

Minnesotans look back on 1968

GEORGE AND CHARLIE PILLSBURY

Father and son

1 In 1968, Republican George Pillsbury was thinking about getting into politics, but hadn't yet been elected as state senator from Orono. His oldest son, Charlie, who had campaigned door to door for Eisenhower with his mother, Sally, when he was a tot, was now a student at Yale, drawn to a growing antiwar sentiment on campus. His roommate, cartoonist Garry Trudeau, based the character of Mike Doonesbury in part on Charlie.

A businessman and heir to the Pillsbury milling fortune, George was a Marine in World War II and was at odds, at first, with his son's antiwar stance. Still, he said, there weren't a lot of heated arguments around the dinner table. "We agreed to disagree," he said.

"My dad is of a generation that trusted the experts to know what was right," Charlie said. "I didn't think the experts were right this time, and as it turned out, they weren't."

Friction of a different sort developed after Charlie skipped his college hockey banquet to campaign for Sen. Eugene McCarthy, who was challenging fellow Minnesotan Hubert Humphrey for the Democratic presidential nomination. Four years earlier, McCarthy had fought off a challenge from Charlie's uncle, Wheelock Whitney.

A few years later, Charlie's name was on a flier alongside Yippie leader Jerry Rubin's, advertising an antiwar event. George was then facing competition for conservative votes, and told Charlie the Pillsbury name couldn't be associated. "We compromised," Charlie said. "I took my name off the flier, but I still gave the speech." The younger Pillsbury is still putting that negotiating skill set to use, as volunteer director of an international-dispute settlement nonprofit called Mediators Without Borders.



George Pillsbury, left, and his son Charles in 1972;

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