

The Man Who Would Never Be

MAYOR

IN THE RACE FOR PHILADELPHIA'S
TOP JOB, MICHAEL NUTTER W'79
WAS DISMISSED AS THE CANDIDATE
WITHOUT A CONSTITUENCY.
HIS JOURNEY FROM LAST PLACE
TO LANDSLIDE VICTORY HAD THE
MARKINGS OF A POLITICAL MIRACLE.
NOW THE PUBLIC EXPECTS MORE.

BY TREY POPP

As career suicides go, Michael Nutter's was a uniquely Philadelphian affair.

On June 27, 2006, the four-term City Councilman walked into the City Hall chamber where he had spent the last 15 years. Fresh from spearheading a widely praised ethics-reform bill and a citywide smoking ban, the reform-minded Democrat was higher on the legislative hill than he'd ever been. Even for a man whose hands had never quite touched the levers of the city's political machine, the view was now one of virtually unlimited job security. Then he spoke a dozen words.

"I love this place," he said,
"but it is time for me to leave."



On the move: Nutter and aides outside City Hall.

The announcement shocked many of the politicians and reporters in attendance. Resignations have their place in the city's politics—former Councilman Rick Mariano had just submitted one ahead of a 6½ year jail sentence for selling his office to pay off credit-card debt—but they are typically preceded by disgrace. Nutter was so clean he practically squeaked. Forget about corruption; this was a man who didn't smoke, drank no caffeine, and ate no meat. The only reason he would step down would be to run for another office, since city law prohibits elected officials from seeking other posts.

And as Nutter went on to say, that's exactly what he had in mind. He was quitting what he viewed as a dream job in order to take a shot at the mayor's office 10 months down the road.

A legislator at the top of his game, unsullied and well liked—there are plenty of cities where this move would have made perfect sense. Philadelphia was not one of them. The reasons were all too obvious to the local punditocracy. Nutter was too intellectual. He couldn't raise money. He didn't have a natural constituency. He was on the outside of the ultimate insiders' game. And most damningly of all, the opinion-makers asserted in so many words, he might be black, but he wasn't black enough.

Nutter's announcement made him the first official candidate for mayor, but the smart money stayed put behind four other men. "Only in Philadelphia," Nutter later quipped, "can you be the first person in the race and already be in fifth place."

A week is a long time in politics, the saying goes, but for Nutter the next half a year changed nothing. Three months before the Democratic primary, he was polling a scant 8 percent, the only one of five candidates in single digits. One month later his pole position was no different. Finally, in April, he bested all his previous marks—and vaulted into ... fourth place.

There were 28 days left until the primary. The only political analysts interested in Michael Nutter's campaign were the ones who specialize in autopsies. This is the story of the man who defied all those sages. It is the story of someone who came from so far behind

by tapping into such deep hopes that by the time he reached the general election after walloping the primary, the groundswell beneath him produced the city's largest margin of victory in more than 75 years. It's the story of the mayor Philadelphia never thought it would get.

Michael Nutter grew up in West Philadelphia, but there's something about the bespectacled 50-year-old he has become that makes it hard to picture him as a kid. True, his slightly nasal voice can recall Kermit the Frog, as the *Daily News* once put it. And there's definitely something playful about a new mayor-elect who uses his celebrity turn as a TV weatherman to tell viewers, "Bottom line, it's cold out there. Wear a coat." But it's a particular kind of playfulness, a parental kind really, and that's the vibe Nutter gives out most.

Even reminiscing about his days playing stickball at 55th and Larchwood, the picture he paints has a way of centering on grown-ups. "You really kind of belonged to every parent on the block," he recalls. "If anybody got in any trouble, I mean, they could discipline you or certainly tell you to stop doing it. They'd let your parents know. It was a real sense of community. And I loved it."

It isn't every Catholic boy who remembers communal discipline so fondly, but Nutter was well served by it. His father was a plumber and salesman. His mother worked for the telephone company. Neither of them tolerated "ghetto talk" in the house, as Michael's sister Renee has said, and both had high expectations of their children.

After attending grade school at Transfiguration of Our Lord just a few blocks from his house, Nutter won a partial scholarship to St. Joseph's Prep, a prestigious, predominantly white Jesuit high school in North Philadelphia, familiarly known as "the Prep." By this time he was working at a drug store a block from home, and coping with the gang wars afflicting the city in the early 1970s. The Prep was in some ways a world apart, but by most accounts Nutter had a knack for finding his comfort spot no matter where he happened to be.

"What happens at the Prep is that it's almost like neighborhoods," says Jerry Taylor, who still teaches history there and remembers Nutter fondly. "The kids from Jersey hang together, the kids from North Philly hang together, the South Philly kids hang together, and then they mix according to circumstances. I don't think there was a lot of racial tension in the school, but there was an awful lot of racial tension in the streets, and that carried over into the school. So the ability to live in both worlds was sort of unusual."

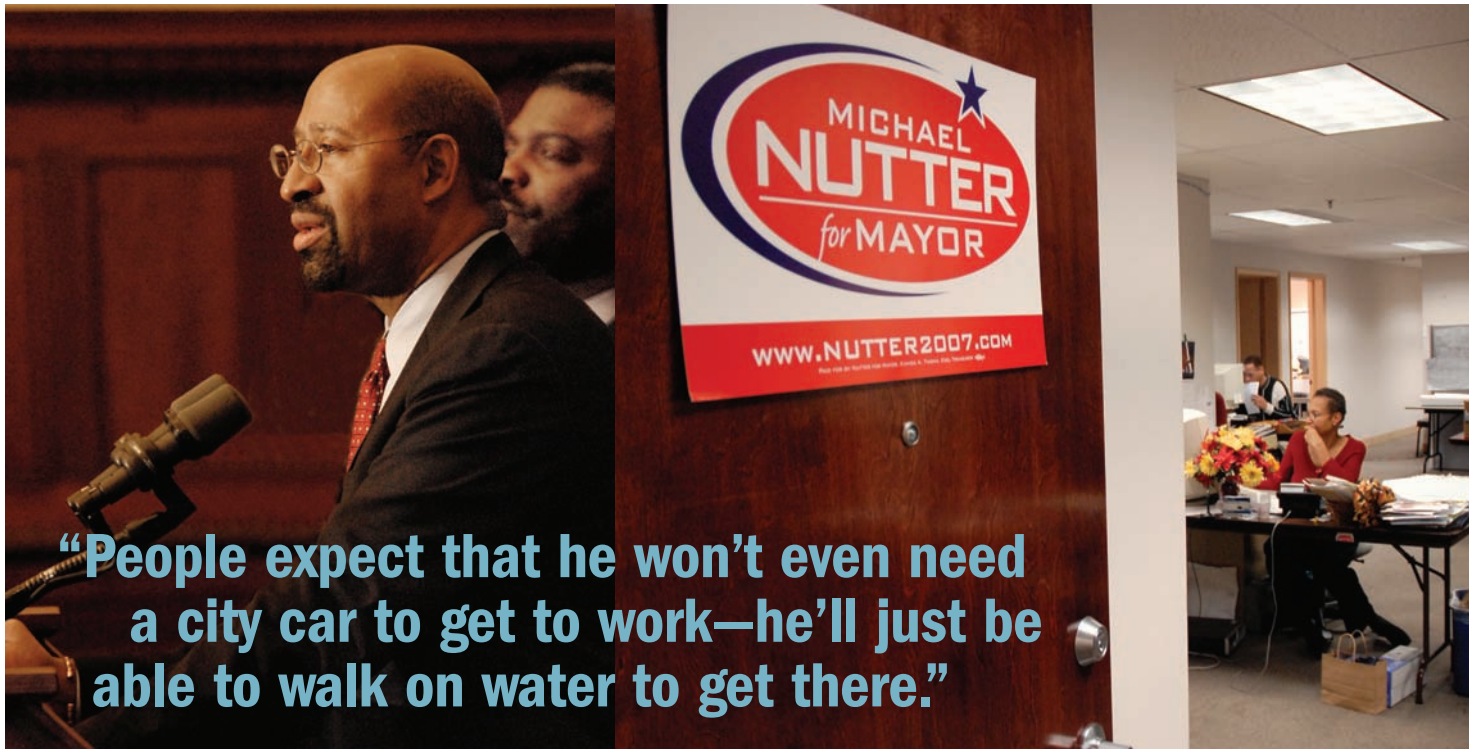
Chris Hannum, one of Nutter's old stickball pals who also attended the Prep, and now practices internal medicine near Philadelphia, describes his old classmate as someone who fit into all molds by accepting none.

"He wasn't rambunctious, he wasn't the life of a party, he wasn't the class clown," Hannum says. "He wasn't a nerd, he played football but he wasn't a typical jock—he sort of had qualities of all those different types. That's why he could relate to so many types of people, because he's like an Everyman."

By his own reckoning Nutter "wasn't a stellar performer in high school," but his grades were solid enough to win him a scholarship to Penn in 1975. He was initially interested in the business side of medicine, but the pre-med curriculum proved no match for life outside the classroom. As a freshman Nutter kept his job at the neighborhood drug store. After that he started working at the Impulse Disco on North Broad Street, which probably shaped his future more than the University did.

When the topic turns to Penn, Nutter ducks for literary cover. "Mark Twain once said, 'Never let your schooling get in the way of your education,'" he quips. "When I was in college I didn't know that he had said that, but I certainly was a follower of that philosophy."

There is no telling whether Twain would have amended his advice if he'd lived to hear the 1976 disco classic "(Shake, Shake, Shake) Shake Your Booty"—the only number-one song title in history to feature a word repeated four times—but the Impulse was much more than a place to groove to KC and the Sunshine Band. It was ground zero of a new generation of black leaders whose members would help to shape Philadelphia politics for the next 30 years.



“People expect that he won’t even need a city car to get to work—he’ll just be able to walk on water to get there.”

At the nightclub’s frequent political fundraising events, Nutter met the players. He had worked for Xerox after graduating from Wharton, and then spent a spell as an investment banker, but he was still searching. “I may have been either too young or too stupid to have any fears,” he says about those days. “I knew I would be successful at something. It was really just a matter of working hard to make sure I stayed focused.” When his elders at the Impulse pushed him under the wing of Councilman John Anderson, Nutter got a taste of what that something might be.

Most Philadelphians remember Anderson as a closeted gay man who championed liberal causes. Nutter remembers him as a hero. “In 1982 he asked me to manage his re-election campaign,” Nutter says. “Initially I said no, because I didn’t know anything about politics ... But he and some others convinced me. So I did. And on the night we won in May of ’83, I decided that night that this is what I wanted to do.”

As it turned out, he would have to do it without his mentor. Shortly after winning the primary election, Anderson died at 41. But Nutter had set his mind on City Council. Eight years later, on his second try, he defeated the incumbent in his district—and the city Democratic party that had supported her—to win a

primary on his own account. Clinching the general election later that year, he won the only job he would want until the mayor’s office beckoned 15 years later.

With 28 days left until the 2007 primary, Philadelphia’s mayoral race was all but sewn up. According to an April 17 opinion poll, a multi-millionaire businessman named Tom Knox enjoyed a nearly two-to-one lead over his closest challenger, U.S. Representative Chaka Fattah GPU’86. That margin was widely interpreted as a measure of the electorate’s fatigue with the political establishment. Knox had spent a year and a half as deputy mayor for management and productivity under Ed Rendell C’65 Hon’00—famously drawing a salary of one dollar a year—but he had never held an elected office.

Knox had pledged to spend up to \$15 million of his own money to “buy City Hall back for the people of Philadelphia.” The final tally was closer to \$8 million, but that was enough to give him a virtual monopoly of the airwaves early in the race. He used it to outflank everyone on the issue of reform—stripping the butter right off of Nutter’s bread.

There are two ways to tell the story of what happened next.

The first is all about strategy and tactics. Nutter’s war chest was limited by a

campaign-finance law he had helped to push through as a councilman. Yet this worked to his advantage. The new, lower fundraising caps forced Nutter’s opponents to play on a flatter field. There was no stopping Knox from spending as much of his own money as he desired, but establishment favorites like Fattah and U.S. Representative Bob Brady could no longer tap the city’s traditional power brokers as deeply as they could have in the past.

After maintaining his self-discipline during that eternity in last place, Nutter spent just about his whole nest egg in the last few weeks of the campaign, vying to reclaim the reform mantle. In the climax of one TV ad, a giant illustrated hand ripped off the top of City Hall and shook out a dozen animated figures whose dark-suited, screaming bodies bounced when they hit the ground. **THROW OUT THE BUMS**, said a title card. In another, which got a huge response, Nutter’s daughter Olivia showed off her public middle school—underlining the candidate’s personal stake in improving the Philadelphia educational system.

For Terry Gillen L’85, the campaign’s political director, the outcome was simple. “The national story of this race,” she said after the primary, “is that campaign-finance reform came to Philadelphia and the good guy won.”

Great Expectations

“I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves,” Thomas Jefferson famously wrote. **“And if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education.”**

For Harris Sokoloff, those words function as a job description. The adjunct professor in the Graduate School of Education has spent a dozen years trying to bring citizen voices into the halls of government, and Philadelphia’s 2006 mayoral election served as the impetus for what may be the most ambitious project he’s worked on yet. Aptly titled **“Great Expectations: Citizen Voices on Philadelphia’s Future,”** it is a joint effort by the Fels Institute’s Project on Civil Engagement and *The Philadelphia Inquirer’s* editorial board to focus the new mayor’s attention on an agenda created by the public.

“With an open mayoral seat and a political free-for-all looming,” says the *Inquirer’s* Chris Satullo, who led the project along with Sokoloff, **“a lot of people in town were trying to think of ways that there could be a good, clean, civil, issue-oriented race instead of a bad Philly political free-for-all with a lot of playing of the race card.”**

Supported by the Lenfest Foundation, which agreed to underwrite the project’s major public events, the University was able to team up with the newspaper to create what Satullo calls a **“12-step plan to cure Philadelphia of its addiction to negative politics.”**

Starting well before the mayoral primaries last spring, *Great Expectations* went out into the neighborhoods to conduct citizen forums. During the general election campaign, the candidates attended potluck dinners in various homes

But that wasn’t all there was to it. There is a devil that comes out for city-wide races in Philadelphia, and past victories have often hinged on which candidate makes the best deal with it. **“For better or worse, these mayoral campaigns do come down to racial politics,”** an unaffiliated Democratic consultant told *The Philadelphia Inquirer* the very day Nutter announced his candidacy. **“The white candidates benefit with multiple black candidates in the race, and Michael’s move guarantees that.”**

throughout the city. A wide range of Penn professors participated in one way or another, and the *Inquirer’s* editorial page used the project to drive coverage down an issues-oriented path.

The culminating event was a **“Citizens Convention”** in early December, at which mayor-elect Michael Nutter received the citizens’ agenda and delivered a keynote address. **“There were more forums in the most recent election cycle than in any other mayoral race in the city’s history,”** he said in praise of the project. **“Now the real work begins ... There are 1.5 million of you who are the shareholders of this corporation who work hard every day to give us your tax dollars, and you expect a return on your investment just like any other investment you make.”**

“One point about civic engagement isn’t just that we’re going to listen to what citizens say,” Sokoloff points out. **“Once you hear what they have to say, you have to tell them what you did with it. And then you have to give them an opportunity to say, ‘Oh, we like what you did,’ or ‘No, we’re not sure—can you modify it this way or that way?’”**

The project leaders hope that the process will not end when Nutter takes office.

“What we hope to refine and extend,” says Satullo, **“is that you’ve got a great research university with a lot of people who know a tremendous amount about urban issues, and we try to use them to inform our reporting.”**

The partnership is just as strong in the opposite direction, says Sokoloff. **“The *Inquirer* is crucial because it gives a megaphone to the citizen voice. And it’s a megaphone that politicians tend to listen to.”**

“Leadership is strongest,” he adds, **“when it has the active voice of the governed behind what it does.”**—T.P.

As one of two white candidates, Knox may have benefited from the presence of three African Americans in the contest. As 28 days left turned into 14, however, Nutter’s TV blitz—and attacks on Knox’s reformist credentials by the other white candidate, Bob Brady—had siphoned off enough of the leader’s support to make it a statistical dead heat. Whatever the case, all the candidates had so far followed a pledge to avoid race-based appeals. That ended during a debate one week before the primary.

For months, Philadelphia’s homicide rate had been arguably the central issue of the election. Nutter’s controversial proposal, detailed in a policy paper heavily footnoted with academic references, was to introduce “stop, question, and frisk” tactics to the police handbook.

A number of Penn faculty advocated this strategy as a way to reduce the level of gun-carrying in public [*“Gazetteer,”* Sept/Oct 2007], but it had generated plenty of heat in the media. Opponents questioned its compatibility with constitutional safeguards, particularly the prohibition on racial profiling. During the May 7 debate, Fattah, who is black, translated those criticisms into ad hominem terms, accusing Nutter of having “to remind himself that he’s an African American.”

“I’m still not exactly sure what that means,” Nutter says now. **“You know, *Is he black enough?* ... Of course, you would never hear that about a non-African American, or somebody who is white—*Oh, he’s not white enough.* What does that mean?”**

For many Philadelphians, long accustomed to the poison of racial politics, the most inspiring accomplishment of Nutter’s campaign was the way he torpedoed this divisive rhetoric. Fattah’s remark was stunning in its blatancy, but he was just saying aloud what many had articulated less directly. Nutter faced another variant when the *Inquirer’s* editorial board asked him to respond to what it called a general sense that he was “something of an elitist” and “not a man of the people.”

In the sound file the newspaper posted online, you can hear the exasperation mount in the candidate’s voice. **“I am probably, from an income standpoint, either last or next-to-last in terms of financial resources,”** Nutter says. **“I don’t know what *elitist* means, to be honest with you. I mean, I could have come in today with my jeans on—maybe halfway down my behind—and my hat on backwards. Now if that makes you more down—”** he cuts himself off. **“I mean, this is a bunch of nonsense!”**

Whether he was facing Fattah’s blunt stab or the subtler whisperings of the media, Nutter didn’t take the bait. He liked to tell people that he was who he was and he was comfortable with it. That he wasn’t ashamed to speak a “relatively understandable version of the king’s

English,” or to have come from a family that valued educational achievement. He hadn’t clothed himself in a stereotypically “authentic” racial identity at St. Joseph’s Prep or at Penn, and he wasn’t going to shift shape for a political race.

“I think when people try to label him, he bristles—and rightly so,” Gillen says. “He doesn’t want to be labeled and he’s not going to let people define him.”

Neither did he accept the conventional wisdom that the only way to win a city-wide office was to put yourself in the pocket of the union vote, the black vote, or any other demographic piece of the pie. “I considered my base to be people who wanted change,” Nutter says. “People who were tired of politics as usual and business as usual in Philadelphia. That’s a harder base to identify, versus a geographic area or a racial constituency or class constituency or a specific area of the city. But my base was people who wanted change.”

Mark Alan Hughes, a senior fellow in Penn’s Robert A. Fox Leadership Program and a columnist for the *Daily News*, took a leave of absence from the opinion pages to get a worm’s-eye view of Nutter as a campaign volunteer.

“What I loved watching happen during the course of the primary election campaign is the way Nutter was able to take something that many people in the chattering classes in Philadelphia had characterized as his liability—the fact that he’s well-educated, and well-spoken, and thoughtful, and policy-wonkish, and endlessly fascinated with some of the details of governing and so on,” Hughes says, “and demonstrate that, you know what—Philadelphians like smarts too. That in fact Philadelphians process those very qualities not as liabilities but as assets. And that they’re not alienated by somebody who speaks in complete paragraphs, that they’re not turned off by somebody who does his homework and shows up prepared for a forum, but in fact they respect that.”

Whatever the appeal, it worked. “It was the kind of way you see some Kentucky Derby horses win, coming around the corner pole with this incredible burst of speed that surprises everyone,” says Don Kettl, director of the Fels Institute for Government. What’s more, “He won without a ton of bitterness in the primary, which was surprising given how contentious it was.”

To be in Philadelphia in the days after Nutter’s victory was to feel a palpable sense of optimism about what it meant. Outgoing mayor John Street had been a lame duck ever since a federal investigation of his office uncovered the biggest corruption scandal in Philadelphia in 25 years. (Ultimately Street was not charged, but his city treasurer went to jail. The feds’ broader case was crippled when alleged ringleader Ron White, a Street ally and fundraiser, died before trial.)

Furthermore, Street had been almost gleeful in his embrace of racial politics. “The brothers and sisters are running the city,” he had crowed early in his tenure, firing up his own base. “Oh, yes. The brothers and sisters are running this city. Running it! Don’t you let nobody fool you, we are in charge of the City of Brotherly Love. We are in charge! We are in charge!”

Nutter’s supporters were harder to pigeonhole. Looking around the Warwick Hotel during the campaign’s primary vic-

Two More Penn Faces in City Hall

After winning the mayorship, Michael Nutter named former Penn classmate Clarence A. Armbrister C’79 as his chief of staff. Armbrister has in the past served as city treasurer and managing director of the Philadelphia School District. He will leave his post as Temple University’s chief operating officer to take the job in City Hall.

“I was a little surprised when I got the call,” Armbrister told *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. After all, he had supported Chaka Fattah in the primary. But Armbrister added that he was impressed by Nutter’s approach. “He told me he was looking for the best people, regardless of anything else, and he made a very convincing case.”

Meanwhile, Nutter tapped Penn President Amy Gutmann to co-chair his transition team as the mayor’s office changes hands in January. “I look forward to doing everything I can to further the mayor-elect’s agenda to control crime, improve education and build our city’s economy, goals that are eminently worthy of every citizen’s support,” she said.

tory party, Chris Hannum felt overwhelmed by the diversity of the revelers.

“It was a potpourri of different types of people, and about every aspect of Philadelphia was represented in that room somewhere: business, the collegiate community, the urban grassroots, labor, you name it,” Hannum said a month later. “He had some support from all the different groups in the city, and it was enough to put him over the top. It was amazing. Being in that room, you just felt like a new era in Philadelphia politics was unfolding right in front of your eyes.”

Nutter’s opponent in the general election, Republican Al Taubenberger, evidently felt the same way. Amid a series of debates that were almost parodic in their civility, a reporter asked Taubenberger what was motivating him in the race. “I’m running to make Michael Nutter a better mayor,” he said.

Of course, local government is rarely a staging ground for ideological warfare to begin with. “Pragmatism is everything,” Kettl says. “No matter whether you’re a liberal or a conservative, if the garbage doesn’t get picked up and the streets don’t get plowed, it doesn’t matter what point of view you come from. People care about results.”

Winning in the fashion that he did, Nutter now faces extremely high expectations to deliver them. “He’s coming in with a tremendous amount of good feeling surrounding him,” says Kettl. That’s better than acrimony, he adds, but it does have a downside. “People expect that he won’t even need a city car to get to work—he’ll just be able to walk on water to get there.”

If the new mayor does have any miracles up his sleeve, he can’t afford to waste them on a fancy commute. On January 7 he inherits a far tougher situation than most voters appreciate. Electoral victory has interrupted his plunge toward career suicide, but only with the thinnest of nets. Add the buckling weight of high expectations, and Nutter finds himself in a precarious position.

On the surface, Philadelphia is the picture of good health. The recent completion of the 58-story Comcast Center epitomizes Center City’s continuing growth. On

the other side of the Schuylkill, construction crews have become virtually ubiquitous. *Restaurant renaissance* remains a common phrase on downtown lips. The Street administration's focus on peripheral neighborhoods has made many of them nicer places to be.

Yet these improvements camouflage deep problems. Homicide has reached epidemic proportions in the last several years. Right before Nutter's general-election victory, three city cops were shot in the space of four days. The public-school system, which fell into a nine-figure deficit in 2006, is failing too many of its students, and its bond rating is a notch above junk. The city's tiny projected budget surplus for 2009 could easily be wiped out by "three snowstorms and a couple of bad events," Nutter recently told *Philadelphia* magazine. Meanwhile, there are fewer and fewer residents to shoulder the financial burden; the city has lost more than 100,000 taxpayers since 1990.

The city's core financial challenges didn't get much attention during the election. That's going to make Nutter's job harder. In addition to his crime plan, Nutter campaigned on issues like making Philadelphia America's "greenest city," offering businesses incentives to hire ex-criminal offenders, reducing the wage and business-privilege taxes, and extending health-insurance coverage. Those big ideas are what all the high expectations have centered around. Money concerns have the potential to trip up each of them.

Philadelphia is not yet in a state of collapse, but paradoxically that may weaken Nutter's hand as an executive. "When Ed Rendell took office it was essentially bankrupt," observes Zack Stalberg, director of the good-government group Committee of Seventy. "That turned out to be a great advantage for Rendell, because everyone understood—all the taxpayers and the unions understood—that the city was on the brink of bankruptcy. And it meant that he had a lot of support and there was a lot of flexibility."

Nutter will soon have to renegotiate the city's contracts with its municipal unions. If he can't persuade them that disaster may lie around the corner, they are unlikely to willingly sacrifice as much as Rendell got them to do. The

city's retirement system is underfunded by \$3.9 billion. If Nutter can't turn that around, posterity will have harsh words for his failure.

David L. Cohen L'81, who played a key role in averting the last financial catastrophe as Rendell's chief of staff, sees familiar terrain ahead for Nutter. "I think Philadelphia is probably two years away from a financial crisis that is every bit as severe as the one that the city had in 1991," Cohen said in late November. "That's good news and it's bad news. The good news is that the crisis is two years away. The bad news is that the sense of urgency that existed when Ed took office is less obvious or less present today. It was that sense of urgency that gave us the appropriate level of desperation and the public support to create some very difficult labor agreements."

"None of this is terribly sexy," Stalberg says, "but it's facing every organization in America. GM just managed to negotiate away a lot of their health-care and pension costs, you know. In some ways the city is not a heck of a lot different than that."

Philadelphians have a penchant for putting flamboyant, larger-than-life characters into the mayor's office to govern almost by the power of id alone. Ed Rendell thought nothing of christening a new city pool with a cannonball splash, or mugging his way into the final cut of Jonathan Demme's *Philadelphia*. In the 1960s, Frank Rizzo famously left a black-tie affair with a billy club tucked into his cummerbund to break up a riot.

It's hard to imagine Nutter fitting either mold. Yet it is possible that by electing a vegetarian intellectual who once named *Governing* magazine as his favorite read, Philadelphia voters have found just the man to take the city's unsexy problems seriously.

Be that as it may, Nutter spent his two months as mayor-elect virtually daring them to want more. "I like high expectations," he said in November. "I think there is virtually nothing you can do with low expectations. And the problem in the city is that expectations have been so low, if not invisible, that it's hard to get anything done."

As his first day in office approached, the mayor-elect's confidence seemed to be turning his personality down a new

path. A month before the general election, Terry Gillen recalled the Nutter she first got to know back in the 1980s. She painted a picture of a man given to deadpan humor and small crowds. "We were in an organization at the time and he was the treasurer, and he would get up and give these treasurer reports that were hilarious. I don't know if he knew anything about the budget of the organization, but he was very funny."

Asked if Nutter was the kind of person who could work a big room, Gillen paused for a moment. "He can work a medium-sized room," she replied.

A month later, many people who have watched him closely were noticing a new kind of magnetism. "Over the course of the campaign, I've seen him grow," Cohen said. "I've seen his humor, which has always been on display one-on-one and in small groups, come out as he addressed larger groups. He's approachable. And I think people like him."

Mark Alan Hughes traces the change to a particular campaign event at the Convention Center. It was a highly orchestrated scene that didn't presage any rhetorical fireworks, but Nutter seemed to feed off the crowd in a completely new way. "He delivered as good a political speech as I've ever heard—live or even recorded," Hughes recalls. "The cadence, and the power of the imagery—but also more than that, it was the delivery. There were no notes. It was all new language that I had never heard before, and delivered with this personality and charisma that just electrified the room. I mean, I asked him about it afterwards, because it was as if he'd been transported."

In a way, that's exactly what has happened. The story is only partly that of a City Councilman surprising everyone by becoming mayor. It is also about how, in becoming mayor, Nutter has discovered within himself an expansive political persona that wasn't apparent when he set out.

Of course, he puts it another way entirely. "Every now and then," Philadelphia's new mayor said after his victory, "the voters just kind of figure out what they want. Not what the political pundits want. Not what the political chattering class thinks is the conventional wisdom or anything else.

"And I think what's happened here is that the public has actually surprised itself." ♦