

AT A GLANCE

School busing plan ends after 17 years

“Racial balance is not to be achieved for its own sake,” said U.S. District Judge Robert Krupansky.

With that, he granted a motion by the Ohio Department of Education and ended a 17-year experiment in cross-town busing.

Thomas Atkins, one of the attorneys for the plaintiffs in the desegregation suit, protested. “The judge has authorized the Cleveland school system to re-create the segregated system that spawned this litigation in 1973,” he said.

But the general reaction was relief. “The judge says it’s over, and I don’t have a quarrel with that,” said George Forbes, the former City Council president who was now president of the local NAACP. He added: “But I’m telling you now that when you have kids that don’t have any paper in the bathrooms or books to take home, something is wrong.”

Parents were allowed to pick a first, second and third choice among nearby schools and magnet schools or special programs. The state also authorized a \$5.25 million voucher program. Parents of 1,700 students were given up to \$2,250 each for tuition to 49 private or church schools.

But would the public schools be open in September? The system prepared for a strike, but at the last moment teachers compromised on a three-year contract. Voters, apparently pleased with the changes, passed a whopping 13.5-mill levy. It was only the second successful operating tax in 25 years.

Mayor Michael White was still unhappy about Krupansky’s 1995 decision to take control from the elected school board he had backed. In December, he met with state legislators pushing a bill to give the mayor control of the school system.

Mary Jo Pesho left her two teenage children in Parmatown Mall on Jan. 2, saying she was going to get the family van from the parking lot. She didn’t return. The next day, her nude body was found in the van at the Triskett rapid station.

The murder shocked Cleveland as few had. Parmatown and other malls tried to reassure shoppers that they were safe. Eventually, two youths were convicted: Mark DiMarco hanged himself in prison. Shannon Kidd was sentenced to life imprisonment.

A murder by a group of teenagers had similarly shocked Lakewood a year earlier. In June 1996, Antonio Davis got a life sentence for stabbing Vincent Drost while Drost was using a pay phone on Franklin Blvd. Two juveniles were acquitted.

1996 ended as it had begun, with a brutal murder. Patrolman Hilary Cudnik stopped a stolen car on Woodland Ave. and was riddled by bullets from an assault rifle. Leonard Hughes was convicted, but escaped the death penalty when 11 jurors yielded to one who held out for life imprisonment.

The winter of 1995-96 was the snowiest on record — 101.5 inches. The last snow came in April — officially spring. From Nov. 9 through 14 — officially still fall — Ohio’s greatest single snowstorm dumped 19 inches at Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, 61 inches in Shaker Heights and 69 in Chardon. The storm knocked out service to 110,000 Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co. customers.

For the third time in 2½ years, Mayor White ousted a police chief. In April, he demanded the resignation of John Collins, whom he had named a year earlier after a national search.

White said Collins was insubordinate. Collins said White was micromanaging the Police Department and talked of running against him for mayor in 1997. Council members, neighborhood groups and rank-and-file police praised Collins.

White said he would conduct still another national search, but a week later named veteran policeman Rocco Pollutro, who had retired a year earlier as deputy chief.

The same day, Patrolwoman Deborah Simmons charged that White’s chief of staff, LaVonne Sheffield-Turner, threatened to have her “sweeping Kinsman” Rd. if she filled out a report on an accident involving Sheffield-Turner that she said injured a child.

Investigators were unable to find any evidence that there had even been an accident. In June 1997, Simmons pleaded guilty to 18 counts of falsification. She was fined \$3,000 and given probation on the condition she not work in law enforcement again.

E-check was intended to reduce fumes from cars. Now it was the drivers who were fuming. Faced with federal orders to reduce ground-level ozone, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency chose not to require reformulated gas. Instead, it hired Envirotec Systems Corp. to conduct tailpipe tests. The company failed to open two of its Lake County sites by Jan. 1. At others, equipment was faulty or operators weren’t trained.

Some drivers had to wait up to five hours to pay their \$19.50 fee and get the tests. Some had to pay hundreds of dollars for repairs. Eventually, the state eliminated the test for cars less than 2 years old and limited the amount owners would be required to spend on repairs.

Mike Fratello’s Cavaliers broke a 41-year-old National Basketball Association record by allowing only 88.5 points per game. They also put fans to sleep with their deliberate style. They finished third in the Central Division at 47-35, but lost to the New York Knicks in three straight in the playoffs.

A year-long party for the Bicentennial

By Fred McGunagle

It was a yearlong party. But, hey, you’re only 200 once.

It started, naturally, on New Year’s Eve 1995. More than 70,000 people jammed Public Square for a seven-hour Fanfare for Cleveland orchestrated by Disney “imagineers.” Local corporations picked up the \$600,000 tab.

Four-hundred-foot images of Mickey Mouse and the Little Mermaid cavorted on the face of the Terminal Tower. In the square, a life-size Aladdin, Jasmine and Belle (that’s Belle from the “Beauty and the Beast,” not from the Indians) shook hands with children.

The buildings around the Square opened their lobbies as stages. Bands played gospel, jazz, polkas and country music. The last hour was a celebration of Cleveland’s past, present and future, carried live on two television stations.

Then fireworks shot from the Terminal Tower and a giant digital clock appeared on the face of the tower, counting down the seconds. At the stroke of midnight, the band played “Auld Lang Syne” as a 400-foot-tall “200” appeared on the tower.

The bicentennial events continued during the year, but the big splash was July 19-22. Fittingly, it centered on the Flats, where Moses Cleaveland and his surveyors had landed on July 22, 1796.

Moses wouldn’t have recognized the place. For that matter, neither would Clevelanders of just 20 years earlier. Then, the Flats was a handful of bars among warehouses and weeds along an oily river.

Now, a dozen stages on the east and west banks resounded with virtually continuous entertainment. Food tents served hot dogs and pierogis. Performances went on until 1 a.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Entertainers ranged from the Youth for Hope Choir to the Thieveland rap group to the Salem Ridge Band to the Cleveland Ballet.

A quarter-million Clevelanders watched Bob Hope lead a Parade of Lights down the river. Above the boats, eight bridges glowed with purple, blue and red lights. Krazy Kraft raced, and sometimes sank. Sea World water-skiers performed. Each night ended with a laser show and fireworks.

Clevelanders could take the RTA’s brand-new \$69 million Waterfront Line to the lakefront. There they could tour the 350 exhibits of the \$59 million Great Lakes Science Center, which held its grand opening Friday. On Friday night, 1,650 partygoers swigged test tubes of champagne served by waiters in white lab coats.

Sunday’s celebration drew an estimated 400,000. The crowning event was the Cleveland Orchestra’s performance at the Nautica stage of “Reach Forth Our Hands.” Thomas Newman’s specially commissioned work featured Cleveland-born actress Debra Winger reading a letter that had been enclosed in a time capsule during Cleveland’s centennial 100 years before.

On Monday morning, after a service at the Old Stone Church, past and present city leaders dedicated \$1.7 million worth of improvements on Public Square. Then the Early Settlers Association laid its annual wreath at the statue of Moses Cleaveland and served the traditional cake and ice cream.

The bicentennial events continued. They included a series of history presentations and the opening of Bicentennial Village, a 24-home development by Habitat for Humanity in the Central neighborhood.

“It’s a lot more than just having a party,” said David Abbott, director of the Bicentennial Commission. “If that’s all we did, we would have failed pretty miserably.”

In the last large-scale event, 200,000 watched a 200-unit parade led by Santa Claus and Drew Carey, Cleveland’s new Bob Hope. Then they gathered for the holiday lighting ceremony on



DAVID I ANDERSEN / PLAIN DEALER PHOTOGRAPHER

New Year’s Eve on Public Square touched off a year-long celebration of the city’s 200th birthday.

Public Square, where the yearlong party had begun.

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Cleveland gets Browns; Baltimore gets Modell

Cleveland was in its hurry-up offense, but this time more than a game was at stake. This time what was in play was the future of the Cleveland Browns.

As the year opened, Mayor Michael White and city leaders flew to Atlanta. They urged National Football League owners not to allow Art Modell to move the Browns to Baltimore. Browns fans in Cleveland and around the country peppered owners with faxes and phone calls. Meanwhile, the city pressed its lawsuit to force the Browns to play out their Stadium lease through 1998.

Modell told his fellow owners of his attempts to get Cleveland to fix up the Stadium before he signed a contract with Maryland officials. The league delayed a decision, then delayed it again.

On Feb. 8 came an agreement. Modell could take his team to Baltimore in 1996. But the Browns would get a new team — most likely one from another city — in 1999. Meanwhile, it would keep the Browns’ name and colors.

Cleveland would build a 72,000-seat stadium

costing at least \$220 million. Modell would pay Cleveland \$11.5 million in compensation. The league would lend Cleveland up to \$48 million and the state would chip in \$36 million. Cleveland would drop its suits against Modell and Maryland.

Cleveland would get the Browns. Baltimore would get Art Modell. Clevelanders consoled themselves that they had gotten the better of that deal.

It took the Indians nine days longer than last year, but they clinched the Central Division championship on Sept. 17. Eddie Murray and Carlos Baerga had been traded, but Albert Belle, Jim Thome and Manny Ramirez each hit 30 or more homers and drove in 100 runs. Kenny Lofton stole 75 bases to lead the league for the fifth straight year.

Umpires threatened to boycott the playoff series against Baltimore. They wanted a stiff penalty against the Orioles’ Robbie Alomar, who had spit in the face of umpire John Hirschbeck. After a 17-

minute delay, the league promised the umpires a hearing and they took the field.

The Orioles won the opener in Baltimore, 10-4, on four home runs. The second game was tied, 4-4, in the eighth inning when Paul Assenmacher appeared to have pitched out of a bases-loaded jam with a comebacker. He threw home, but catcher Sandy Alomar’s double play relay skipped past Jeff Kent. The Orioles went on to score three runs for a 7-4 win.

The third game, at Jacobs Field, was also tied, 4-4, this time in the seventh inning. Then Albert Belle hit a grand slam and the Tribe won, 9-4.

The Indians were one pitch away from a 3-2 win in the ninth inning of Game 5, but the Orioles’ Robbie Alomar singled on a 1-2 count to tie the score. Out of pitchers, manager Mike Hargrove kept Jose Mesa in the game.

In the 12th, Alomar lined a pitch over the fence in right center. The Indians failed to score in the bottom of the 12th. Suddenly, sickeningly, their season was over.

— Fred McGunagle

LOOKING AT A YEAR

Jan. 2: U.S. forces enter Bosnia as part of a U.N. peacekeeping force.

Jan. 28: Millionaire John du Pont is arrested for killing Olympic gold medal wrestler Dave Schultz in Newton Square, Pa.

Feb. 28: Princess Diana agrees to terms of a divorce with Prince

Charles.

April 4: The FBI arrests the Unabomber, Theodore J. Kaczynski, in a cabin in Montana.

July 3: Russian President Boris Yeltsin is re-elected.

July 17: TWA Flight 800 explodes over the Atlantic Ocean near New

York, killing 228 on board.

July 19: Muhammad Ali lights the flame officially opening the Olympic Games in Atlanta.

Nov. 6: President Bill Clinton is re-elected, handily defeating Republican Bob Dole.

Dec. 12: Madeleine Albright be-

comes the first female secretary of state.

Deaths: Comedian George Burns, jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald, former Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, convicted KGB spy Alger Hiss, film star Gene Kelly, former French President Francois Mitterrand.