

OUR CENTURY

1973

AT A GLANCE



PLAIN DEALER FILE PHOTO

Indians ace Gaylord Perry, right, and his brother, Jim, a pitcher for the Detroit Tigers, faced off at the Stadium.

City Council divided by race

City Council members of both parties — and of both races, which had become the more crucial division during Carl Stokes' mayoralty — wanted peace. Their choice as president in 1972 had been Edmund Turk, who ran meetings with a light hand, encouraging compromise.

Naturally, Turk was criticized as weak. After 15 months, he quit council for an appointment as chairman of the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio.

George Forbes, who had been Stokes' floor leader, was elected the first black council president. Nobody realized it at the time, but from that point until today the mayor and council president would be of opposite races.

Forbes announced that he would continue to do a talk show on WERE-AM, which had inflamed racial issues. As a counterpoint to black-baiting Gary Dee, Forbes assailed "whitey" and "honkies." His colleagues knew it was an act. Voters didn't, and Forbes would discover 16 years later that they had long memories.

Model Cities was supposed to be urban renewal with a heart, mixing social with housing programs in plans devised by residents of the area. Cleveland was to get \$45 million in federal funds for the Hough and Central areas. It wound up getting \$9.3 million, much of which, audits would show, was wasted.

On Aug. 6, the director, Bob Doggett, was about to enter his office when he was shot twice. Paging through a police mug book, he fingered Danny Greene. Police were skeptical. They suspected the shooting had something to do with a Model Cities contract to crime figure Ronald Grier-Bey and with Gerald Johnson, whose body was found in the Ohio River with a bullet through his heart and Bey's phone number among his effects.

Four people eventually were indicted, but none were convicted.

As the year began, the Cleveland schools were hit with a strike by 2,200 nonteaching employees. Teachers honored the picket lines, halting classes for 140,000 students. School officials pointed out that, with overtime, custodians were making \$13,000 to \$25,000 a year, compared with \$7,450 for starting teachers. After five days, the workers went back with no raise but a promise of reopened negotiations if the school board came up with more money.

As the year ended, the NAACP sued the school board, charging that construction and pupil assignment policies had "the purpose and effect of perpetuating a segregated public school system."

The case was assigned to U.S. District Judge Frank Battisti. So was a suit filed against the city of Parma by the Justice Department charging housing discrimination against blacks. That case would last 26 years.

Nick Mileti's Crusaders finished second in the Eastern Division of the new World Hockey Association, with a record of 43-32-3. Ron Buchanan was the leading scorer. Goalie Gerry Cheevers and defenseman Paul Shmyr starred in the league-leading defense. Coach Bill Needham's team was eliminated by the New England Whalers in the division semifinals of the Avco Cup playoffs.

Mileti's Barons, meanwhile, were playing their American Hockey League games on nights when the Crusaders didn't need the Arena. Fans ignored them. In "Forgotten Glory: The Story of Cleveland Barons Hockey," Gene Kiczek records that Mileti tried to move them to Lewiston, Me., in November. Finally, he won permission for a move to Jacksonville, Fla.

"Auld Lang Syne came for the Barons on Feb. 4, 1973," Kiczek writes, "when they played their last game ever at the Arena, a 5-1 loss to the Richmond Robins. There was no great, fond farewell. Only 435 mourners came to see the passing of a legend, the greatest minor league team in the history of hockey."

Mileti's Cavaliers, bolstered by the addition of Lenny Wilkens, continued to improve, winning 32 games in their third season in the NBA.

The Indians, Mileti's third major league franchise, struggled financially and on the field. They finished sixth, though Gaylord Perry pitched 29 complete games, winning 19, while Charlie Spikes hit 23 homers.

The Browns again were out of the playoffs at 7-5-2. To Art Modell's chagrin, the Central Conference champs were the Cincinnati Bengals of Paul Brown, whom Modell had fired in 1963.

New life downtown

By Fred McGunagle

There were three schools of thought about downtown in 1973. A large group thought it was dying. A larger one said it was dead.

Then there were Ray Shepardson and Herbert Strawbridge.

Actually, there was plenty of life downtown during the day. The vacant lots that Erieview had created 10 years earlier were filling with tall office buildings. But at 5 p.m., their workers streamed back to their suburban homes, leaving deserted streets.

In the streetcar age, department stores had been a reason to come downtown. Now, in the auto age, they were a reason to go to the suburbs. Taylor's, Bailey's and Sterling Lindner, all downtown institutions since the 19th century, had closed. Vacant storefronts were appearing on Euclid Ave.

The suburban shopping centers were also where Clevelanders now headed to see a movie. Many had two screens; Westgate Cinema had four. Only the Hippodrome and the Embassy remained downtown. The Riverside at Kamm's Corners was the only other theater in the city listed under "First-Run Films."

The four majestic theaters of Playhouse Square had been a glittering attraction in the 1920s, when Cleveland was "The Fifth City." Now, in the 15th city, they stood dark and empty.

Two events that would have a far-reaching effect on downtown had occurred in 1972, though they drew relatively little attention at the time.

In May, a developer proposed tearing down the State and Ohio theatres for a parking garage. Shepardson and the Playhouse Square Association sprang into action and persuaded city officials to stay the wrecking ball.

The association dated to 1970, when Shepardson, an assistant to Cleveland School Superintendent Paul Briggs, first saw the inside of the Palace Theatre, stripped for demolition. "I was totally blown away, even in its current condition," he said.

Shepardson quit his job, organized his friends and set out to save Playhouse Square. In 1971, he brought the Budapest Symphony and rock shows to the Allen. Most of the association's revenue, however, came from more than 600 people who paid \$120 each for life memberships.

After the close call with the State and Ohio, the association incorporated as a foundation in 1973. In April, Shepardson booked "Jacques Brel is Alive and Well and Living in Paris" for three weeks in the lobby of the State. It ran for two years, still a Cleveland record.

That and a series of \$2 shows with big-name stars at the Palace enabled the association to make urgently needed repairs to the theaters. Volun-

teers painted, patched the roof and repaired the plumbing. "Even the stars pitched in," Shepardson says, mentioning Mary Travers, Carmen MacRae, Chita Rivera and Dizzy Gillespie.

Still, most Clevelanders thought the effort was hopeless. "People thought I was wacko," Shepardson says now. "Not because they didn't want anything to happen, but because they didn't believe it could happen."

It was an October 1972 event that energized Strawbridge, president of the Higbee Co. A junkyard was proposed for the vacant land along the east bank of the Cuyahoga River between Superior and St. Clair Aves. The Plain Dealer editorialized that the site was ideal for shops and restaurants. Besides, it was where Moses Cleaveland had landed and Lorenzo Carter built the city's first cabin.

Strawbridge immediately bought the land for Higbee's, telling his board about it later. "We were going to have another national joke about turning our Plymouth Rock into a junkyard," he explained.

He brought in Lawrence Halprin, who had designed Ghirardelli Square on the San Francisco waterfront. "My God," Halprin said, "this is the best piece of property you can imagine! This is much better than Ghirardelli Square."

Halprin designed a development of shops and restaurants on Superior Hill, but the plan went up in smoke with a fire that destroyed four buildings. Still Strawbridge persevered, eventually investing \$2.5 million of Higbee's money in land and buildings.

He bought and renovated the historic Western Reserve Building at the top of the hill. The Women's City Club started work on Heritage Park at the Moses Cleaveland landing site. In 1974, the Cleaveland Crane & Trucking Co. opened in an old truck terminal. "We got a lot of young people to come down," Strawbridge says. "It was the first disco in town."

But like Playhouse Square, Flats development was a long, uphill project. Strawbridge recalls: "A lot of stockholders began to scream that Strawbridge was nuts, that nobody would ever come back downtown, that downtown was dead."

"I think we finally got all our money back out of it, but the object wasn't a real estate investment. We had to get more people downtown or we were going to lose the downtown store."

As the '70s went on, more downtown businesses closed. Clevelanders laughed at Strawbridge and Shepardson.

After all, everybody knew downtown was dead.

McGunagle is a Cleveland freelance writer.

Perk wins wild mayor's race

James Carney had a clear Democratic field in a city in which Democrats held a 7-1 lead in registration. This time, unlike 1971, there was no black mayoral candidate to take votes from him: Arnold Pinkney was now president of the school board.

But in the nonpartisan October primary, Carney trailed Republican Mayor Ralph Perk 56,000 to 44,000. The best he could say was, "Considering everything — the miserable weather and all — I thought we did all right."

Ten days later, Carney dropped a bombshell. He announced he was pulling out of the race for personal reasons. Friends said it was at the insistence of his wife.

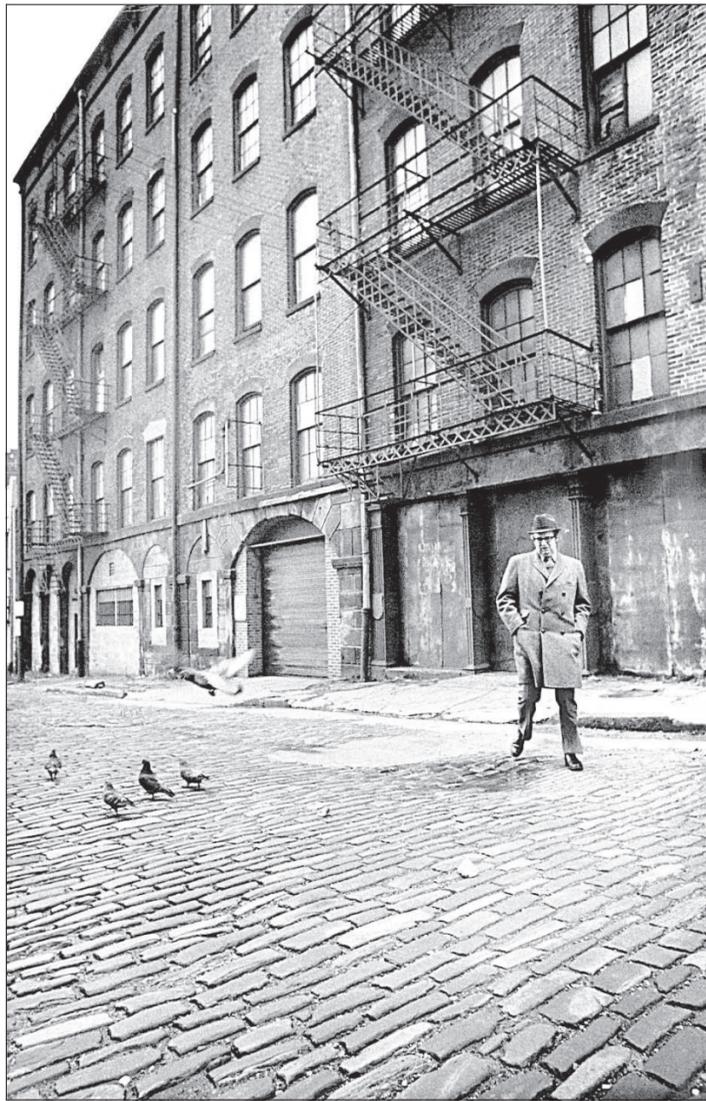
At first, it appeared that the runoff election would be Perk vs. a flock of write-in candidates. But Common Pleas Judge George McMonagle

ruled that the five nominators who signed Carney's petitions could pick a replacement. They chose Mercedes Cotner, who had been a West Side council member before becoming council clerk in 1964. She put on a spirited 13-day campaign with little money.

The Sunday before the election Cotner traveled the city, reminding voters that Perk had refused to debate her. "What's he afraid of, a woman?" she demanded. Perk, with predictions of a landslide in his pocket, sang "May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You" to the golden-agers at the Riverview Apartments of CMHA.

In the smallest November turnout since women got the vote, Perk won, 90,000-57,000.

— Fred McGunagle



PLAIN DEALER FILE PHOTOS

Herbert L. Strawbridge in the then-deserted Flats.



The Moses Cleaveland landing in 1973.



The Ohio Theatre auditorium, before restoration.

LOOKING AT A YEAR

Jan. 14: The Miami Dolphins cap a perfect, 17-0 season with a Super Bowl victory over the Washington Redskins.

Jan. 27: A truce is signed in Paris, bringing a cease-fire to the war in Vietnam.

Mar. 27: Bill Walton leads UCLA to an unprecedented seventh straight NCAA basketball title.

Apr. 30: Four top aides to President

Richard Nixon resign (H.R. Haldiman, John Ehrlichman, John Dean and Richard Kleindienst) amid expanding allegations of a White House cover-up over Watergate.

June 25: Dean tells a Senate committee Nixon was involved in the cover-up.

Oct. 12: Vice President Spiro Agnew resigns under terms of a deal to avoid imprisonment on income tax

evasion and other charges. Nixon nominates Gerald Ford as Agnew's replacement.

Oct. 23: In what became known as the "Saturday Night Massacre," Nixon fires two administration officials involved in the Watergate investigation. A third resigns in protest.

Dec. 16: O.J. Simpson becomes the first running back in NFL history to rush for 2,000 yards in a single sea-

son. **Born:** Monica Seles, Neve Campbell, Neil Patrick Harris.

Died: Lyndon Baines Johnson, Israeli leader David Ben-Gurion, American cardiologist Paul White, Spanish artist Pablo Picasso, Spanish cellist and composer Pablo Casals, American film director John Ford, actor Edward G. Robinson, cartoonist Walt Kelly.