, where he was on the Board of Editors for the *George Washington Law Review*, he, his wife Kathy, and their baby

daughter Michelle moved to Los Angeles, where Charles and Kathy's two sons, Tim and Dan, were born soon after. In 1965, Manatt founded his own law firm, capitalizing on his experience in banking and finance. Today, that law firm has offices in major cities across the country, and Manatt remains a principal partner.

Understanding Chuck begins with his family. The Manatt family believes they are descended from Huguenots who migrated from France through Belgium and Scotland to Northern Ireland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This family knowledge stems from Robert Manatt, Jr., who was born in County Down in 1792. He, with much of the rest of the family, came through Philadelphia in 1817, and eventually settled in Holmes County, Ohio. With the Homestead Act in full swing, he hitched up the horses to covered wagons and moved his family to Poweshiek County, Iowa, in 1847. It is believed that the Manatt family was the second family of European decent to settle there—just a year after Iowa joined the Union in 1846.

The Manatts thrived in Iowa. As a young man growing up there, Chuck was greatly influenced by formative experiences as a member of 4H, the Boy Scouts, and the Future Farmers of America. The creed of the Future Farmers of America: "Learning to earn, earning to live, living to serve," continues to be Chuck's mantra guiding his career and public service.

Chuck has developed his professional career in five major areas: law, banking, politics, farming, and democracy building. It begins with law. His interest in pursuing a legal degree came, in part, from watching the leaders of the Iowa Young Democrats, all of whom seemed to be lawyers. Chuck enrolled in law school at Iowa and then transferred to the George Washington University School of Law in 1959. He served as the school's representative to the George Washington Student Body Council and as an associate editor of the *Law Review*. There he met one of his eventual law partners and lifelong friends, Tom Phelps, also an Iowa State grad.

After he completed law school, Chuck and Kathy traveled to Los Angeles, where he learned about banking. His training at O'Melveny was especially good. There he learned about the savings and loan chartering and bank approval processes, as the firm was just beginning to represent one of the first new banks chartered after World War II.

By the fall of 1964, Chuck and Kathy had firmly planted their roots in Los Angeles. They bought their first home, in Van Nuys; they learned that their son Tim was going to join the world; and Chuck opened his first law office above the Pantages Theater in Hollywood. The practice developed

on the chartering and representation of new banks and savings and loans. San Luis Obispo Savings & Loan, Saddleback National in Tustin, and Palm Springs National Bank, and Valley National Bank in Salinas were among his first clients. In addition to the financial institutions work, Chuck started working on representing developers of some shopping centers, both in the San Fernando Valley and in Palm Springs.

The next winter, Chuck had extended discussions with friend and fellow Iowa State and George Washington law graduate, Tom Phelps. They came to an agreement, and Tom joined Chuck in a law practice in April 1965. Alan Rothenberg, also from O'Melveny, joined in 1966 as a litigation partner. In subsequent years, although the practice has had the ups and downs of most law firms, it has grown to four hundred professionals, with law offices in eight cities. In 2001, Chuck and his partners established Manatt/Jones Global Strategies, which is an international consulting firm headed by Ambassador James Jones and focused on client representation regarding incoming and outgoing investment in the United States. The consulting firm has offices in Washington, D.C., Mexico City, and Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Chuck's involvement in the banking industry resulted from his work in law. His very first client at O'Melveny & Myers turned out to be the FDIC application for American City Bank. Since O'Melveny had not handled a bank application in many years, they thought a young freshly minted lawyer might be the right one to do it. Eventually, that application, and that of the San Luis Obispo Savings and Loan, led to a flurry of activity in the bank chartering area. Among the benefits of this work, the young counsel was able to learn a great deal from the Directors of these banks, who were generally twenty to thirty years older than he was at the time.

The independent banking trend took off after many of the new savings and loans had been chartered, post-War. After completing about forty bank applications for clients, Chuck had the idea to start a bank directly. Tom Phelps, Alan Rothenberg, and he were founders of First Los Angeles, in Century City. Chuck was the Chairman of the bank and the largest stockholder.

This role gave Chuck recognition in the greater Los Angeles community, which he would not have received there as a lawyer. He was involved with the California Bankers Association (CBA), elected president of the organization in 1979. The banking work led in turn to numerous overseas activities.

Yet, despite his involvement in law, banking, and politics, Chuck never forgot his roots in Iowa and farming. His interest in farming developed es-

pecially when he was in 4H and FFA in high school. When city kids or town boys were running their paper routes, dirt farmers' sons were caring for their hogs or cattle as part of their 4H or FFA projects. The hogs Chuck raised were of the Hereford breed, which no one else in the county raised. This meant that Chuck would always have the Grand Champion Hereford pig of Audubon County and then go on to show at the Iowa State Fair. Chuck's FFA instructor, Jim Hamilton, drilled into his head the importance of knowing how to fill out and read a financial statement and how to plan a project that would have a positive cash flow. When he finished his high school years, Chuck had four steers, twelve Hereford hogs, and about \$3000 in the bank.

Manatt graduated from Iowa State, studying agricultural business, rural sociology, and agronomy. Over the next few years, while working in law and banking, Chuck began purchasing Iowa farmland. Today he has twenty quarters, composed of 2,400 acres of cropland and 800 acres of pasture. His agricultural portfolio spans six different farmers in Cass and Audubon Counties in Iowa. In addition to the corn and soybean operations, they run 600 stockers on the pasture, which are fed out during the wintertime at a feed lot before going to market.

The recent capstone to Chuck's agricultural activities was the building of the Taylor Hill Lodge on Highway 71, north of Audubon. He had the lodge built by Tom Testroet, who is an amazing carpenter as well as being the son of one Chuck's high school classmates. The joy of the lodge is that it serves as Chuck's family home when they are in Iowa and otherwise is available for the community's use, as it desires. Donna Bauer manages the lodge, and Ted Bauer manages the overall farming operation. Happily, these managers have worked with the Manatts since the time when Chuck's father was running the farm operations.

Perhaps the area where Chuck is most well known, though, is his involvement in politics. As mentioned earlier, his first political event was a Democratic Party fundraiser to support the Adlai Stevenson's Presidential campaign. Richard Rausch was the promoter of the fundraiser. Little did Chuck know how thoroughly this event would hook him for the future. Chuck immediately made himself useful to the Democratic Party, serving in roles such as President of the Iowa State Young Democrats, National College Chairman of the Young Democrats, Executive Director of the Young Democratic Clubs of America, and Legal Counsel for the California Federation of Young Democrats.

In Los Angeles, Chuck started out as the treasurer of the 26th Dis-

trict California Democratic Club. That was, in part, a grassroots movement started in the 1950s, which was championed by future U.S. Senator Alan Cranston. In 1964, Chuck was the Chairman of the Young Citizens for Johnson/Humphrey, in southern California, under the patronage of Earl Warren, Jr., and the new young Senator Birch Bayh. Throughout the '60s, Chuck was especially active in supporting Congressman Jim Corman and Assemblyman Bob Moretti, who later became the California Speaker. This eventually led to his working with Nelson Rising, Fred Port, John McAllister, Burt Pines, Gray Davis, and others in the Tunney for Senate campaign in 1970.

Following up on the Tunney campaign, political operatives raised the idea of Chuck running for State Chairman. The previous summer, Chuck had lost in a twelve-way race for LA County Committee from the San Fernando Valley Assembly District. Chuck dug in and visited fifty-two of California's fifty-eight counties in his quest to be successful this time.

The actual election is a story in itself. During his California Chairmanship, Chuck generally had good luck in electing Democrats to office. After his first try at reappointment didn't succeed, the state did it a second time, and that, along with the Watergate scandal, ushered in more new legislators. The exciting times of being a Party Chairman included trying to build from the ground up a political organization that would be supportive of office nominees and progressive policies around which most Democrats could rally. This marked the first time Chuck had to rebuild Democratic operations, following the era of Ronald Reagan.

The concluding year of Chuck's State Party Chairmanship reflected a national victory for Governor Carter and, unfortunately, a loss for Senator Tunney. As Larry O'Brien's book of memoirs reflects, "There are no final victories in the party business." Following his California experience, Chuck was elected Chairman of the Western Conference of the Democrats, and in 1978 he was tapped by DNC Chairman John White to be the National Finance Chairman of the Party. Both of these new assignments gave Chuck the chance to travel much of the country and work quite closely with party officials, and some office leaders, in rebuilding party activities. Unfortunately, the 1980 election results were reflective of the Reagan magic and limited the progressive policies that had been attempted in the Carter era. Chuck decided to run for Democratic National Committee (DNC) Chairman to again concentrate on "the rebuilding after the Reagan phenomenon" that he had experienced in his service to California.

The DNC Chairmanship brought both great joy and great frustration

during Chuck's term. He was able to modernize the party, computerize the national headquarters, establish the Harriman Media Center, and build the first-ever National Party Headquarters. In 1982, Democrats had good gains in the House and in Governorships.

Chuck's presumed replacement as National Party Chairman by Burt Lance was one of the biggest fiascos Chuck would experience. As literally hundreds of Chuck's friends were coming to San Francisco for the weekend of the Democratic Convention, they were buffeted with the news that the Mondale campaign wanted Lance as the National Chairman. (While in the Carter administration, Lance had been accused of mismanagement and corruption as Chairman of the Board of Calhoun National Bank of Calhoun, Georgia, leading to his resignation as director of the Office of Management and Budget in 1977. Lance was acquitted of all charges in 1981.)

Fortunately, the *Wall Street Journal* ran an article in favor of Manatt for Party Chair, and Chuck prevailed.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Chuck's work continued, as a National Committeeman from California and as a Co-Chairman of the Clinton/Gore ticket in 1992. Happily, that election campaign was successful, and the Democrats came into their own with a progressive President.

But politics did not remain domestic for Chuck. He has also made a lifelong commitment to spreading democracy around the world. Chuck's first involvement with the international democracy movement came with a NATO Young Political Leaders conference in 1961. They met in D.C. that year, and in 1962, they met in Aarhus, Denmark. From that activity evolved a group called the U.S. Youth League and its Washington affiliate, the American Council of Young Political Leaders. There was much activity across borders, with and into Communist countries, which went under the guise of study tours or learning missions. Chuck's first trip abroad for the Young Political Leaders was in 1974, when he enjoyed an extensive trip to Japan. He continued to pursue other, similar activities, including visiting with the Peace Corps in Columbia and going on a study mission to Germany with the Republican leadership of the California legislature.

Chuck's more serious involvement in promoting a democratic form of government around the world started in 1978, when Bill Brock, as the Republican Chairman, and Chuck, as the Democratic National Finance Chairman, got together to form the American Political Foundation. The Foundation conducted a variety of activities, and with Larry Silverberger's help, President Reagan gave a speech in the House of Commons on June 9, 1983, encouraging Americans to form the National Endowment



*Chuck and Kathy Manatt display their souvenir flag from Chuck's appointment as the U.S. Ambassador to the Dominican Republic in 1999.*

for Democracy. It was Chuck's pleasure to serve as Vice Chairman of that group, and he was founding Chairman of the National Democratic Institute, the Endowment's Democratic affiliate. In 1999, then-President Clinton appointed Manatt Ambassador to the Dominican Republic, where Chuck emphasized election administration reform, commercial development, and greater cooperation between the Dominican Republic and the United States' criminal justice systems.

Chuck has been honored numerous times for his professional abilities, including being named in *The Best Lawyers in America* and being awarded two honorary Doctor of Laws degrees.

In addition to his prodigious professional and political activities, Chuck has dedicated himself to numerous causes and organizations. Currently, Chuck is the Chairman emeritus of the George Washington University Board of Trustees, having served as its Chairman from 2001 to 2007 and as a member of the Board since 1980. Since Chuck's joining the Board, the university has seen rapid expansion and growth, including the construction of a state-of-the-art facility for its medical school and other key programs.

Chuck is also a member of the Board of Trustees of Grinnell College, in Iowa. His commitment to his home state and to higher education was demonstrated most recently in 2002, when he established the Manatt-Phelps

Lecture in Political Science at Iowa State University. Since giving its inaugural lecture, Chuck has brought such luminaries to Iowa State as then-Senator Biden, Senator Hagel, FedEx founder Fred Smith, and international political dignitaries from Mexico and Sweden.

Chuck is also the Director of the National Museum of American History, a branch of the Smithsonian dedicated to inspiring a broader understanding of America and its many peoples. He is Director of the National Capital Boy Scouts of America. He is committed to social justice and works to improve the lives of the poor as a trustee of the Wesley Foundation, the Red Cloud Indian School in Pine Ridge, South Dakota, and the Meridian Center International, a leading nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization dedicated to strengthening international understanding. In 2009, Chuck became the President and a Director of the Council of American Ambassadors, a nonprofit, nonpartisan association of over two hundred former and incumbent non-career U.S. ambassadors. Chuck serves as a Director of the Center for the Study of the Presidency. He is also an advisory member to the Paladin Capital Fund.

Above all else, Chuck believes in the goodness of people and in helping those in need, when possible, to do the best they can for themselves, their families, and their communities. Throughout his life, Chuck's career reflects a commitment to helping those who are less fortunate. Helping others motivates many of his life's activities. Chuck truly believes that people are not born merely to improve conditions for themselves, but to improve the governments and the lives of the whole world by giving generously of their resources and talent. This Iowa farmer truly has lived by the Future Farmers' creed. He has learned to earn, earned to live, and lived to serve.