

OUR CENTURY

1990

AT A GLANCE

Cleveland count is down, again

Once, Clevelanders wondered how big a gain the census would show. In 1990, they worried that it would show a drop below 500,000, out of the big-city category.

The final count: 505,516, down 68,000 from 1980 and 409,000 from 1950. In 1986, city officials had tried to block release of a study by researcher Thomas Bier of Cleveland State University that said the city was still losing people and projected a 1990 figure of 505,513. Bier missed by only three people.

Cuyahoga County's population was 1,412,140, meaning the suburbs had lost 18,000 people in the decade. The seven-county metropolitan area was 2,759,823, down 15,000.

George Voinovich had been soundly thrashed in his 1986 campaign against Sen. Howard Metzenbaum. According to Ohio political lore, that worked in his favor in the governor's race: Ohio voters liked to defeat a candidate, then elect him.

A factor that got less attention was also in his favor: The new mayor, Michael White, named three Voinovich holdovers to his Cabinet. They included Finance Director Charles Brown, who had said weeks earlier that White's promise to add 250 police without raising taxes was "unrealistic and totally dishonest."

Brown's appointment meant White couldn't announce he had discovered that city finances were in worse shape than his predecessor led people to believe, a common tactic of new mayors. That left Voinovich free to tout Cleveland's "comeback" and his own financial acumen in overcoming the 1978 default. Political insiders sensed a connection with Voinovich's surprising decision months earlier not to endorse George Forbes for mayor.

Still, no Republican had been elected to statewide office since 1978.

The Democratic candidate was Attorney General Anthony Celebrezze Jr., son of the former Cleveland mayor. He raised eyebrows when he announced he had changed his long stand against abortion and was now pro-choice.

Celebrezze counted on the popular White for a boost in Cuyahoga County, but the mayor failed to show up at his appearances. Late in the campaign, White finally delivered a lukewarm endorsement.

Voinovich coasted home. Shortly afterward, the three Voinovich holdovers in White's Cabinet announced their resignations. White replaced them with his own people.

It was the grandest opening since — well, since the same building opened in 1930. Then, it had been the heart of the Van Sweringens' Terminal complex. Now it was Forest City Enterprises' The Avenue, Cleveland's finest retail center, with 110 tenants.

Three floors of shops surrounded a skylight-illuminated fountain in the atrium. Nearby were an 11-screen theater seating 3,000 and a food court seating 1,500. The rail station below was being remodeled for RTA trains.

On both sides of The Avenue, 13-story buildings planned by the Vans were finally becoming reality — the Skylight Tower and the Ritz-Carlton Hotel. The Old Post Office, the Vans' last building, was being remodeled into the MK-Ferguson Building. Soon, Tower City expected to boast a Nieman-Marcus department store and the eight-story Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.

The young Cavaliers had been tagged the team of the '90s. But as the 1989-90 season began, they were the team of the injured. Brad Daugherty missed the first 41 games, Larry Nance the first 17, Mark Price eight of the first 15. Early in the season, the Cavs traded Ron Harper to the Los Angeles Clippers for the rights to Danny Ferry, who was playing in Italy. The trade was prompted by warnings from the league about the people Harper was associating with, but it was unpopular with fans and teammates.

The Cavs won 42 games, 15 fewer than the year before. They were eliminated in the deciding game of the first playoff round by the Philadelphia 76ers.

The Indians had fired manager Doc Edwards late in the 1989 season. They started fast under John McNamara but faded as usual, finishing fourth at 77-85. Free agent Keith Hernandez was a \$3.5 million bust, but a trade of Joe Carter brought Sandy Alomar Jr. and Carlos Baerga from the San Diego Padres. Center fielder Alex Cole hit .300 and stole 40 bases.

After going to the conference title game in 1989, Bud Carson's Browns collapsed. The low point came Nov. 4 when they were humiliated 42-0 by the Buffalo Bills at a sold-out Stadium. Three of the Bills' touchdowns came in the fourth quarter against a Browns team that seemed to have quit trying.

Carson was fired after the game, with the Browns' record at 2-8. Under interim coach Jim Shofner, they lost five of the last six. They finished 3-16, the worst record in the franchise's 45 years.

The wheels of Israeli justice ground slowly for John Demjanjuk, who had been in a Jerusalem prison for three years. In May, his appeal of a death sentence for "crimes against humanity" in Nazi death camps began. At year's end, a decision was still pending.

To replace the controversial Howard Rudolph as police chief, White named Edward Kovacic, who had been a respected police commander. Among new commanders: John Joyce, whose career had suffered after he led the raid that produced the "carnival kickback" case against Forbes and other council members.



PLAIN DEALER FILE PHOTOS

The bodies of the Avery family were found in a Kirtland barn, left. Above is the rock and clay grave of the family of five.

A murder chills Kirtland

By Fred McGunagle

It took police and firefighters hours to dig through 4 feet of rock and clay beneath a Kirtland barn on Jan. 4. They found what they had been told to expect — the bodies of a family of five.

Their hands, feet and mouths were bound with duct tape. Each had been shot through the head.

They were quickly identified as Dennis Avery, 49; his wife, Cheryl, 42; and their daughters Trina, 15, Rebecca, 13, and Karen, 7. They had lived in the big farmhouse on Chardon Rd. with at least a dozen other

people until the previous April, when the group suddenly moved out.

The informant who supplied the tip about the bodies told police a chilling story. The Averys had been "sacrificed" on the night of April 17 by Jeffrey Don Lundgren, the leader of a cult who claimed to speak for God. The others had dug the grave earlier in the day. The sacrifice was supposed to ensure the success of the remaining members' move to Missouri. There they would search for a golden sword that would give Lundgren supernatural powers.

Lundgren had formerly worked at Kirtland Temple, but he was expelled from the Reorganized Church of Je-

sus Christ of Latter Day Saints for his unorthodox tenets. His followers were under a strict regimen of Bible lessons and paramilitary drills mixed with hard drinking and heavy-metal music.

Seven of the cultists were arrested in Kansas City. Lundgren, 39, was arrested days later in California with his wife, Alice, 38, and son, Damon, 19. Lundgren pleaded not guilty, though his attorney admitted he had killed the Averys. He was quickly convicted. During the sentencing phase of the trial, he spoke to the jury for five hours.

"I am a prophet of God," he told them. "I am even more." He killed

the Averys because they were wayward sinners with rebellious children. "Everything I did was done by divine word."

He was sentenced to death, a sentence still being appealed. His wife, son and Ronald Luff, his right-hand man, were sentenced to terms ranging from 120 to 170 years to life on five counts of murder. Another follower, Daniel Kraft, was sentenced to 50 years to life. Five other cult members received lesser terms. All remain in prison.

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The mayor of Cuyahoga County

"Mike! Mike! Mike! Mike! Mike!" chanted the delirious crowd in One Cleveland Center.

"Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!" a triumphant Mayor Michael White shouted back from the stage.

It was a replay of White's victory celebration after the mayoral election six months earlier. Only this time, White had — in effect — been elected mayor of Cuyahoga County.

He had led the fight for a \$344 million Gateway bond issue which, a month or two earlier, appeared to have no chance. He had done it even though 20 of the 21 wards in Cleveland voted against it. It was the suburbs that responded to his impassioned plea to "keep our community moving forward."

Now County Commissioner Tim Hagan, who had run against White for mayor, stood beside him before the cheering throng. He told them: "There is a new voice and a new leader, and I am pleased to share this platform and call him my leader and my mayor!" The crowd cheered even louder.

As the year began, it seemed impossible even to get all of the parties to agree on a plan. Gov. Richard Celeste sent in his ace troubleshooter, lawyer Thomas Chema. In private meeting after private meeting, Chema worked out an agreement on a 44,000-seat baseball stadium.

Correction

On last week's Our Century page we incorrectly identified Amy Mihaljevic, the 10-year-old Bay Village girl murdered in 1989. We regret the error and apologize to the Mihaljevic family.

Then Chema and Celeste persuaded the legislature to authorize a "sin tax" on tobacco and alcohol, and county commissioners to put the tax on the ballot May 8 — six years to the day after the 2-1 defeat of the domed stadium issue in 1984.

Chema was still trying to persuade the Cavaliers to agree to move from the Coliseum in Richfield to a new 20,000-seat area in Gateway. The Akron Beacon Journal editorially attacked the "raid." A columnist told Akronites, "They're trying to steal YOUR basketball team. YOUR concerts. YOUR ice shows."

Rep. Louis Stokes urged "defeat of this plan to have the poor man subsidize the rich man's stadium." Rep. Mary Rose Oakar urged shelving the issue until many unanswered questions could be resolved. The United Auto Workers and its consultant, Dennis Kucinich, ran television commercials against it.

Backers declared the issue would provide 28,000 good-paying jobs, 1,500 new hotel rooms and \$33 million a year in taxes for schools, city and county. They said the teams would pay half the total cost and the tax would expire after 15 years. White said part of the bond money — \$36 million to \$51 million — would be spent on "economic development" to rebuild the area around Gateway.

Then came well-timed announcements from baseball Commissioner Fay Vincent and George and Gordon Gund, owners of the Cavaliers. Vincent told City Council that Major League Baseball would allow the Indians to move if they couldn't get a suitable stadium in Cleveland. The Gunds said they would bring the Cavs back downtown if the issue passed.

Predictions were for a turnout of 200,000. Twice that many voted. A late surge of votes from affluent east-



PLAIN DEALER FILE PHOTO

Cleveland Mayor Michael White celebrates passage of the Gateway bond issue.

ern suburbs brought the "yes" vote to 51.8 percent.

Hurdles remained. The law allowing issuance of tax-exempt bonds for sports facilities would expire at the end of the year, and the Indians and Cavs had yet to agree to terms.

White, however, basked in his countywide popularity. He continued to draw loud cheers from suburbanites, as when he spoke at the City Club on his first 100 days as mayor. On that occasion, he made a surprising revelation when an audience member asked about his long-range plans.

"I have in my briefcase something which I carry around everywhere,"

he said. "It is Michael White's set of goals for the next four years. Everything I hope to achieve over the years personally and through my own leadership is in that document."

He would not show it to a reporter afterward. But it looked as though he must be on schedule.

Yesterday, Cleveland. Today, Cuyahoga County. Tomorrow, the world.

Fred McGunagle

Photo researcher:
David G. Jardy
Plain Dealer Library

LOOKING AT A YEAR

Feb. 11: James "Buster" Douglas knocks out Mike Tyson to win boxing's heavyweight championship.

April 7: Former National Security Adviser John M. Poindexter is sentenced to six months in prison after being convicted of five criminal charges related to the Iran-contra affair.

April 28: "A Chorus Line," the longest-running show in Broadway history, closes after 6,237 performances.

July 20: Justice William Brennan retires after 34 years on the U.S. Supreme Court.

July 30: Yankees owner George

Steinbrenner is suspended from baseball for associating with a known gambler.

Aug. 2: Iraqi armed forces invade Kuwait.

Oct. 16: Mikhail Gorbachev wins the Nobel Peace Prize.

Nov. 21: Junk bond creator Michael

Milken is sentenced to prison for violating federal securities laws.

Deaths: Former Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg, civil rights leader Ralph Abernathy, composer Leonard Bernstein, Muppets creator Jim Henson, Gen. Curtis LeMay, and actresses Mary Martin, Ava Gardner, Greta Garbo, Irene Dunne.