

MAYOR JAMES W. DAY EULOGY

AUGUST 30, 2010 - "THE ICON"

By Parma Mayor Dean DePiero



Parma and Northeast Ohio lost an icon a few days ago. That icon was someone who has been accurately described as a man who possessed great wisdom, unparalleled vision, and a never-ending pride in his community. That icon's name was James Walter Day. He will truly be missed.

Whether you knew him as James Day the friend, James Day the veteran, James Day the public servant, Councilman, Mayor, real estate executive, or James Day the father, grandfather, brother, and husband - we all knew him as someone who loved life, his community and most of all his family.

James Walter Day was born on June 25, 1924, the youngest of ten children, in a house on Valley View Drive - now known as East Ridgewood Drive in Parma, Ohio. In 1929, the family moved to Hinkley where he grew up and attended Hinkley High School and excelled in all that he did. In 1942 out of a sense of service to his country, he joined the service and served during World War II. In 1950, James and his wife of three years, Carol, bought a house on Salisbury Drive in Parma. About the same time, he began learning the real estate trade and became a licensed real estate agent.

His political career was launched when he was elected as Parma Ward One Councilman in 1953 and quickly made his mark in various areas of city government. It was about that time that he predicted he would be Mayor in ten years. Sure enough he was elected in 1962 by a comfortable margin. He served as Mayor from 1962 - 1967.

As has been widely acknowledged, he displayed wisdom and incredible vision that made Parma the fastest growing suburb in the country and oversaw progressive development of the area.

Today, a number of Parma's major institutions and businesses thrive and have benefited thousands of area families due to his vision, work ethic and ability to get the job done.

Tri-C West probably would not be where it is today but for the fight that then Councilman Day started in 1956 to convince the state to bring it here. Mayor Day knew the value of education and Tri-C West became a reality. Today, over 13,000 students attend this place of higher learning that continues to be one of Parma's proudest and largest employers.

Mayor Day was also instrumental in the establishment and expansion of Parma Community General Hospital. Today, it is the largest independent community hospital in the State of Ohio and Parma's second largest taxpayer. More importantly, the hospital's excellent staff cares for and cures thousands of area families every year. The establishment of this hospital in Parma is clearly one of the great benefits of living in the Parma-area.

Also, as Chairman of the Parma Planning and Zoning Council Committee he oversaw the expansion and development of Parmatown Mall and the Day Drive area. Furthermore, he helped to shepherd the development of various new businesses and numerous residential subdivisions.

Today, Graftech International houses its headquarters on Snow Road as a result of Parma's efforts led by then Mayor Day to attract Union Carbide to the site over 40 years ago. Graftech is a worldwide leader in the development of cutting edge energy technology.

After he left office early to become a Vice-President of Higbee's Corp., he negotiated countless commercial real estate transactions around Northeast Ohio including notable developments such as Settler's Landing, Belden Village Mall and projects in the warehouse district.

But even after he retired from public service and Higbee's, Mayor Day never stopped giving back to the community. His generous donations include thousands of dollars to Padua High School, St. Charles Borromeo, and James Day Park in Parma, Ohio, and various other good causes inside and outside of the Parma-area. His personal contributions have benefited the lives of many area residents for years.

As many of you know, over the last week I spent lot of time at Parma Community General Hospital due to the birth of our first son, Blake. The night before Mayor Day passed away, I visited him on the 7th floor of Parma Hospital where he was in great spirits, looked relaxed and even joked and asked whether he could offer me a drink - which consisted of a medical cocktail - to prepare himself for his upcoming colonoscopy. I gracefully declined but we spent time talking about his role in the establishment of our great hospital and how good it has been for Parma and the entire region...

How ironic... the night before his passing, the man who has been an area icon was being cared for at one of the very institutions that he help create and the fact that he was telling me, the current mayor, the story of how it all came to be.

The list of Mayor Day's accomplishments and the lasting legacy that he left on the city that he loved are far too many to mention today. The historians will continue to document those many accomplishments.

Today, I have spoken a lot about wisdom and vision and how this great man possessed these qualities and put them into action many times throughout his life, not to benefit himself but to benefit a community and a region. But one quality that this man also possessed was great pride in his community and his family's name.

He was so proud of his family, his son and his grandchildren and spoke of them often. But as often as he spoke about them - a close second was the pride he had for his other love and passion, the City of Parma. You don't find folks these days that talk and act with such great pride for their hometowns. Truly they are a disappearing breed.

But today and every day forward, I hope you will join me in using Mayor Day's life, his legacy, and his accomplishments to be visionaries for our communities, to be proud of our communities, and to give back to our communities and other institutions that we care about. This is what the lesson of James W. Day's life should teach us, and I know that is what he would want you to think about as you go forth today.

Last week we lost an icon, but his legacy lives on. We thank him for teaching us about vision, wisdom and pride. May god rest your soul, Mayor Day.

It is an honor to be asked to eulogize such a great man and visionary leader this morning. I want to thank the Day family for extending me the privilege. God bless all of you, God bless Mayor Day and God bless the great city of Parma.