Teaching Cleveland Stories

people and periods from Northeast Ohio's past

TEACHING CLEVELAND DIGITAL MEDIA

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Fire bombings during the 1966 Hough Riots.

CLEVELAND IN THE 1960S

MICHAEL D. ROBERTS

The 1959 holiday season, the last of the decade, was full of good cheer and spirit, the downtown department stores merry with color, music and the smells of Christmas. Shoppers swarmed the streets, their heads bowed to the cold as they made their way up Euclid Avenue, past the array of brightly lit stores.

Children wondered how Santa could be both at May Company and Higbee's. The giant Christmas tree at the Sterling-Lindner department store was as traditional as the season itself. The restaurants and bars along the avenue were aglow with fellowship that only the holidays can bring.

It was the final hours of a peaceful and generally rewarding decade for Greater Cleveland. No one predicted that the upcoming decade, the 1960s, would be as tumultuous and trying as any the city, or the country, for that matter, would endure.

The decade was only weeks old when a harbinger of bad news appeared. On January 23, the *Cleveland News*, an institution that traced its heritage to post-Civil War days, announced it would cease publication, following years of competing for afternoon readers with the dominant *Cleveland Press*.

The Cleveland Press was no ordinary newspaper and, because of the weakness in the two-party political system, Cleveland was no ordinary newspaper town. Under Louis B. Seltzer, the newspaper emerged as the most powerful institution in the region. Picked by *Time* magazine as one of the most influential newspapers in America, *The Press* elected mayors, jailed corrupt public officials, hunted murders, and drove the agenda of the city and its citizens.

Seltzer was as much a politician as a journalist. Diminutive in stature, blunt and street smart, he was self-made with minimal formal education. He reigned as the most powerful force in the city for a quarter of a century. He was a man whose vision did not eclipse the next election.

While no one realized it, the demise of the *News* marked the initial toll of the bell for *The Press* itself, as its death would take place 21 years later. By 1960, television news was coming of age, and a circuitous highway system was opening a burgeoning suburban sprawl. Afternoon newspapers could no longer reach the spreading population before the six o'clock news.

By the fall of 1960, it seemed as if the whole of America was changing. The election of John F. Kennedy brought a vitality to politics that heralded a new era, not only in Washington, but across the nation. Cleveland was destined to be a major player in that change, even though it would be a painful change.

More than 25 years had passed without any major development or repair to Cleveland's infrastructure. The city suffered through the Great Depression and, during World War II, focused its energy on the war effort. Its housing stock was decaying and many of its neighborhoods were overcrowded.

In a massive effort to rejuvenate Cleveland, the government embarked on six urban renewal projects. The city's business community hailed the effort and focused on the downtown piece of the project, Erieview.

In concert with urban renewal, a highway system, planned as early as 1927 and spurred by the Eisenhower Administration's federal interstate program, was progressing. Transportation was a constant theme in and around Cleveland, with a rapid transit system being the key to the development of Shaker Heights in the 1920s.

Together these two efforts — urban renewal and the transportation system — would be largely responsible for the consistent drain of population from the central city.

At the time, the urban renewal projects constituted the largest such effort in America. Critics accused Seltzer of promoting Erieview to benefit a new location for his newspaper. The scope and shape of urban renewal would severely affect the city's East Side and cause one official in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to later say Cleveland was the agency's Vietnam, because it was so deeply mired in a losing effort.

Meanwhile, on the city's West Side, adjacent to Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, a group of scientists and engineers worked secretly and industriously to ensure that an American would be the first to set foot on the moon.

A federal aeronautical research laboratory was built in 1941 at the airport to develop aircraft engines and test fuels during World War II. Later, it experimented with jet engines, rockets, and exotic fuels. In the 1950s, a handful of engineers quietly began to experiment with liquid hydrogen.

The laboratory, known as the Lewis Research Center, part of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, was an obscure facility, until October of 1957 when the Russians orbited Sputnik, the first man-made satellite. The launching of the satellite at the height of the Cold War shot panic through the U.S. government.

There was an obvious need for a new government organization to take on the challenge of the looming space race. Because of their work with fuels and rockets, a Lewis team, headed by its director, Abe Silverstein, authored a memorandum used by the Eisenhower administration as the foundation for the creation of the new space agency.

The first director of NASA was T. Keith Glennan, the president of Case Institute of Technology in Cleveland. Silverstein was the architect of what would be the Mercury and Apollo programs, that resulted in the moon landing in July of 1969. Sadly, Washington politics involving NASA and its budget ultimately dealt Lewis a short hand and made Houston the center of the space program.

In Cleveland politics, a transition was taking place as President Kennedy selected Mayor Anthony J. Celebrezze to his cabinet, as head of the Department of Health, Welfare, and Education. Celebrezze served as mayor from 1953 to 1962, a generally prosperous and tranquil time for the city, highlighted by highway construction, all of which would lead away from the city.

Celebrezze was promoted and prodded by *The Press* and he did much of the newspaper's bidding, particularly when it came to the ambitious, but flawed downtown redevelopment plans. Celebrezze was a mayor in a tradition of ethnic politics that governed from City Hall since the early 1940s and answered to *The Cleveland Press*.

These politics represented a philosophy of indifference to which there was no statute of limitations. With its strong Middle European roots, the electorate was mistrustful of Progressive government.

Appointed to replace Celebrezze was Ralph S. Locher, the city's law director, a taciturn man described by those who served with him as decent and pleasant, known for his integrity and honesty. He was no administrator, however, and no match for what would befall the city in his time. One councilman who served with him said Locher had the demeanor of a college president, rather than that of a big city mayor.

Locher's inadequate administrative skills and his links to a dying political past became obvious over time, compounding an already relentless series of

issues that had been ignored for decades and was now playing out in a destructive confluence.

The mayor inherited a troubled city, the depths of which were evident to those who examined the realities confronting urban life. As the decade advanced, skepticism began to build around the massive renewal project that began with such grandeur and was slowly proving to be a profound gaffe.

An intrusive interlude to life in Greater Cleveland was a lengthy newspaper strike, beginning late in 1962 and ending the next spring, that was costly to both newspapers. Art Modell, the owner of the Cleveland Browns, timed the firing of the team's legendary coach, Paul Brown, with the strike, hoping the news blackout would blunt one of the biggest sports stories here ever.

The Browns won the 1964 National Football League Championship, but Modell would never replicate Paul Brown's achievements.

While sports had its moments in the 1960s, urban renewal continued in the headlines. Erieview was an area bordered by East 6th Street and extended to East 17th Street, south to Chester Avenue and north to the lake. It was filled with small businesses and modest homes. These buildings were cleared, leaving vast stretches of acreage available for redevelopment.

The result was the displacement of people and businesses in such a fashion that it affected the commerce on Euclid Avenue, a stretch of upscale shops, stores, and restaurants that had been a traditional haunt of downtown shoppers. Over time, the combination of bad downtown planning and the creation of suburban malls, aided by one of the best highway systems in the country, diminished downtown.

There were problems with other areas of the city designated for urban renewal. The process was driving people, mostly black people, into neighborhoods that were overcrowded and filled with inadequate housing.

In the area around St. Vincent's Charity Hospital, some 1,200 families were up-rooted and moved to the Hough area, itself designated for renewal. Hough was notable for its overcrowded conditions for black families.

In fact, the city did its best to ignore these conditions, almost from the very beginning of black migration during the Civil War era.

While historically Cleveland had a reputation of racial tolerance, its liberalism flagged as European immigrants arrived and settled, making the town a mosaic of ethnicity that became ingrained in its politics and culture.

Cleveland also attracted Southern blacks hoping for a better life. Two world wars within the span of two decades hastened that journey, as the industrial

might of the city was geared to war production and needed as much manpower as it could absorb. The Korean War soon followed, maintaining the manufacturing need.

There were about 10,000 blacks living in Cleveland just before World War I. By the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, that figure had grown to 72,000 and, by 1940, it had reached 85,000. By 1960, there were 250,000 blacks living mostly on the city's East Side.

The city was not prepared to deal with this increasing influx of newcomers, in terms of housing and schools. As time passed, both necessities degenerated further. By the early 1960s, the city was at a tipping point, but most were oblivious to the growing storm.

By 1960, jobs were still easily found for blacks, especially those in the steel mills, where the money was good, but the work dirty, dangerous, and damnable. Federal government jobs as postal workers, clerks, and other official tasks were steady employment. There were positions available for teachers, social workers, and lawyers.

Blacks were increasingly part of the community's fabric. By 1963, ten of the 33 City Council seats were black. However, beneath the surface existed an unspoken demarcation that separated the minorities from the rest of the community. As late as 1959, *The Cleveland Press* carried a page one story concerning downtown office space, in which a respected realtor was quoted as saying he would not rent to Negros, because they were too messy.

There were few black newspaper reporters. Editors routinely asked whether an incident or event took place "at a good address." Black crime was often ignored as not being newsworthy. Reporters covering the police beat told editors of the conditions they witnessed in black neighborhoods, but could draw little interest in reporting on them.

Simply stated, the community had no sensitivity as to what was happening in the overcrowded slums and the inadequate and aging East Side schools. Even though these conditions festered for years, it seemed to the community at large that the ensuing discontent occurred overnight.

This was because of the nature of ethnic politics that drove City Hall for years, and the failure of the news media to play its role in communicating reality to the community. Politicians knew its ethnic constituency possessed a heritage distrustful of government and the best way to appeal to that instinct was to embrace the status quo.

The racial story broke in a series of confrontations between black students and their ethnic counterparts in those neighborhoods that abutted each other.

Protests over the conditions in the schools became regular events. Some black students were going to school half a day in makeshift classrooms in the basement of churches.

Nationally, Martin Luther King, Jr., was beginning a cavalcade of civil rights protests that ignited the imagination of blacks across the nation. He was no stranger to Cleveland, visiting often with his message. Times were changing, and no place exhibited that dynamic greater than Cleveland.

This was the situation that Ralph S. Locher inherited as mayor. In a belated effort, the Cleveland City School District began a building program with an emphasis on East Side schools, which some civil rights activists saw as an effort to further segregate the city.

One of the dreadful moments of the decade took place on April 7, 1964. It involved the growing conflict over education and the ensuing tragedy rocked the community. Protesting the construction of an elementary school on Lakeview Road, Reverend Bruce Klunder lay in the path of a bulldozer and was accidentally crushed to death. The incident divided the community even further and photographs of the scene became a symbol of the agony of the times.

In the wake of this tragedy, the Interracial Business Men's Committee was formed, bringing together black and white business leaders with a stake in the community, in an effort to alleviate the growing conflict and solve the contributing irritants. The effort provided temporary relief, as more blacks were hired by business and a community relations department was established at City Hall.

As days passed, the news focused more and more on racial issues. The media showed a willingness, albeit naively, to explore the problem that had been evident for decades. One newspaper ran a series of articles on the life of a black family.

Newspaper readers in the summer of 1965 drew some respite from the city's woes when a *Plain Dealer* copy editor, Robert Manry, sailed the Atlantic Ocean alone in a 13-foot boat, the smallest vessel ever to cross the sea at the time. As he progressed, his 78-day adventure was played out daily, resulting in *The Press* scooping the morning paper on its own story, by publishing a television interview of Manry in the midst of the ocean.

The man-against-the-odds story was in strange contrast to the odds-against-man story, which the city was struggling to confront or at least to contain, in what was becoming an increasingly tension-ridden existence.

The mayoral election of 1965 was a contest of black and white and the past and future, as Mayor Locher chose to run for his own two-year term, but this

time his chief opponent would not come from the ranks of traditional ethnic politics. He would be a black man, Carl B. Stokes, who successfully ran as the first black Democratic state legislator from Cuyahoga County.

In many ways, Stokes was the perfect candidate for the times. Handsome, articulate, a confident man, edgy in temperament, the representative of a cause whose time had come, he stepped into the campaign, believing that he could make a difference both for his people and for Cleveland.

One of the characteristics of his confidence was a sense of arrogance that could be repelling. In 1965 Stokes failed to ask the ten black City Council members for support of his mayoralty bid. It was not that they opposed him, it was a matter of protocol. Stokes, for his part, thought he could win without asking for help.

He did not win. The newspapers backed the old politics and won the day, as Locher triumphed by 2,143 votes, the slimmest victory in the city's history. *The Press* predicted a 20,000 win for Locher. Stokes impressed the reporters covering the race and he later would say that this campaign was the highlight of his political life.

The victory was Pyrrhic for Locher, as events in the city continued to spiral out of control. After years of neglect, the city and its services deteriorated, despite the late efforts to fix a failing school system. Education remained a primary issue, and the now apparent folly of urban renewal had come together like a Greek tragedy, to generate a violent encore

Meanwhile, another important story broke in 1966, when the U.S. Supreme Court held that Dr. Sam Sheppard, who had been convicted of the murder of his wife in a famous case in 1954, was subjected to unfair pretrial publicity by *The Press*. Sheppard was ordered released from prison and given a new trial. He was later acquitted.

The news damaged the reputation of *The Press* at a time when *The Plain Dealer* was attempting to surpass it in both circulation and civic leadership. The court decision cast a shadow on *The Press* and gave the morning newspaper the appearance of greater credibility and, in an odd way, this would come to bear on the campaign.

It was oppressively hot July 18 that summer of 1966. At 5 p.m., outside of the Seventy-Niner's Café on the corner of East 79th and Hough Avenue, a crowd gathered. The heat made it a bad time to drink. The bar, owned by two white brothers, had problems with its clientele. Someone had tried to burn their car a few days before and a cherry bomb was exploded in the men's room.

Tensions were high.

A young woman, identified by some as a prostitute, was in the crowded bar, soliciting money for flowers for the funeral of another streetwalker. One of the owners ordered her out of the bar and she joined the crowd outside, angry at her dismissal.

A man who purchased a bottle of wine was refused a glass of water by one of the brothers. His anger provoked, he joined the crowd, claiming he had been called a nigger. The crowd began to swell in size and emotion.

Police were summoned, but it was too late. All the frustration and conflict of the past welled up in one wild rampage that swept through the Hough area in a violent torrent. Shops were looted, fires set, the sound of gunfire resounded through the neighborhood. The scene resembled street fighting on the television news in some far-off land.

Looters roamed the streets with a strange sense of glee, pushing racks of stolen clothes and carrying bundles of goods. The best the police could do was to take photographs of the looters and hope to identify them later.

Locher waited and, finally, reluctantly asked the Ohio National Guard to intercede in what became a six-day siege of the Hough neighborhood. Four residents were killed and some 240 fires were set. The blame for the violence rested on overcrowding and the failure of the urban renewal program to provide relief from conditions in Hough.

The sight of military vehicles mounting heavy weapons moving through the city streets was eerie and disturbing. Guardsmen were crouched in doorways, their rifles at the ready, scanning the rooftops for snipers in the night.

Despite its obvious cause, a county grand jury, comprised of some of the town's most respected citizens, and led by Seltzer, found that the riot was instigated by a conspiracy organized by outsiders, maybe even Communists. There still existed a sense of denial among the city's leadership as to the true conditions of the city.

Tragic as it was, Hough was the event that would propel Carl B. Stokes into City Hall and the annals of history.

The Hough riot shook the city's business leaders, cast a cloak of fear over the town, and brought more negative national media to a city already suffering from cynical reviews. White people feared driving through the East Side and blacks dared not venture near the Murray Hill area. There were random shootings and some killing, including the ambush of a policeman on the East Side.

The mood at City Hall was sullen. Community leaders lost faith in the ability of Ralph Locher to run the city and deal with the overwhelming problems

that were mounting daily. But it was not just Cleveland. The nation's major cities were facing racial unrest, with rioters taking to the streets elsewhere.

It did not help when a Cleveland officer, testifying before a state legislative committee, urged that the death penalty be applied to rioting black nationals. The tension between the city's police force and the black community lingered for years.

All the sins committed by City Hall over the past decades suddenly came to rest on Locher. *The Plain Dealer,* that stood so gray and idle while *The Press* dictated to City Hall for years, lashed out critically and rendered frustration and wrath on its competitor, through the Locher administration.

To make matters worse, the federal government cut ten million dollars of the city's urban renewal funds, leaving the already embattled program adrift. It was evident to everyone that Locher's term as mayor was fading into failure.

The national media became so negative in its portrayal of Cleveland that Locher refused to meet with another out-of-town reporter.

It was also evident that the performance Carl Stokes made in the 1965 campaign elevated him to a level where victory, while not probable, was certainly more than possible. This time Stokes actively sought support, not only from the black councilmen, but from the business community, as well.

The 1967 mayor's race was perhaps the most memorable and remarkable in the city's history. Not only was the first black mayor of a major American city elected, the drama and excitement of that campaign generated attention around the globe. Reporters from every major news outlet in the world descended on Cleveland, creating a genuine global event.

A signal and surprising moment in the campaign came with the endorsement of Stokes by *The Plain Dealer*, an act he considered legitimatized him among the white establishment. It was an important moment for the newspaper as well, for it symbolized its ascension over the rival *Press*.

The business community, stung by the ineptness of the Locher administration and fearful of more racial unrest, pumped money and influence into the Stokes campaign. Some observers feared that business leaders were so anxious to rid the city of Locher, they would support Stokes in the primary and then back a white candidate in the general election.

Reporters followed Stokes on his forays into the white West Side, where he met in small gatherings over coffee, asking for support, urging that the issue of race be cast aside in favor of enlightened leadership in City Hall. He handily defeated a subdued Locher in the Democratic primary.

Poised to oppose Stokes was Seth Taft, a Republican with one of the most prominent political names in Ohio history, and a descendant of a U.S. president. Seth Taft was regarded in the community as honest, dedicated, and active, but, most importantly, he was white.

While both candidates tried to remain above the race issue, it smoldered in the background, threatening to burst into full flame at any moment. Race would be the deciding factor, but it did not mar the campaign.

The campaign itself was exciting and interesting, unlike any since. Both camps exhibited well-run political organizations. A series of debates between the candidates held in various parts of the city were set-piece battles, while reporters pontificated on the victor.

Stokes was the superior orator, but Taft improved as the campaign progressed and showed surprising and increasing aggressiveness. As election day approached, the polls showed the two candidates neck-and-neck. The town was alive with speculation and anticipation.

Election day was cold, with flecks of wet snow. There was a question of the turnout. A huge voter registration drive, largely funded by a $175,000 grant from the Ford Foundation, worked the neighborhoods in the months preceding the election. The question was whether the voters would respond.

Representatives of the global media roamed the city that day, studying the turnout, which was not only large, but electric in mood. Despite the issue of race, there was a wholesome quality to the campaign, two excellent candidates locked in a struggle that personified democracy. People sensed history in the making and wanted to be part of it.

The early returns that night had Taft ahead, but by 9 p.m., the race was neck-and-neck. And then at midnight, Taft began to pull away. At 2:15 a.m., Stokes took his first lead and held on to win by some 2,000 votes, in the closest race in city history.

The succeeding weeks and months were filled with an optimism that Cleveland had not experienced in years. A feeling of achievement abounded and, while only 15% of white voters had supported Stokes, there existed an atmosphere of elation, a sense of genuine community.

Stokes had little time to celebrate. The conditions that contributed to his election were now his problems to solve. The first issue was the quality of personnel serving the city. After so many years of patronage, the various departments were larded with political hacks who contributed to City Hall's ineptness. He attacked the problem with vigor.

Despite its aimlessness, the urban renewal program had to be regenerated and Stokes persuaded Washington to restore the funding. He then hired a director with national experience, as part of assembling an energetic and capable cabinet. Urban experts from other cities were eager to come to Cleveland and participate in the city's rebirth.

Meanwhile, the business community, swept by euphoria, raised $5.5 million and created an organization to support many of the Stokes initiatives, called Cleveland: NOW. The idea born out of a swelling sense of community pride and necessity, ironically, would become fickle and turn on Stokes in the meanest way.

Cleveland: NOW! was created by several white businessmen, following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., in April of 1968. The nation was in turmoil over King's death and that of Robert F. Kennedy in June. Adding to the domestic anxiety was the stalemate in Vietnam and the increasing protest of that war.

These angry forces were mounting across the nation, as demonstrators and militants exercised their wrath in the streets. In Cleveland, civic leaders hoped that a black mayor possessed the ability to calm their community. Stokes maintained that a black mayor was no insurance against racial violence.

Fred Ahmed Evans, a Korean War veteran, became an astrologer of sorts, after claiming to witness a UFO over Glenville one day. While known in the neighborhood as somewhat of a militant, he was an obscure figure, until catapulted to notoriety by *The Wall Street Journal,* which wrote Evans had predicted the outbreak of a race riot in Cleveland.

Evans portrayed himself as a black revolutionary, a man who called for a national black revolt, and used his incendiary rhetoric to inflame ghetto youth. Stokes later characterized Evans as a street hustler, who used the idea of revolution to extort money. Cleveland: NOW! gave Evans $6,000 to fund a youth group.

In the aftermath of Martin Luther King's assassination, Evans, among other black militants, walked Cleveland's streets with Stokes, to calm the anguish which was spreading across the nation and creating violence in other cities.

On July 23, 1968, Evans and some of his self-proclaimed revolutionaries engaged in a gun battle with Cleveland police that left seven dead, including three police officers, three suspected militants, and a citizen. Fifteen more were wounded, and the Glenville community suffered more than $2.5 million in damage.

It was never clear what triggered the shooting. Evans was found guilty of murder and sentenced to life in prison, where he died.

The shoot-out made headlines, even in war-torn Vietnam. It destroyed the myth that a black mayor could prevent the spread of racial violence. It also effectively damaged the mayoralty of Stokes, when it was learned that Cleveland: NOW! money was used by Evans to buy guns.

The irony was that one calamitous event aided Stokes's political rise and yet another would accompany his decline. He was proof that there were no easy answers to the city's racial problems.

In 1969, Stokes was elected to a second two-year term as mayor, but the heady days, bright with promise and alive with community spirit, were gone. He struggled with the reform of the police department, a culture of its own, only to have his attempted reforms and innovations go awry or fail.

That summer, men landed on the moon and the triumphant national celebration that followed underplayed the achievements of a handful of space pioneers at the Lewis Research Laboratory, coming at a time when it appeared America had lost its technological edge. It was no small thing that these men on the West Side of the city achieved.

Back at City Hall, the newspapers became increasingly critical of Stokes, who bridled at the criticism, making the tenor of his final term one of rancor and bitterness over failed expectations. He left City Hall in 1971, to become a television anchorman in New York City.

Among Stokes's lasting achievements as mayor was the passage of an equal opportunity law, that assured minority companies of participation in city business. While there had been no public housing units built in the five years before he became mayor, he could point to nearly 5,500 built during his term in office.

The Stokes years were significant in the city's history, in that they opened the way for the black community to participate in the mainstream of business and political life. The decade brought change in how a city worked and what roles black citizens played in that function. In retrospect, it is clear that the community and Stokes himself set expectations that were far from achievable, given the times and the state of the city.

It was an exhausting decade for Cleveland and its citizens, but when it was over, there were triumphs among the travail. Life went on, but it was changed forever.

The holiday season of 1969, the last of the decade, was not as festive as that of ten years before. The city had endured pain, brought on by decades of neglect, wrought by a political culture that worshipped the status quo. The

next decade would bring more change and a different dynamic, but this would involve the appearance of the city, and the dimming of downtown lights. The altering of its soul had taken place.

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Terminal Tower, overlooking the Public Square, dominates the Cleveland skyline. *Photo by Frank J. Aleksandrowicz, 1973.*

CLEVELAND IN THE 1970S

MICHAEL D. ROBERTS

At first, the arrival of a new decade to the Greater Cleveland area in 1970 appeared a welcomed reprieve from the political and social intensity of the past ten years. The era will be remembered as one of the most cataclysmic in city history. Now the population dropped to 750,903, and the census ranked Cleveland as the tenth largest city in the U.S.

The suburb of Parma grew to a population of over 100,000 and was the ninth largest city in Ohio, evidence of the exodus from the city, which numbered more than 165,000 in over 20 years. Yet Cleveland was still the dominant political and economic entity in northeastern Ohio.

But that role was being threatened by the development of a highway system that fanned out from the city like spokes from a hub, corridors to the bucolic beckoning of the suburbs that would, in a short time, change the nature of the region.

World War II disrupted long-time plans to build the Willow Freeway, that would open the southern suburbs to quick downtown access. The freeway was opened in sections, beginning in the early 1950s, and ultimately became Interstate 77, which made regional travel more accessible.

By 1970, a vast Interstate system crisscrossed northeastern Ohio, shifting development away from the traditional population centers that had originated along railroad lines. Automobiles traveled these highways on gasoline that cost 36 cents per gallon.

In the spring of 1970, America was divided over the Vietnam conflict and protests shifted from civil rights to that of opposing the war. Less than 40 miles south of Cleveland, those protests culminated on May 4, 1970, in one of the most unlikely places in the nation, Kent State University, where four students were killed by National Guardsmen, who had been summoned to the campus to subdue a protest. The tragedy symbolized the ending of the tumultuous 1960s and left an exhausted nation seeking tranquility and a sense of normalcy.

If the nation was seeking relief from the anger and resentment over the Vietnam War, the City of Cleveland was in need of its own salve. The final years of Mayor Carl B. Stokes's administration produced a series of sharp confrontations with the police department and Council Presidents James V. Stanton and Tony Garofoli. Both emerged from the 1960s as substantial political figures and antagonists of the mayor.

Throughout the final months of his term, Stokes berated the newspapers, former allies, and anyone who seemingly challenged him. The strain of managing a city in torment was taking its toll on everyone.

The city was caught in the grips of racial polarization. While Stokes had opened the way for minorities in government and business, the black organization he created — the 21st District Caucus — withdrew from the Democratic Party, making a difficult political scene even more fractious.

Meanwhile, conditions worsened in the city. Businesses were steadily abandoning downtown, plans to disperse public housing on the West Side were met with hostility in the neighborhoods, deepening the tensions at City Hall. Public services were slipping; crime was at a record pace, as drugs began an insidious and irreversible intrusion into the poor areas of the city.

In 1972, homicide in the city set a record with 333 murders. Ten years earlier there had been only 59.

Looming in the wings and ready once more to take center stage was the school issue. It had been this controversy that set off the Hough riot, which ultimately lead to Carl Stokes's rise. In the 1970s, problems in the school system would spill out over the city and touch the lives of everyone.

All of this was too much. No one could triage the issues, much less solve them, especially an embattled Carl Stokes, who saw no respite, nor allies, nor even hope. The once promising City Hall that Stokes assembled dissipated and his temperament became increasingly short and accusatory toward those who challenged him.

The newspapers continued to offer support, but it was becoming clear that the community was losing confidence in Stokes. It is important, in evaluating this era, to understand that much of the confidence accorded Stokes was generated by an inflated expectation factor, both by community business leaders and by the mayor himself. When it became clear that the negative forces at work, here and nationally, were of such magnitude that no single person could overcome them, the emotional letdown was more than Stokes or the community could bear.

The painful decade that had spawned so many hopes and dreams, and invited the world to watch, was over. Life went on, but the dynamic that drove Cleveland was changing.

Seven months into the new decade, George Szell, the great conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra and the city's legendary cultural icon, died at 73. No Clevelander in his time projected the city globally and with such grandeur as did Szell. He conducted the orchestra with a martial majesty for 24 years.

The desire for a sense of normalcy descended upon Cleveland as Carl Stokes announced, on April 16, 1971, that he would not run for a third term as the city's mayor. The progressive nature of his politics gave way to the return of the status quo, to which the ethnic composite of the city lent itself.

Stokes organized the 21st District Caucus in order to counter the existing white political apparatus and gain a greater voice in that community. Black politicians began to emerge from the caucus and establish themselves as leaders, replacing Carl Stokes in the community.

Stokes withdrew the caucus and black political participation from the Democratic Party out of frustration and charges of racism. The secession of the caucus would play a role in crippling the party's efforts to retain power in City Hall.

The long tradition of a strong and united Democratic Party had been severely tested during the 1960s, with the emergence of black politics. Over time, the party had become composed of three elements: the Irish on the West Side, the Italians on the East Side, and the Eastern European population that made up the ethnic nature of Cleveland's South Side.

The evolution of black politics, which had emerged from Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, elbowed its way into Cleveland's political mosaic, creating an abrasive mix that brought charges of racism, disrupted the patterns of patronage, and circumvented the paths of political ambition for a generation of Democratic hopefuls. In the fall of 1971, when it came time to reclaim City Hall, the party was woefully unprepared to step forward and do so.

The party split internally, offering two candidates for the fall primary, City Council President Tony Garofoli and businessman James Carney, a long-time behind-the-scenes political figure. Representing the black community and running as an independent was Arnold Pinckney, the school board president and confidant to Carl Stokes, who lent his considerable support to the campaign.

On the Republican side was Ralph J. Perk, who was elected county auditor in 1962 and enjoyed favorable support from the newspapers in that role. Perk

promoted himself as an honest and ethical politician and ran on that premise. He had run for mayor against Stokes in 1969 and lost by 4,500 votes.

Running against him in the Republican primary was a rising political star, whose ascension to political prominence was yet in the future. George Voinovich was in the Ohio House of Representatives when he opposed Perk.

Perk was a curious blend of politician for Cleveland. In a sense, he was not Republican, in that he did not fit in with the image so rigidly attached to the party by its critics. For instance, it was questionable whether he could even get into the Union Club in those days, let alone afford its dues. He was more comfortable amongst his neighbors on East 49th Street, where the polka and perogies were favored over the symphony and sushi.

Perk was perceived as a man of the people. He created this image largely through newspaper accounts of his challenges to the business practices of John and James M. Carney, who used political contacts and manipulations to acquire vast real estate holdings. *The Plain Dealer*, in particular, had been severely critical of the Carney brothers. It was ironic then, that Perk and Jim Carney would face each other in the race for City Hall.

Jim Carney, by many accounts, was among the smartest men in town. He was a lawyer, self-made, the ethics of his achievements dubious in the eyes of some. Nevertheless, Carney was respected by the business community. He built several buildings around a revived East 9th Street. Even though he was active in politics throughout his life, he generally spurned the rigors of public campaigning for the solitude of the strategist. It better suited his personality and his pursuits.

When Pinckney failed in the primary, Carl Stokes marshaled the black vote and shifted it behind Carney. The tense feelings between Stokes and Garofoli, from their earlier clashes over public housing at City Hall, were still raw.

As always, the newspapers played a key role with their endorsements. *The Cleveland Press* supported Carney and *The Plain Dealer*, which had aided Perk in his attacks on the Carney brothers, supported Garofoli.

The contempt in which Carney held *The Plain Dealer* was illustrated by the fact that he became a stockholder in the newspaper, often offering embarrassing remarks as to its business practices at the annual shareholder meeting, no doubt negating the paper's support. All these diverse elements were shaping a pattern that favored Perk, despite the fact Democrats out numbered Republican registered voters 8 to 1.

Neither candidate could match the eloquence of the Stokes campaigns. Perk tramped tirelessly through neighborhoods, adapting to one ethnic culture

,then another, like a chameleon crossing a rainbow. He gained what would be an unholy alliance with key labor unions, and resurrected the traditional role of the ethnic politician, who played the divisions of the town as if he were conducting an orchestra.

For all of Jim Carney's faults, the downtown business community believed in him the way they did their investment counselors. After all, he had sunk his own money into downtown, building two hotels when the city sorely needed them. He organized a Port Authority and played a role in numerous civic efforts. He was the best they had, and the business leaders believed he would be an outstanding mayor.

As a campaigner, Carney was painful to watch. He suffered from a tall man's awkwardness and was self-conscious as a speaker. He had spectacles that reporters referred to as "Coke-bottle thick" and never seemed at ease.

Together, the pair hardly presented an intoxicating campaign, but, after the previous decade, the city needed to catch its collective breath, even if it involved political boredom. There was growing alarm in the business community, for many of the projects it championed in an effort to revive the town had failed. The city needed new blood, and fast.

Instead of that transfusion, it got old politics. Perk was the first elected Republican mayor in Cleveland since Harold Burton in 1935. Perk did not suffer from the enormous expectations that burdened Stokes, but as time passed he proved to be an inept administrator and an inconsequential mayor. The Cleveland business community — always sensitive to national ridicule that the city drew over such misadventures as the Cuyahoga River burning, its aimless sports teams, and even its intemperate climate — prepared for the worse.

It did not take long for Perk to add to the miasmatic ridicule that hung so lazily over Cleveland, in what a visiting sports writer once termed as the city that represented the broken nose of America. In October of 1972, while presiding over ceremonies opening a convention, Perk, wielding a welder's torch, set his hair on fire. The photograph that captured the moment was transmitted nationwide by wire services, perpetuating Cleveland jokes. Late night television shows were merciless.

When his wife reported to have turned down an invitation to a White House dinner, because it conflicted with her bowling night, the jokes took on new life. Then an aide, in an attempt to defend the mayor's involvement with a computer company, said that Perk, who had served as county auditor for nearly a decade, did not know the difference between a bond and a note, and the ridicule reached a new pitch. On a visit to Rome, Perk beseeched the Pope to pray for Cleveland.

On the city's East Side, the Cleveland Clinic was emerging as a great medical center. It was capitalizing on two events that had taken place within its confines that would lead to it becoming the country's, if not the world's, leading cardiac hospital. The decade at the clinic was a time of perfecting these two procedures.

In 1958, Dr. Mason Sones had discovered, by accident, the first coronary arteriogram, which pictured the interior of an artery, thus enabling an exact determination of a diseased vessel. A maverick of sorts, Sones thrived on the independent nature of the Clinic at the time, and became a renowned figure in the cardiology community.

The other development that would propel the Clinic into the future was the work of Dr. Rene Favaloro, a cardiothoracic surgeon, who developed the first successful coronary artery bypass procedure. These two procedures, and the work that Clinic doctors did throughout the 1970s to make them almost routine medicine, foretold the future of not only the Clinic, but good fortune for the city and ultimately the region.

Meanwhile, the announcement on the part of the Greater Cleveland Growth Association, the area's chamber of commerce, of a plan to study the creation of a huge jetport in the lake created headlines. The plan was spearheaded by James C. Davis, the managing partner of Squires, Sanders & Dempsey, one of the city's leading law firms.

The law firms — mainly Squires and Jones, Day, Cockley & Reavis — played an influential and sometimes covert role in the governing of the city. Because so many of their large clients had business interests in and around the city, the firms were often asked to intercede or interact with government in such matters as maintaining a good school system, promoting economic growth, and dealing with other day-to-day issues.

In effect, these firms operated as a shadow government. For instance, one day in the early 1970s, Mayor Carl Stokes called Jack Reavis, then managing partner of Jones, Day, and told him that the city did not have enough money in its budget to open the swimming pools that summer. There was fear in those hot summers days, for they were one of the ingredients of the riots that had devastated the city.

Stokes called Reavis in the hopes that he could help raise the money to open the pools. Reavis rallied the business community in a matter of hours and the needed funds were obtained.

The firms played a large role in the community in other ways. They recruited young lawyers from the best law schools, bringing a steady stream of

intellectual capital to the city. These young lawyers fanned out to volunteer for countless civic and cultural boards, and some became candidates for public office. The legal community provided stability to a city whose political foundation was fractional and inbred.

To understand the impact of the big firms on the town, it must be noted that they served the interests of their clients well. That is what they were paid to do, and sometimes the interests of those clients were not always aligned with that of the city.

The jetport plan became lost in a debate between conflicting interests. It also may have been stillborn out of the frustration of the business community over decades of political ineptness in its efforts to regain the greatness that the city enjoyed in the earlier part of the century.

Prior to the Great Depression, Cleveland had a reputation of acting in a grand manner. When it was conceived, the Terminal Tower was the second tallest building in the world, the airport was the largest in the world at one time, and the first ever to be lighted for night operations. Cleveland manufactured the first commercially sold automobiles, and, for a time, was the aviation capital of America. It had the largest convention center in the country.

There was a desire and a need to do something on a greater scale. It was clear, however, that the leadership necessary for large scale endeavor was not going to come from City Hall.

When James C. Davis, managing partner of Squires, Sanders & Dempsey, took over as chairman of the Growth Association, it was a jumbled and ineffective body. Davis reorganized it, drew the business community and newspapers together, and launched the jetport idea, with a warning that Cleveland could not afford to miss this opportunity, if it was to regain its prominence.

The object was to raise $1.2 million for a feasibility plan for a jetport that could be completed by 1985. According to preliminary studies, it would serve as a catalyst for 70,000 new jobs with a payroll of $500,000,000. Projections were for substantial increase in air travel and the use of supersonic transports, which would link Europe to Cleveland in a few hours. The federal government was studying the establishment of a series of hub airports around the county to accommodate these flights.

Because of a lack of trust or competence or simply out of naivety, there grew a reluctance on the part of the business community to engage openly with the city's political and civic grass roots. Ideas involving the expenditure of public money were packaged in back rooms, then sold to willing and eager newspapers, which presented plans as *faits accomplis*.

If the city's leaders yearned for the return of the city, they failed to study the past and understand how citizens contributed to the growth of the city.

Contrast that to the way the town handled the building of the Public Auditorium and the Terminal Tower. Those issues were voted upon, and, in the case of the auditorium in 1916, the bond issue passed 4 to 1. More people voted in that election than cast ballots in the presidential primary that year. Voters approved the moving of the train terminal to Public Square in 1919.

The failure to involve the public in succeeding years cast suspicion and doomed more than one public project. This division between the sectors of the community would continue to haunt the city for years to come.

Environmental groups, civic watchdog organizations, and other good government groups bridled at being treated in such a manner. They organized opposition that made politicians reluctant to engage in visionary plans, no matter what promise they held for the common prosperity of the community. So was the fate of the jetport, which died from ridicule and added to the city's cynicism.

Chief among the critics was a young city councilman named Dennis J. Kucinich. He used the jetport issue as a platform, gaining notoriety citywide for his opposing view. As the decade progressed, Kucinich's public presence would become as familiar as the newspaper at your door.

Was the jetport a missed opportunity? No one will ever know, because the necessary studies to determine its feasibility were never completed, having been lost somewhere amidst the dissent. Nearly 40 years later, former City Council President George Forbes, who was present at the debates, said the project was 50 years ahead of its time.

Despite the failure of the jetport, a spirit of restoration and revival seemed to permeate the city. A band of young and dedicated investors began to refurbish aging Ohio City, struggling against the odds to remake the neighborhood, in a project that would continue on for half a century and reflect the pride of a community like nowhere else in the city.

When the great theaters, the hallmarks of Playhouse Square, were threatened with demolition, the Junior League and others mounted a Herculean effort to save them, thus ensuring that a celebrated part of the city survived and regained its vibrancy.

The Depression and then World War II had arrested downtown development decades before but, as the 1970s progressed, new buildings began to rise, with the encouragement of tax cuts. The city began to take on a new look. On Euclid Avenue and East 9th Street, the venerable Cleveland Trust, now called

Ameritrust, erected a 29-storey tower and promised a companion to it in the future, and the Diamond Shamrock Corporation built a 22-storey headquarters at Superior and East 12th Street.

The 20-storey Bond Court office building at East 9th Street and Superior Avenue was completed in 1971; and in 1973, the 526-room Bond Court Hotel was constructed adjacent to it on Superior Avenue, forming a complex, along with a parking garage. The city had been painfully short on hotel rooms.

By 1973, the sprawling apartment complex known as Park Centre opened. It was hailed as the set piece of the embattled Erieview urban renewal project, first begun in the late 1950s. The twin 22-storey apartment towers between a two-storey shopping complex cost $42 million and was the second most expensive downtown investment, behind the Terminal Tower. Not far from the Park Centre on Superior Avenue, the Ernest Bohn Tower, a public housing project, rose another 22 storeys, a monument to urban renewal and to the father of public housing.

The signal project of the decade for local government was the construction of the Justice Center Complex, which occupies a city block between St. Clair and Lakeside Avenues on Ontario Street. The 26-storey building houses the Cleveland Police Department, the Cuyahoga County and Cleveland Municipal Courts, and the County Jail. Its planning had been a nightmare of negotiations between city and county officials, with Mayor Perk at one time threatening to withdraw from the project because of cost overruns.

Originally budgeted at $61 million, the controversial project ended up costing more than $125 million, and was stigmatized by rumors of illegalities associated with its construction that were never proven. It was also burdened with construction flaws, the latest discovered in 2010, when it was found that the lights in the Police Department headquarters had been on continuously since it was constructed in 1976. No provision had been made for light switches.

Downtown development, under the guise of saving the city, opened a Pandora's box, from which sprung tax abatement, an issue that would be used in such projects as the National City Bank Building at East 9th and Euclid Avenue and other development. Tax abatement was an issue with which opponents would tar Ralph Perk. The town lived on tax abatement well into the next century, eroding the tax base that would support the schools.

One of the most significant downtown projects of the time was the expansion of Cleveland State University, which had begun in 1964, an offshoot of old Fenn College.

By the time the 1970s arrived, the school, sorely needed by the city, had become a new economic engine, driving the eastern side of downtown. The construction of the James A. Rhodes Tower in 1971 gave CSU its own landmark, with the campus spreading out around it, as the decade passed.

If things were improving in the city's higher education picture, the Cleveland school system was caught on the other end of the spectrum, perched precariously amidst racial and financial issues in search of a solution.

The school system had been at the forefront of the agitation and strife that caused the unrest leading to the Hough Riot in 1966. Despite increased civic involvement and the awareness of a festering situation, no real progress was made toward a solution. In fact, the school problem was getting worse.

School Superintendent Paul Briggs took over the Cleveland school system in 1964 and tried to meet the growing racial protest by building new schools. By the 1970s, he had built 50 neighborhood schools, and that was the problem.

By 1971, two out of three black students were attending classes in schools made up of mostly minorities. That ratio was increasing in Cleveland, while across the nation the integration of school systems was on the rise.

When the Cleveland Board of Education announced it would build new schools on the city's East Side, black citizens and civil rights leaders balked, arguing and demonstrating that to do so would be a furtherance of segregation in an already divided city. Finally in 1973, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People filed a federal lawsuit, claiming that it was impossible to receive a quality education in an illegally segregated situation, such as Cleveland.

After five years of proceedings, U.S. District Judge Frank J. Battisti ruled that the school system was guilty of *de facto* and *de jure* segregation, which led to the busing of students across town and even further tormented an already divided city. Critics say that Battisti overlooked the opportunity to build magnet schools that drew students of like interest, instead of spending millions on busing.

There has long been a debate over how seriously busing affected the city's population loss, but the fact remains that it proved to be unpopular among both blacks and whites, and added to the embittered legacy of racial discontent. Ultimately, it helped to drive more families from both races to the suburbs, but was only a part of the migratory motivation, for drugs and crime were flourishing in unprecedented numbers.

Meanwhile, with Carl Stokes in New York City, where he was getting mixed reviews in his role as a news anchor on WABC-TV, racial politics flourished here, and three black political figures emerged in his shadow.

The first, was Louis Stokes, Carl's older brother. Reserved, respected, and reticent, by comparison to his brother's sophisticated and strident manner, Louis Stokes established himself as a fine lawyer and gained esteem in legal circles, after a successful appearance before the United States Supreme Court. His quiet ways masked a strong and effective leader.

He was elected in 1968 to the U.S. House of Representatives. He later became chairman of the House Select Committee on Assassinations, which investigated the murders of President John F. Kennedy and the Reverence Martin Luther King, Jr.

The next was Arnold Pinckney, an insurance broker, who was one of Carl Stokes's closest confidants. Stokes supported him as his successor at City Hall, but Pinckney failed as an independent candidate. Moderate in the public's view, he served in several positions, but was best known for his work on the school board, where he opposed school busing.

The third emerging political figure would be the most prominent and controversial in the eyes of the citizenry, and a lightening rod for racial issues. Bold in his pronouncements and quick to act, George Forbes was elected to the presidency of City Council in 1973 and served for 16 years, the longest term in Cleveland City Council history.

Forbes had a sense of humor, when it came to race issues. For a time, he hosted a daily talk radio show and often made remarks about the city's racial climate. Those who knew the man and understood downtown politics often found it amusing. But for the many white West Siders, Forbes came across as exacerbating the already sensitive feelings about race.

It did not help that Forbes was accused of taking $500 in a scheme involving a visiting carnival. Charged by County Prosecutor John T. Corrigan, Forbes was defended by Squires, Sanders in a well-covered trial, where he was found innocent. The trial added to the existing racial tensions.

Elsewhere, the quixotic nature of City Hall became bewildering. There was something about being mayor that seemed to change a person. Carl Stokes became embittered and, for Ralph Perk, the office took on a dream-like quality. Perk campaigned throughout his career as a proponent of the city's "little people," but as time passed, his personality took on a sense of wanderlust.

In 1973, the Democrats made another feeble attempt at City Hall, running Jim Carney again, but his performance in the primary was so bad that he

withdrew, and the party was forced to put Council Clerk Mercedes Cotner on the ballot, which resulted in the reelection of Ralph Perk.

Perk stunned many of his followers and friends when, in 1974, he decided to run for the U.S. Senate, a decision that cost him some of his valued advisers, who quit in protest. He was roundly defeated by former astronaut John Glenn, but worse, the decision to run and abandon the city created a political stigma that would haunt him.

Organized crime in Cleveland reached far back into the century and attained its zenith during Prohibition, when it made a fortune in extortion and the sale of illegal alcohol. The mob was comprised of three elements: the Irish on the West Side and the Jews and Italian factions elsewhere.

By the time World War II ended, Jewish members of the organization could see that the future of criminal prosperity in Cleveland was limited. They sought legitimacy and became original investors in the development of Las Vegas.

To placate former partners, skim money from the casinos was sent back to Cleveland to the remaining mob members, mostly Italians who headquartered in and around Murray Hill. The regular flow of money from Las Vegas created a lethargy in mob operations here. Adding members to the organization meant splitting the cash flow further, which was not economical.

Over time, the organization became more myth than mob, but Clevelanders enjoyed perpetuating the legend, so the once dark specter of organized crime continued to have a presence, exaggerated as it might be. The mob did manage to make its influence felt in labor unions, where its extortion was manifested in many ways. Some of these labor leaders were part of Perk's City Hall.

Shondor Birns was not a made member of the mob, but a consultant of sorts, a contractor who projected the mob's will in a no-nonsense manner that required intimidation or even murder. For years, he was known as the enforcer of the numbers games in the black neighborhoods. He also specialized in loansharking.

Another rising criminal figure in town was Danny Greene, an Irishman who at one time ran the longshoremen's union and gained prominence through his flamboyance and fearlessness. He, Birns, and the mob were on a collision course over money and power.

Numerous bombings and killings rocked the city throughout this period. The mob read Birns's death as a threat and hired a hit man to kill Greene. In October, 1977, he was killed by a bomb in a suburban parking lot, after visiting his dentist.

Then, in a flurry of events resulting from the capture of Greene's killer, mob members here and elsewhere fell like dominoes. Now only sepia-toned memories remain, a legacy best experienced over a dish of pasta on Murray Hill.

Ralph Perk's tenure in City Hall continued to be marked by one awkward incident after another, all of which enlivened the work of the newspaper and television reporters who covered him. The mood of restoration extended into City Hall, where the mayor hired two interior decorators with questionable credentials, who later would end up with unquestionable criminal records.

These decorators, Richard G. Eberling and Obie Henderson, set out to make the Perk administration more exclusive than ethnic, ordering costly appointments, including an expensive toilet for the mayor's private office. The two also managed to make off with some valuable paintings from City Hall, spiriting them off to a hide-away in Tennessee.

The two went on to be tried and convicted for the murder of an elderly woman. Eberling was suspected of killing four others, including his stepfather. There were other miscreants in the Perk administration. One former aide, James Dickerson, celebrated for his educational achievement, combat heroics, and administrative skills, turned out to be a charlatan of the first degree. His resume was pure fiction.

But the city benefited tremendously under Perk from the fact that he was one of the few big city mayors who was Republican, while President Richard Nixon was in the White House. Perk took over a cash-strapped city from Stokes and was able to get millions in federal grants to help the city limp along. The city was living on the dole.

It was becoming increasingly evident that the city's financial woes were rendering it impossible to maintain its status as the dominant political entity in the region.

Because of the nature of Cleveland politics, there was no foresight regarding the need to accept this fact and create the metropolitan government, which many were heralding. Two events occurred during the Perk administration to underscore the changing nature of the city.

The city was forced by court action to sell the sewer system to a regional authority in 1972 for $32 million and did the same with its transit system in 1975 for $8.9 million. Despite these harbingers of the need for a regional government, it was business as usual at City Hall, now living off federal grants, the sale of assets, and borrowing.

For those who recalled the remark about the mayor not knowing "the difference between a bond and a note," the financial state of the city took on a chilling reality that would have consequences in the future.

As Ralph Perk's image and political currency waned, perhaps the most tempestuous political figure in recent history emerged to command attention and act out his own drama, which would further darken the city's image and once more make mockery of it in the national news.

Plain Dealer reporters in the late 1960s remember Dennis J. Kucinich as an alert and ambitious copy boy, who absorbed every detail of how the news was made and covered. He listened to the way reporters privately described political figures, not the way their stories appeared in print, thereby gaining insight into the reporting process. There was little that escaped his eye, as he collected copy and chased for coffee.

This education undoubtedly served him well, and when he was elected to City Council in 1969, he positioned himself as a young and refreshing populist, which contrasted with the dissolute nature of the city. In its inaugural issue in 1972, *Cleveland Magazine* ran a cover story on Kucinich, predicting that he would run for President of the United States, which he later did.

Alert, witty, with the careless energy of youth, and tactical by nature, Kucinich morphed Ralph Perk into the image of an old, tired city, one run by political hacks and self-interested businessmen. He then went on to run against Perk for mayor in 1977, defeating him to become, at 31, the youngest mayor in the city's history.

Perk left behind a veritable financial mess, fraught with such distress that it threatened the viability of the city's treasury. Adding to the peril was the status of the Municipal Light Plant, forever a political conductor in the community.

The light plant, or Muny Light as it was called then, existed as a competitor of the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company. Proposed by Mayor Tom L. Johnson in 1903, Muny Light was underwritten by the city, in an effort to provide cheap electricity for its citizens and to make CEI reduce its rates.

Because it had fallen into disrepair, Muny Light did not produce its own power, but purchased it and paid to have it delivered through power lines owned by CEI. There were several attempts to organize a sale of the Municipal Light plant to CEI, but the vortex of political history — dating back to the height of the Progressive Movement at the turn of the century — ignited each time the issue was raised.

Kucinich, as municipal Clerk of Courts, had organized a drive that defeated a referendum to sell Muny Light in 1977. He defined the issue perfectly for his mayoralty bid against Perk.

Thus, when he became mayor, Kucinich found himself pitted against CEI and the business community, which contended that part of the city's financial problems stemmed from the cost of subsidizing Muny Light. Applying pressure to City Hall, six banks which held bonds that had matured, refused to roll them over, unless the light plant was sold.

Meanwhile, the Kucinich administration had become an odd collection of youthful exuberance, anti-establishment zealots, and novice bureaucrats, all off on their own. Confusion and confrontation welled out of City Hall, as if it were volcanic, affecting a city bewildered and demoralized.

Then, a week before Christmas in 1978, in a symbol of protest, Kucinich held a press conference on the steps of the old Cleveland Trust rotunda at East Ninth Street and Euclid Avenue. He withdrew is personal savings account of $9,200.

At the same time, across town, in a moment that seemed to define the chaos, Kucinich's youngest brother, Perry, held up a branch of Central National Bank, making off with $1,396. He had been under psychiatric care for years, and was immediately apprehended.

Again, a beleaguered Cleveland became the butt of jokes nationally. Locally, an angry movement to recall Kucinich was launched, which he barely survived, winning by 236 votes out of 120,300 cast.

In retrospect, there were no winners in the confrontations between City Hall and the business community. Kucinich destroyed his credibility as mayor and the bankers added to the pall of ridicule that had already gathered over the city. There was more national commentary on the quirky nature of the city. In the midst of default, former mayor candidate James M. Carney mused aloud to a reporter asking why, under the circumstances, would anyone want to do business in Cleveland?

The Muny Light plant continued its tenuous existence and the threat of default was lifted and consigned to the archives of inglorious history.

The last year of another exhausting decade presented yet another election. A defiant and determined Dennis Kucinich stood for reelection and a desperate business community rallied behind George Voinovich, who by now had paid his political dues in an efficient and steadfast fashion, having served as county auditor, county commissioner, and lieutenant governor of Ohio.

Voinovich was counter to Kucinich in almost every way. Conservative in personality, as well as politically, he worshiped at the altar of fiscal responsibility, offered the media little fodder and, despite being a Republican, possessed that same allure to ethnic voters that many of his predecessors had. He was charged with another quality, as well. He seemed to be immune to scandal and catastrophic political events. Later in his career, reporters would refer to the Teflon nature of his character.

The 1979 election was non-partisan, with the top two vote-getters in the primary running off in the general election. It was not surprising that Voinovich and Kucinich made the cut. Voinovich's margin of victory was 11,000 votes.

The decade, painful, mercurial, and paved with foibles, was only months away from ending, when a tragedy struck that would severely affect the general election and plunge the city into sadness. Voinovich's nine-year-old daughter, Molly, on her way back to school after lunch, was struck and killed by a van.

While the Voinovich family mourned, Kucinich ceased campaigning and a moratorium of political activity was observed by both camps. Molly's death was a somber reality of life, paling the paltriness of politics. The city could feel the hurt. It was a sad moment.

The hiatus clearly hurt Kucinich, who appeared to be fighting for his political life. When the election was over, Voinovich won 94,541 votes to 73,755 for the boy mayor. The decade was done, and none to soon.

The two men who vied to lead the city into the 1980s would take separate but interesting journeys. The town would, too, as it charted a new course that would see the nation doff its cap, as Cleveland emerged from its morass of misery to once more be toasted as an admirable American city.



Mayor George Voinovich and Council President George Forbes announce plans for $15 million, 21-storey office building at E. 9th and Superior, 1979.

CLEVELAND IN THE 1980S

MICHAEL D. ROBERTS

While the 1980s gave promise that northeastern Ohio was reviving, there were historical and contemporary forces at work that would thwart any serious comeback. There was no reversal to the population exodus from Cleveland. For the first time, the census showed a decline in Cuyahoga County. The biggest problem was a shrinking job market.

The Great Depression of the 1930s is generally regarded as a critical and devastating turning point in Cleveland's history. By 1980, one could argue that no region in America was so permanently scarred by the Depression than the Cleveland area.

Now, another devastating economic force was descending upon the region. This time it was global in nature and it compounded the damage of the awful economic impact of the Depression. It was the globalization of industry and it was growing at a time when Cleveland was optimistically looking forward to a new decade.

To understand the economic gyrations that the region faced in the 1980s, one has to reflect on the turn of the 20th century, when Cleveland found itself on the cutting edge of what is known as the Second Industrial Revolution. An entrepreneurial spirit flourished here, as rarely seen in America.

In the early 1900s, a diverse economy was emerging in the city, as inventors and investors found their places in steel, machine tools, electricity, paint, automobiles, shipping, and manufacturing. Entrepreneurs were attracted to the city and were welcomed by fellow inventors and industrialists.

Seventy fledgling automobile companies were located in Cleveland. Alexander G. Winton made the first commercial auto sales in the country here.

Technological spin-offs created new businesses at an astounding rate. For instance, the Brush Electric Company, founded in 1880, was directly responsible for the establishment of such blue-chip companies as Union Carbide,

Lincoln Electric, and Reliant Electric, simply through the technological transfer of former employees.

Key to the success of these aspiring enterprises was the ability to attract financial capital, through which they could develop and market their innovations. The need for capital, in turn, created financial institutions attuned to the spirit of enterprise that permeated the community.

At one time, prior to the Depression, the city hosted 38 banks and a stock market that carried more relative industrial stocks than its much larger counterpart in New York.

Cleveland inventors were among the top producers of patents in the country, resulting in the creation of many small businesses, which thrived because of the local financial markets. It was the maturity of these companies that created the wealth that drove Cleveland.

The Depression destroyed many of the city's financial institutions and with their demise went the availability of capital. The small, entrepreneurial businesses that had spun off the innovation that created great companies withered and died.

When the country recovered, the financial markets of the East Coast came to dominate. Even into the 1980s, local business innovators complained in a common refrain that Cleveland banks were too conservative. The memory of the Depression lingered indelibly in bank ledgers.

Years later, a senior partner at Baker Hostetler, one of the city's prestigious law firms, would explain that the reason the firm originally opened offices in other cities was to keep their wealthy clients, who fled the city in the wake of the Depression.

The loss of a vibrant financial market cost the city's economy the self reliance that had attracted so much innovation and success in the past. The city's business culture changed from spirited entrepreneurs to conservative bureaucrats, who shunned the risk that created wealth and who merely managed the large companies that had survived the Depression.

The other factor that had a long-range effect upon the region was its reliance on manufacturing jobs with limited knowledge requirements, but decent pay. This work did not need to be supported by higher education.

World War II and the Korean War helped revive the regional economy, but post-war global forces were already at work that would be as powerful in its negative impact as the Depression. In fact, it could be argued that the Depression rendered the region unable to cope with the global events a half-century later.

The global economy began with the recovery of foreign nations from World War II and the emergence of cheap labor and a new wave of technology. It was most evident in the 1970s, as foreign automobiles, the Japanese being most prevalent, began to challenge American manufacturers.

By 1980, with the vast federal highway system completed in the region and school busing an emotional city issue, the suburbs held more allure than urban life for those who could afford it. The population in Cleveland dropped 177,000 in the last decade to 573, 822. Worse yet, Cuyahoga County experienced its first decline since 1810, with a 12.9% decrease to 1,498,400.

The loss was not all in the city. Parma, once the largest suburb in the state, dropped below 100,000, losing 7.7% of its population in the last decade.

Even the most casual observer could notice a change in the population shift by simply reading the high school football scores in the newspaper. Schools that had been remote and on the edges of the county were developing better teams, and becoming more competitive with those closer to the city. Schools like Aurora, Avon, Kenston, and others were more and more prominent in the sports news.

Added to the local issues, globalization was making its impact on the way people lived. In retrospect, the post-war era in the region had been consumed by issues wrought by parochial politics and the reverberation of civil rights. At first, business and political leadership seemed impervious to the impact of world industrialization on the region.

State and local governments in the region did not react to the new world view, because they were neither positioned nor prepared to do so. In Cuyahoga County alone, there were 56 different governmental entities and, in reaction to the economic ill fortune, they began to offer inducements to businesses in the form of tax cuts.

These inducements were made to attract or maintain companies, but they affected the tax base of communities. These cuts would be a first and inadequate response to the shifting marketplace.

The 1980s brought a new realization that local government had to change to a more regional concept, if the area was to make its way in the changing world. The realization that we were no longer competing with an adjoining state, but with vast overseas markets, brought with it a need to alter traditional economic and political thought.

While regional or a county government had been proposed, discussed, and even put on the ballot in the 1950s, it was not a compelling issue for the

ordinary voter. The ethnic nature of politics and the growing emergence of minorities distracted from regional issues.

Yet, economic necessities were forcing certain aspects of regionalism to be implemented. In 1968, the City of Cleveland found itself unable to maintain its port and was forced to merge with the county. Financial and political exigencies created the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District in 1972. The city turned over some of its parks to a regional system, when it could no longer afford upkeep. In 1974, the city merged its bus system into the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority.

One regional opportunity that eluded Cleveland was the failure to annex suburbs that wanted to purchase city water. The government in Columbus, Ohio, grew its municipal boundaries by annexing in return for water and thrived.

The unwillingness and the unpreparedness of community leaders to work for a regional government both pre- and post-World War II created a growing economic separation from the rest of the world. It would be a problem that plagued Cleveland and northeast Ohio into the modern era.

The northeastern Ohio area could claim the development and manufacture of the automobile, since its inception. Generally regarded as the second most important automotive center in the nation, the impact of the global economy began to have a negative impact, as imported cars rose in popularity with the American public.

Most noticeable though was the impact of globalization on the steel industry. Following World War II, American companies produced two-thirds of the world's steel. It was a euphoric time, as the industry continued to rely on aging technology to bolster profit margins.

The region's steel mills were important contributors to this boom, but early in the 1970s, it was evident that foreign competitors, using new technology and cheaper labor, were able to undercut the price of the product.

As double-digit inflation lay waste to the American economy in the early 1980s, adding to the steel industry's travail, companies merged and unemployment spread. In Ohio in 1975, there were 20 steel companies operating 47 mills. Ten years later, only 14 companies operating 23 mills remained. Employment and production had fallen to nearly half of what it had been in the decade before.

Other companies began to be effected by foreign markets and new technology. The venerated Warner & Swasey, one of Cleveland's oldest companies,

known for optics and machine tools, was sold in 1980 and slowly dismantled, falling victim to the increasing computerization of industry.

The dwindling steel production saw more job loss in the Great Lakes shipping industry, causing unemployment on boats, on the docks, and in related industries.

Having been weaned on manufacturing and heavy industry, the region fell behind in preparation and education for the oncoming knowledge-based technologies. Because universities near Silicon Valley, Boston, and Pittsburgh had been the springboard of new technologies, those areas flourished, as the 1980s progressed. Cleveland lagged and lost ground.

But there were glimmers of enlightenment in the region. Kent State University began to do research with liquid crystals and Akron University was developing polymers, which hopefully would replace a decimated rubber industry in that part of the region. The Cleveland Clinic was growing faster, on its way to becoming not only a preeminent hospital, but a place of medical discovery.

Cleveland State University, late in coming on line, was nevertheless growing and beginning to have an impact on the community. Case Institute of Technology and Western Reserve University, which had merged in 1967 into Case Western Reserve University, was trying to create a new identity to meet the challenges of a new world. The truth was that the region had failed to devote the needed resources to higher education decades before and was now in a race to catch up with the rest of the world.

Thus, the global economy had a far-reaching effect on the daily lives in northeast Ohio at almost every level. Things would never be the same.

By 1980, Cleveland was exhausted and nearly inert from the political and racial turmoil that seemed to taint every issue that touched its citizens. It was so pervasive that, during a political meeting on the East Side, an elderly black man leaned over to City Council President George Forbes and asked in all earnestness why no one could get along downtown.

The remark had a profound influence upon Forbes. It signaled that even the proverbial man in the street was sick and tired of a City Hall that was a national joke and lacked the capability to staunch an ever-increasing flow of population and business away from the city.

It also signaled how far the region was behind the rest of the global village.

The next decade in Cleveland would feature leadership that would attempt to bring order to the town. Forbes was destined to be the most dominant figure. Outspoken and audacious, he had two agendas: helping blacks attain a

respectable place in Cleveland society and making the city a better place for all. He could not achieve one without the other.

Together with Mayor George Voinovich, Forbes formed a leadership tandem that elevated the city from its chaos and engendered cooperation with the business community that had not been seen in years.

Born in Memphis, Tennessee, Forbes came here in 1950, after serving in the Marine Corps, to attend Baldwin-Wallace College, with the idea of becoming a minister. In time, his ambitions changed and, in 1963, he was elected to the Cleveland City Council, just as the Civil Rights movement was gaining traction.

By the 1970s, Forbes had become the most powerful black politician, following Carl Stokes's tenure as mayor and his move to New York to become a television anchorman. Forbes was elected council president in 1973 and remained in that position throughout the 1980s.

After the tumult of the 1970s, the city needed a respite, and there was a sense of resignation on the part of the political and business leadership that, in order for the city to have a future, there needed to be more understanding and cooperation.

Only strong leadership could manage such a course through the no-man's land of tangled politics and civic malaise that was cast over the city, as if a storm had passed through and left a wake of frustration.

Complementing Forbes was George Voinovich, elected mayor in 1980, who now was a seasoned public official, having served as a state representative, county auditor, county commissioner, and lieutenant governor. Voinovich had the confidence of the business community and possessed a fiscal sensibility that gave city government a course of direction that it had not seen in a decade.

At first, Voinovich was leery of Forbes. By nature, Voinovich was conservative, quiet in his ways, and not given to displays of emotion. The fact that he had the most successful political career of any mayor since Frank J. Lausche in 1944 testifies to his planning and patience. When it came to his political career, he was a man navigating a mine field, careful with each step.

Conversely, Forbes was a man of action, who paid little attention to the consequences. As City Council president, he tolerated little deviation from his colleagues, fought frequently with the media, and trumped with race-card politics. His radio talk show on WERE was regarded as outrageous, especially on the West Side, where his humorous references to race were not taken lightly.

If Voinovich tiptoed around controversial political issues, Forbes rushed through them like a rampaging bull. Together, they made for interesting and

effective leadership, something the city had not seen since the early Stokes administration.

Forbes had many admirers in the business community, especially James Davis, the managing partner of the powerful law firm Squires, Sanders & Dempsey. It was Davis who put the full weight of the firm behind Forbes, when he was indicted on eleven counts for accepting a kickback from a traveling carnival. Davis rallied the business community to support Forbes, who was ultimately found innocent.

Davis acted as a mentor to the council president, instructing him in the ways of business, pointing out that government does not create jobs, but creates an environment where business can thrive and create jobs.

Something that was clearly not thriving as the decade opened was *The Cleveland Press*, the afternoon newspaper that had meant so much to the city for most of the century, at times acting as its very soul. Time and circumstance had slowly sapped the paper's strength. Television and an expanding highway system that lead from the city were destroying the newspaper. The six o'clock television news made the afternoon edition stale in content and the ever-broadening suburbs made timely delivery harder, limiting the newspaper's reach to an ever-diminishing audience.

The history of *The Press* reached back 103 years and it was the flagship of the Scripps-Howard media empire. For 38 of those years, *The Press* had been guided by Louis B. Seltzer, a self-educated man of such drive and vision that his will virtually dominated the city's life in every way. There was no single person more powerful in the last century in Cleveland.

Seltzer understood the ethnic mix of Cleveland and promoted it through the newspaper. The process built reader confidence to such an extent that its endorsement, or lack thereof, could make or break a politician, project, or position.

Regardless of his achievements, Seltzer had his flaws. The coverage of the 1954 Sheppard murder case would be judged by the U.S. Supreme Court as prejudicial to the defendant Sam Sheppard, who would ultimately be acquitted of the murder. Seltzer's dominance over City Hall was so complete that it had weakened the two-party system in a way that would affect politics for years.

Seltzer retired from *The Press* in 1965, but it was already clear that the newspaper was in decline. *The Plain Dealer*, for years an anemic competitor, had gained momentum through new management and by virtue of the times. In 1968, *The Plain Dealer* staff celebrated the day it surpassed *The Press* in circulation.

After Seltzer left, *The Press* never regained its vitality. It was dutiful and competitive, but there was something troubling about its condition. It was almost like witnessing a friend or relative suffering a long and debilitating illness. It reportedly was losing $6 million annually.

It was no surprise then that, in 1980, wealthy industrialist Joe Cole announced he had purchased *The Press* for $1 million and other considerations. Cole, long active in Democratic politics, intended to revitalize the newspaper and challenge *The Plain Dealer*.

The Press added color and a Sunday edition and outwardly appeared to be making a run at survival, but, behind the scenes, Cole was bleeding money at a rate he could not afford. Secretly, he began negotiations with the Newhouse family, owners of *The Plain Dealer*.

These negotiations resulted in the closing of *The Press* on June 17, 1982, in a transaction that saw the Newhouses pay Cole some $22.5 million for the subscription list of *The Press* and its shopping news.

The circumstances surrounding the closing of the newspaper troubled its former employees and others, who complained of antitrust violations. Finally, a federal grand jury was convened to hear testimony, but never returned an indictment,

The death of *The Press* would have a great impact on the city. The lack of competition would allow *The Plain Dealer* to lessen the intensity of its reporting over the next decade and, in time, the city and county would witness government corruption of historic proportion.

The issue of the municipal light plant, which had brought so much woe to the city for so long, still lingered. Voinovich was not about to let it simmer and come back to haunt him politically. Discussions of a possible sale to the Illuminating Company proved unsuccessful.

Finally, the administration confronted the issue by changing the image of what was known as "puny Muny," renaming it Cleveland Public Power, and investing in its future. An embittered Illuminating Company countered by moving its headquarters to Akron.

Meanwhile, the embattled school system, under court-ordered busing, floundered from crisis to crisis. The office of superintendent was in a constant state of flux, as one after another of the superintendents either failed or found himself in constant conflict with the school board. One superintendent even committed suicide.

The finances were so out of control that one study showed that the politicized custodians were making $1.3 million annually in overtime. The system

needed $50 million to repair its buildings and the cost of busing was so expensive that the federal court ordered the state to pay half the cost. Busing did little to improve the academic standards of the system. The majority of students could not pass state proficiency tests.

Enrollment continued to drop, there was flight from the city, and citizens finally passed a bond issue to repair schools, only to have the school board and superintendent disagree on how the money should be used. The superintendent resigned in frustration. The school system appeared to be in a free fall.

The endless newspaper stories concerning the schools and the lack of quality education in Cleveland's public system numbed readers, who turned elsewhere to relieve the constant reminder that they were witnessing failure on a massive scale. Sports would become an increasingly popular escape.

To that end, a foretelling meeting took place between George Forbes and a man named Richard Jacobs, a real estate developer, who had enjoyed great success, but was little known in Cleveland circles. Jacobs had asked for a meeting with the council president to announce his intention to buy the Cleveland Indians.

The first thing Forbes asked was whether Jacobs could afford to do so. The developer just nodded and Forbes thought the man crazy.

Forbes reached for the phone and called Mayor Voinovich.

"Mayor, you better get down here quick," Forbes said. "I got a man in my office who wants to buy the Cleveland Indians. . . . Yes, he wants to buy the team with cash. Hurry, I'll try to keep him here."

The Cleveland Indians were City Hall's lingering nightmare. Since the 1950s, the team had floundered from one season to the next, cursed by bad luck, low attendance, and indifferent ownership. In effect, it had become as much of a charity as any welfare agency in town, being passed from one wealthy family to another, who offered temporary sustenance, but no future.

Rumors that the team would move circulated annually, like a case of flu, and woe to the politicians in office if that was to occur. City Hall lived in fear of that moment. Several real attempts were made to move the team, but were staved off by aggressive newspaper coverage.

The appearance of Jacobs would be a beacon of hope, in more ways than one. The city had endured so much frustration and disappointment on so many fronts that its citizens had no contemplation of the future. That day in 1986 symbolized the dawning of new hope.

Richard Jacobs was an enigmatic man. Withdrawn, and circumspect to a fault, he was a brilliant businessman, who had amassed millions developing shopping centers here and across the country. No one shied from publicity as did Jacobs, so when he bought the Cleveland Indians, his name was as obscure to the public as some of those who played for him.

A native of Akron, Jacobs and his brother, David, had worked hard at building their business and appeared to be diverting somewhat from real estate to dabble in sports, a familiar path taken by men of means, who wanted test their fortune in the public arena.

But Jacobs was not your average wealthy man playing at the game. In the beginning, he knew next to nothing about the business of baseball. However, he brought an intensity and financial acumen to the game, the likes of which had not been seen since the glory days of Bill Veeck in the 1940s.

He also had a keen eye for executive talent which, in turn, assembled a farm system that, within a few years, would produce a core of players that, in the next decade, would take the Cleveland Indians to two World Series.

While baseball was the most visible of his pursuits, Jacobs invested in the city in other ways. He purchased Erieview Tower, the orphan left from the aspirations of the ill-fated urban renewal projects of the 1950s, and built a stunning shopping mall on the top of a discarded ice rink called the Galleria.

Later, he announced the construction of a new skyscraper on Public Square that would be known as Society Center, which eventually became Key Center. He proposed yet another such building for the Ameritrust Bank on the western side of the square.

Already, downtown was booming, aided by tax abatement, with the kind of building that had not been seen since the city's halcyon pre-Depression days. Sohio cleared the eastern side of Public Square in 1985 and built a 45-storey office building that respectfully maintained a lower profile in height than the Terminal Tower.

Forbes and others had urged Sohio to surpass the Cleveland landmark, as a symbolic gesture of a new era. Sohio officials wanted to preserve the past and opted to allow the Terminal Tower to be the dominant skyline feature.

Not so Richard Jacobs. As the plans for his tower on Public Square evolved, a reporter asked whether it would be taller than the Terminal. In a rare moment of candor, Jacobs responded, "You're damned right."

Key Center would ultimately rise 888 feet tall, overlooking the Terminal by 180 feet. It was that symbolic split with the past that Forbes had sought from Sohio, a signal of a new kind of spirit in town.

In a sense, Jacobs represented the pre-Depression drive that had fuelled Cleveland's early growth.

That spirit was typified by the building that was taking place downtown. National City Center rose 35 floors on the northwest coroner of East 9th Street and Euclid and opened in 1980. Eaton Center on Superior and East 12th Street was a 28-floor structure that was completed in 1983. Across the street, the Charter One Bank building opened its seven storeys in 1987.

In 1983, on East 9th Street, the silver, chisel-like structure known as One Cleveland Center reached 31 storeys high, the fifth tallest building in the city at the time.

Ameritech built a 16-storey contemporary headquarters on East 9th Street in the Erieview Plaza, the site of the controversial urban renewal project that was planned some thirty years prior.

In 1985, where the old Cleveland Press building stood, a 19-storey office building called North Point was built, housing the now international law firm of Jones, Day.

While all of these projects were changing the city's skyline, its trademark symbol, the Terminal Tower, until 1964 the tallest building in the country outside of New York City, was undergoing a dramatic remake, aimed at refocusing Public Square as the heart of Cleveland.

Forest City, a national real estate company founded by the Ratner family here in the 1920s, received $73 million in government loans and aid to convert the Terminal Tower concourse into a vast shopping and business facility, now called Tower City Center. The dramatic make-over featured some of the nation's most fashionable stores.

Dick Jacobs's influence was felt in other ways. His Cleveland Indians played in the dismal confines of Cleveland Municipal Stadium, a cavernous ballpark opened in 1931, that was considered a grand achievement in its time. The stadium was home to the Cleveland Browns, as well, and operated by the Stadium Corporation, a business entity that leased the facility from the city. Stadium Corporation was run by Art Modell, who was the principal owner of the Browns.

Since 1961, when he arrived from New York and bought the Browns, Modell was celebrated as the city's sports impresario. Outgoing, self-deprecating, and emotional, Modell carried with him the stigma of having fired one of the best coaches in all of football, Paul Brown, and then never delivering a team that matched the consistency under him.

Shortly after buying the Indians, Jacobs asked Modell to review the lease agreement the team had with Stadium Corporation. The Indians were getting less of the advertising revenues from the signage than the Browns, even though the baseball team played far more games.

Modell refused and, while it was a minor thing, it was an omen of things to come. It was clear to Jacobs that he had to have his own stadium, if his baseball venture was to be successful.

At one point, he asked Modell if the Cleveland Browns were for sale. They were not, replied Modell. Jacobs longed to own a National Football League franchise.

For years, there had been talk of building a new stadium or putting a dome on the existing field. The conversation and proposals were aimless, typical of how the city dealt with major municipal projects. But the town was coming to the understanding that, if it was going to keep major league sports, something would have to be done about a new stadium or even stadiums.

Other cities were building new stadiums and the baseball commissioner publicly commented that, unless Cleveland followed suit, there was the distinct possibility of the Indians moving to another town.

In 1984, a proposed increase in property taxes was put on the ballot to finance a domed stadium. Raising property taxes was a political mistake of the first order and opponents had a field day. The issue was soundly defeated, a signal that the public was reluctant to support the construction of a sports facility at its own expense.

The failure of the tax issue sent Modell a message. In all likelihood, there would be no new stadium in the near future and his best course of action would be to improve the existing structure. The Stadium Corporation was responsible for the upkeep of Municipal Stadium and the money for improvements would have to come from the corporation.

Modell asked the city for a ten-year extension on the stadium lease, expecting quick approval, since the city enjoyed a constant stream of revenue from the arrangement. Negotiations lingered for nearly a year, before he dropped the proposal, his frustration increasing.

For all of his civic involvement, and it was substantial, Modell never had a true sense of politics. He contributed to campaigns, knew four Presidents, but lacked clout at City Hall, possibly because he never really needed it. Now circumstances were changing, and rapidly.

Dick Jacobs had little political savvy when he first showed interest in the city and its baseball team. But he was a quick study, a man who did not delude

himself about the limits of his knowledge. His quiet manner belied the fact that he was always working, gathering information about the city and those who made it work.

Everyone around him was a source and he politely used those sources to gain needed insights into his interests. He did not suffer fools and was quick to judge who might be helpful to him and who might not.

In this way, he gained an edge on Modell in the maneuvering for a new stadium. Modell waited for the city to call him, Jacobs had his strategy in place before most even knew there was a need for one.

For all of the love for the Browns and Indians, there was a resentment toward supporting the teams with public money, part of a psychology that had plagued the city from its populist days. There was an underlying suspicion that progress actually meant that someone was taking unfair advantage of the public. This shadowy mistrust would manifest itself around the stadium issue in many ways in succeeding years.

As far as Dick Jacobs was concerned, there was no question that the city needed a new stadium, and so did he. He needed it to succeed with the Indians and did not hesitate in his efforts to achieve that end.

The organization that had attempted to build a domed stadium had acquired 28 acres of land in what was called the Gateway area, on the site of the old Central Market at Ontario and Carnegie Avenues. Jacobs looked at this area as the location of a new stadium, first proposing a 44,000-seat stadium that could roll out another 28,000 seats for football. It was an effort at compromise but, in truth, all parties wanted an outdoor baseball-only facility.

That included Modell, who found himself in financial straits. Free agency in the National Football League had changed the economics of the game, and maintenance of the old stadium was unexpectedly expensive. It was clear that the new baseball facility would cost him a tenant, and the likelihood of there being enough money available to build two stadiums appeared remote. He had no choice but to work on a plan to renovate Municipal Stadium.

Modell proposed a renovation of the facility that would modernize it and cost taxpayers less than $100 million. The idea drew a lot of attention, but City Hall appeared to be cold to the idea.

As the decade drew to a close it was clear that the Gateway site would hold a new ballpark if voters would pass a sin tax on alcohol and cigarettes. It was unclear what was going to happen to Municipal Stadium. No one knew it yet, but the uncertainty of the stadium's fate would lead to the bitterest moment in Cleveland sports history.

Elsewhere, the city was enjoying itself. The once-shabby Flats area, near the mouth of the Cuyahoga River, had come to life as a retinue of bars and restaurants lined its banks, creating an atmosphere of gaiety that had not been seen in the city in years.

Boaters docked at the river's edge and enjoyed the revelry. Acclaimed in the national media, Cleveland's Flats became a symbol of a revived city that was basking in its apparent good fortune. A reported $2 billion worth of construction was altering its skyline. For the first time since the Depression, there was genuine optimism about the future.

Not only were the Flats burgeoning with excitement, but Playhouse Square and its grand theaters, which were on the verge of being razed in the 1970s, took on a new life, its marquees once more aglitter. Playhouse Square was once again developing into an entertainment district that could rival most cities. It was a prime example of what the city's civic effort could achieve in preserving the town's cultural heritage.

But amidst all the good news, came a dour note. It was announced in 1987 that one of the city's most venerable and benevolent companies, Standard Oil of Ohio, known as Sohio, was being taken over by British Petroleum.

Sohio could trace its roots to the beginnings of John D. Rockefeller's oil empire, which began in the Flats in 1870. The wealth that he and his associates created became the foundation of Cleveland's future cultural and commercial life. Slowly, the red and white Sohio signs on gas stations were replaced by the green and yellow BP colors, as another era faded away.

BP kept its American headquarters here for a few years, but ultimately moved to Chicago, when it merged with Amoco. The loss of old businesses would be a recurring theme in the city, as the manufacturing era faded, taking with it jobs and economic security.

The ominous shadow of globalization continued to be cast across a city that had allowed itself to dwell in the past.

When George Voinovich left the lieutenant governor's job to run for mayor, he told those business leaders who urged him to return to Cleveland that it was his wish to run for governor some day.

He was reelected twice as mayor and it could be argued that his time in office was one of the most productive in the modern era.

Voinovich projected the city's comeback image nationally, his administration winning three All-American City awards for Cleveland, which he in turn leveraged into a run for higher office.

In 1988, Voinovich ran for the U.S. Senate against Democrat Howard Metzenbaum and was thoroughly defeated, 57% to 43%. The following year, he announced he would not seek reelection as mayor. He would run for governor in 1990 and win.

After a decade of progress and relative tranquility, the 1989 mayor's race broke with the fury and force of an unexpected storm. It was a contest between the past and the future, the mentor and the pupil, the lion in winter and the tiger at dawn.

If George Voinovich could look back on his stewardship with some pride, Council President George Forbes could share in the glow. In the end, and not without some difficulties in style, the two performed well together and the city benefited from it.

Now, with the mayor's office vacant, Forbes eyed it warily. Business leaders urged him to run, especially Dick Jacobs who had developed a friendship with the council president. Forbes had been in City Council for 25 years and had endured some of the most difficult years in the city's history.

Some close to the campaign wondered whether Forbes had his heart in being mayor.

There was no doubt that his opponent, Michael White, had his heart in the race. Young, articulate, volatile, and smart, White had grown up in the city council dominated by Forbes. He had learned the vagaries and manipulations and politics that governed that body and now he wanted to guide the city's destiny.

There could not have been a clearer demarcation between the two eras than a contest between George Forbes and Mike White. If this was a moment of historical transition, the shifting of power would not take place in a quiet, well-ordered manner.

These were two strong-willed men, who knew the streets of the city as well as the halls of government. It was apparent that they did not like each other and would conduct a bitter fight over the race. Forbes accused White of being a slum landlord and a wife beater, while White countered by calling Forbes's wife a front person for shady investments.

White, a state senator at 38, used the city's success against Forbes, saying that wealthy investors were given special tax breaks, without regard for the poor. It was as nasty a political campaign as the city had ever seen.

With two black candidates fighting for votes, the white community became the pivotal factor, and there was no reservoir of good will residing there for

Forbes. His talk-show days on WERE in the 1970s, where he had made light of racial issues, came back to haunt him.

To many white West Side voters, Forbes symbolized the racial conflict in the city. Those close to Forbes knew that many of his actions were more theatrical than real, but the perception was enough to cost him any chance of election citywide.

He seemed to know it, too. During the campaign, as the polls mirrored the impossibility of it all, Forbes seemed to mellow and back off. He had served longer than any other person as the president of City Council and had left his mark on the city in many ways.

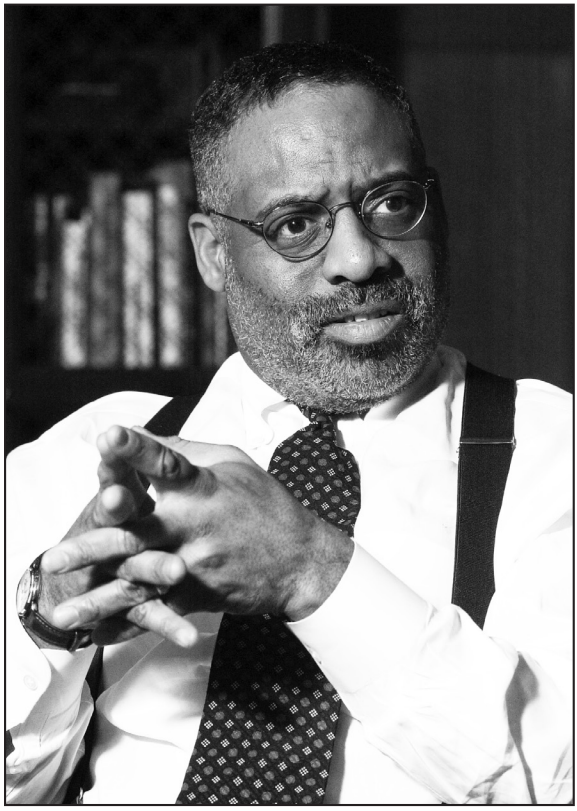
And he had, as that old man asked ten years before, answered the question of people getting along downtown. Yet most of the progress in the decade was cosmetic, and failed to address the city and the region's place in the ongoing globalization that was enveloping the world.

The 1980s proved to be, at best, a brief respite from reality. The ghost of the Depression and the specter of globalization still loomed heavily on the future of northeast Ohio.

Mike White won the election to become the first black mayor since Carl Stokes in 1971. The 1990s beckoned with promise. White appeared dynamic, driven toward maintaining the momentum that had been so hard to generate after the turmoil of the 1970s.

The upcoming decade would be bittersweet, full of triumph and disaster, and Mike White would ride it through as the longest-sitting mayor in Cleveland's history. But the city mattered less and less to the future and prosperity of the region.

There continued to be a desperate need to confront the reality of the region's place in the world.



Michael Reed White (b. 1951), Mayor of Cleveland, 1990–2002.

CLEVELAND IN THE 1990S

MICHAEL D. ROBERTS

The decade of the 1990s arrived like the sun bursting through a winter's gloom. Hope and optimism reigned over the region, as Cleveland prepared to celebrate its two-hundredth birthday, in 1996, an event commemorating the triumph and travail of an American city in its maturity.

A sense of pride that had not been felt in years seemed to abound, and it was only right that the changes in the city should be lauded nationally, with Cleveland being designated an All-American City in 1993. It was the fifth time since 1949 the city had won the award.

However, by 1990, the population in the city fell by 68,000, or 11.9 percent in ten years, to just slightly over a half-million people, dropping it to the 23rd largest city in American. Forty years earlier, it had been the sixth largest city in the country.

Meanwhile, the decline brought with it a population sprawl across the region that left the original inner ring of suburbs in the early stages of decline. The sprawl in northeast Ohio was caused by an excellent highway network, cheap gasoline, inexpensive land, and a desire for suburban living. Later, a deteriorating school system in Cleveland and the movement of jobs away from the central city added to the exodus.

The sprawl now extended beyond the original ring of suburbs into a secondary grouping, like Solon, Avon, and Concord. It was pushing even further into an exurban grouping of scattered communities that reached beyond the bounds of Cuyahoga County.

And with the population shift went income. Between 1990 and 2000, per-capita income rose from $14,601 to $22,321 in the region. In Cleveland, it went from $9,258 to $14,291. But the disparity between income in the city and in the suburbs had widened by $2,687 over the last decade.

Civic and business leaders applied a new strategy to revitalizing Cleveland. Millions had been spent on urban renewal, without appreciable success, and now a different idea took shape: the idea of making Cleveland a destination city, a place that would attract visitors and, in turn, stimulate downtown with some of those suburban dollars.

The set-piece of this strategy was the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, an idea that circulated in the early 1980s and gained such momentum that it ended up in a struggle with the New York recording interests over its location. Based on the legend that Cleveland was the cradle of rock and roll in the 1950s, the city won out in a vigorous national competition, capped by a 1968 poll in *USA Today* that supported its selection.

Radio station WMMS — named for nine straight years by *Rolling Stone* as the best rock station in the nation — played a key role locally in the drive to bring the Rock Hall here, where today it has drawn more than eight million visitors, since it opened in 1995 on the lakefront, just west of East 9th Street.

The Great Lakes Science Center was constructed next to the Rock Hall and other buildings, like the Key Tower, the tallest building in the city, and a totally renovated Tower City, gave promise to a new downtown. No project appealed more to the future of the city than Gateway, the complex that housed a new baseball stadium and arena.

But amid the scent of progress were whiffs of despair. After 90 years on Public Square, the May Company closed its downtown store in January of 1993. The once proud banking house of Cleveland Trust — which was founded in 1894, weathered the Great Depression, and went on to become the symbol of the city's financial establishment — found itself burdened by bad loans, in the wake of a collapsing real estate market. It was forced to merge with the venerable Society Corporation in 1991. Cleveland Trust had become Ameritrust in 1979, when it became a nationally chartered bank.

Also, there were those who warned that the financing of many projects was akin to mortgaging the city's future, because millions in tax abatements were being issued as incentives toward another effort at saving and reviving downtown. Others argued that the neighborhoods and the poverty-stricken were being overlooked in the rush to promote business.

Also, there remained the ever-increasing reality of northeastern Ohio's place in the global community. The region was no longer an entity unto itself, a citadel of manufacturing and commerce, with a talented and well-paid work force. The world was shrinking, as was Cleveland's place in it.

In 1980, manufacturing in northeastern Ohio counted for 26.3 percent of the jobs. By the end of the decade, 18.4 percent of those jobs had been lost, because of the global workplace. With the introduction of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994, even more manufacturing jobs bled off in the region, as another 7.6 percent went by the wayside.

A national foundation survey of American manufacturing cities noted that only in Cleveland did it find executives who were virtually unanimous in blaming the city's floundering economy on global competition.

As the 1980s began, the area hosted twelve *Fortune* 500 companies. In a little more than a decade, that number would dwindle to seven. A Brookings Institute study found Cleveland lacking in entrepreneurial spirit, a condition that was first detected following the Depression, when the large surviving companies took on a conservative management style.

Another unseen dynamic that would play out later was the disappearance of the influence of the major law firms like Jones Day, Squire Sanders, and Baker Hostetler. From their inception early in the century, these firms had produced an intellectual reservoir that, in effect, could, and occasionally did, act as a shadow government.

Often mayors would quietly draw upon the legal and corporate talent to assist with governmental problems. There were always special interests at stake and they often intermingled with the pro bono work of the law firm. While they continued to exist, the truth was there was less and less business here and the future lay in their offices elsewhere.

The media was in flux, too. By 1990, the area was served by only two major daily newspapers. The *Akron Beacon Journal* to the south of Cleveland, and *The Plain Dealer* in the city and the suburbs. Smaller, suburban dailies, as well as a host of community weeklies, existed to both the east and west.

Television had matured and found its place as a medium that could deal well with news that was easily captured visually, but it struggled with substantive issues. By now, the print and electronic media had carved out their niches and attempted to service them to the readers' or viewers' satisfaction.

The internet had arrived, an oddity at first, but a technology so far-reaching that it would alter not only global communications, but the way we lived. The traditional media — both broadcast and print — would enjoy its last decade of dominance, before facing the challenge that the internet represented.

If the loss of the influence of the law firms on the city was noticeable, the loss of competition that the two newspapers generated had a palpable effect, as

well. *The Cleveland Press*, the most robust newspaper of its time, ceased publishing in 1982, leaving the market to the morning *Plain Dealer*.

The vacuum left by *The Press* generated the evolution of smaller publications that tried to fill the void. Cleveland had always been a secondary journalistic town, the two newspapers hostile to any attempt by any publication to enter the market. While other cities enjoyed an alternative press, Cleveland supported only the most sketchy efforts.

On the other hand, in the 1950s and 1960s, first radio, and then television, enjoyed a national reputation, from programming and providing talent that would find success in larger markets. Later, the dwindling population and the impact of cable television would affect the market share that national advertisers sought, shifting their spending elsewhere.

Against this backdrop, a city struggling to reinvent itself, a victim of the global economy, with the loss of corporate and civic leadership, and a media in metamorphosis, emerged Michael Reed White, the 55th mayor of the City of Cleveland, a man destined to serve longer in that office than any predecessor and a man who, more than anything, challenged each obstacle, issue, and personality he encountered.

He was clearly the dominant figure of the decade, not only in the city, but in the county, as well. Traditionally, the mayor of Cleveland was recognized as the leading politician in northeastern Ohio. A lot of this had to do with the city being the focal point of politics, economics, and culture for the region.

While the suburban population was steadily increasing, its political clout was dispersed and unfocused, as a crazy-quilt of 59 political entities existed in the county. For the past half-century, there had been efforts and movements to create a county or regional approach to governance. But the prevailing political forces ignored reform.

While cities, towns and villages had local governments, there existed a county government which was essentially an administrative body that collected taxes, and ran a variety of agencies and a criminal and civil court system. It was the job of three county commissioners to allocate monies to these agencies.6

There were eight elected county officials who ran their offices as they saw fit. They reported to no other government official. Over time, each office — the clerk of courts, the auditor, treasurer, recorder, engineer, sheriff, prosecutor, and coroner — built its own political apparatus.

This form of government was nearly 200 years old and ill-suited for a county so complex in nature. It had no legislative capability and was prone to political manipulation, with an impotent check-and-balance system.

Historically, the political power of City Hall outmatched that of the county, and, when Mike White, came into office, his presence was such that he was regarded as the mayor of the county. White was the first generation of minorities to reap the full benefits of the Civil Rights era. Born in 1951, he grew up in Glenville in the 1960s, and proclaimed, as a youth, that someday he would be mayor of Cleveland. He went on to Ohio State, became the first black Student Union President, and returned home to work as an assistant to Cleveland City Council, before becoming the councilman for Glenville from 1978 to 1984.

While in Council, he became a protégé of George Forbes, who reigned as Council president, and was the most prominent black political figure in the city. White later served in the Ohio Senate.

In the beginning, following his overwhelming victory in the mayor's race over Forbes in 1989, any knowledgeable political observer, be they party member or political writer, gave White such high marks that he was thought to overshadow the legendary Carl B. Stokes, America's first black mayor.

It was White's turn, at 38, to consolidate those gains and further integrate black fortunes into the city, while building the kind of government that would attract new businesses or, at least, retain jobs. The early days of his administration were marked by energy and enthusiasm. Arriving at work at 6 a.m., he impressed businessmen, who saw him bounding up the City Hall stairs at that early hour.

He exuded so much promise that he made the opening of his decade luminous, along with the building, and the visible progress that the city appeared to undergo. Articulate, passionate, intelligent, a black man representing a new generation, Mayor Mike White seemed to possess it all.

A poll taken in 1992 showed that 77 percent of whites interviewed believed that White had improved race relations in the city.

White came into office as the recipient of much of the efforts that Mayor George Voinovich and Forbes had made in laying the groundwork for Gateway and instilling confidence in developers like Richard Jacobs and Forest City, both of whom had made substantial investments in downtown.

White was a micromanager. And, at first, his efforts along these lines were both amusing and impressive. Driving to City Hall, he would see a pothole and order it repaired by day's end. He directed the erasure of graffiti and would rile against lazy municipal workers or shoddy work. He seemed to dedicate his energies to single-handedly lifting the city from its lethargy to a higher station, one that would exalt not only him, but all those who shared life here.

As time passed, it appeared that, for every strength White possessed, he was cursed with a fault. His anxious nature to achieve was blunted by suppressed anger, that could erupt at a moment's notice. He would dismiss those who disagreed with him, as if he were divine.

He created enemies over the merest issue, complained bitterly about the media, and seemed constantly at war with the police department. Conversely, he was fiercely loyal to old friends, particularly Nate Gray, who was a life-long companion and twice his best man.

The first major issue that White faced was the passage of a 15-year sin tax to underwrite the Gateway project, that was to house both the professional basketball and baseball franchises. It was intended to develop the old Central Market area.

The tax was a county-wide issue. White worked hard for its passage, which won by a scant 51 percent. City residents, opposing the use of public money for professional sports, voted it down. It was carried by suburban voters.

Also awaiting White was the paralyzing issue of the Cleveland school system, caught up in the throes of busing for more than a decade. Its cost, the population drains from the city, and the basic inability to educate was a burden of increasing magnitude.

By 1991, some black leaders were questioning the value of busing. The activist Reverend Marvin McMickle asserted that white flight made busing irrelevant, pointing out that transporting blacks across town to sit in classrooms that were already 71 percent black made no sense. Other black leaders disagreed, but nearly everyone conceded that the schools were in disarray.

The Cleveland School Board had become so politicized and contentious that its very existence was inhibiting progress. Over time, White used drastic measures on the school board, finally securing control over it by supporting a panel of candidates of his choice for office in 1993.

In his first term, White's administration had built more new houses in the city since the Korean War, talked the banks into investing $600 million in the neighborhoods, and boarded up 500 drug houses in the city.

White negotiated concessions from the labor unions serving the city and balanced the budget without raising taxes. His critics maintained that he had done nothing for mounting unemployment and that his strident manner had created unwarranted friction in reaching his solutions, unnecessarily alienating many in the community.

The unemployment situation was at 7.5 percent in Northeastern Ohio between June of 1990 and June of 1993. Cuyahoga County lost 35,000 jobs in that

period. The majority of these jobs were in the city. Later, White would assert that his administration had created 10,333 jobs in the first five years of his office.

As the mayor concluded his first term, there were no serious challengers seeking to unseat him. The race in November of 1993 was one of the most inconspicuous campaigns in city history, as David Lee Rock, a political unknown, told voters that he would arm the police department with submachine guns, if elected. White won going away.

In December of 1993, amidst the anticipation of the opening of Gateway in the spring, Mike White made ominous mention of an unmentionable thought. There appeared to be other cities attempting to lure the Cleveland Browns from their birthplace.

There was reason to believe White's observation. Attempts to build a new domed stadium in the 1980s had failed. Discussions dealing with the renovation of Municipal Stadium had been inconclusive, and Art Modell had shown no interest in being part of Gateway.

Modell had been one of the city's great champions and benefactors, since he bought the Browns in 1961. There was something strange afoot, but most fans could not believe that their beloved Cleveland Browns would leave town.

In the past, genuine alarm had been raised, when rumors of the Cleveland Indians circulated and, on at least one occasion in the 1960s, a move to New Orleans had been cut off at the last minute. Part of the impetus for Gateway was a warning by Major League Baseball that the Indians needed a new stadium, if it was to remain in Cleveland.

The National Football League had become dominated by men of means, millionaires who bought into the game as a pastime or hobby. The truth was time had bypassed Art Modell. Once one of the league's great innovators, Modell was no longer in a position to compete with these new elite owners, for whom money was no object.

The pettiness of Cleveland politics had derailed efforts to build a domed stadium, while other cities were erecting facilities of such magnitude that, in comparison, Municipal Stadium appeared worn and tired, a relic from the Iron Age.

Modell was aided in his deliberations by his friend, Al Lerner, who had made millions in the credit card business and came to Art's aid by becoming an investor in his troubled holdings.

Lerner made his money in Baltimore and was now living in Cleveland. It was his desire to own a team in the NFL and he had done spade work to that end in Baltimore, which had lost its team to Indianapolis in 1984.

For Cleveland's suffering sports fans, 1995 would prove to be the best of times and the worst of times. The year started out with the task force assigned to study the Browns situation recommending that Municipal Stadium be refurbished.

On June 1, White announced that he supported a 10-percent parking tax. Five days later, the Browns broke off contact with the city, Modell citing a need to give the community time to collect its thoughts and study its resources.

Sports fans continued to follow the story, unaware of the impending doom. They were distracted by the fact that the Cleveland Indians, for the first time since 1954, played in the World Series, though they would lose in six games to the Atlanta Braves.

Finally, in order to head off the possibility of a news leak, Modell announced on November 6 that the Browns were moving to Baltimore. The news came on election eve, with the sin-tax extension on the ballot. It passed the next day by 72 percent. It was too late.

In the aftermath of the announcement, there was an outcry of anger and chagrin, unlike any heard here before. And no one was angrier than the angry man himself, Mike White.

White's resulting denouncement of Modell and the NFL shook the football world and almost immediately guaranteed the city a replacement team, although the mayor fought to keep the Browns, with threats and lawsuits and every form of intimidation that he could muster.

But White's ceaseless attacks put the league in a position that it had to move quickly and decisively in placating the Cleveland fans, with the offer of an expansion team in 1999, after a new stadium was built.

There will always be the lingering question as to why the stadium was built on the site of Municipal Stadium, which occupied prime lakefront land. Many ask whether the city had once more missed an opportunity to develop its waterfront into a vibrant and attractive location.

There had been six sites proposed and a commission selected by Mayor White chose the existing stadium location, because the city already owned the land and construction could be completed in time for the 1999 football season. It would also be assured to be built while White was in office.

From the beginning, the construction of the stadium was a continuous controversy, as overruns drove the cost of the facility over $300 million. At least, that is what White reported to a skeptical City Council, two years after the stadium opened. As one reporter who tried to pin down the overruns, which were greater than Gateway, claimed, it may be that the true cost of the building will never be known.

The right to play in that stadium was won by Al Lerner, who spent $530 million for an NFL expansion team, outbidding a half-dozen groups who vied for the franchise.

White had endorsed Lerner. The Browns were back, but it would never be the same.

In July of 1996, the city paused to celebrate its 200th birthday, the exact day being July 22. A committee that had formed in 1992 managed to raise $80 million to spend on events and projects. The city was alive with concerts and festive gatherings. A lakefront trolley, connecting Gateway with the North Coast Harbor, was opened and the city's bridges were festooned with lights, giving a spectacular glow to the night. A plan was unveiled to plant 10,000 trees in the city over the next year.

White had promised Clevelanders that he would create a police department of some 2,000 officers, an increase of 500. Crime was a problem in Cleveland, as it was in many urban areas and, as with other challenging issues he faced, White attempted to deal with if forcefully.

The Cleveland Police Department is virtually a culture unto itself. It is also at the edge of the city, the sharp edge where the streets get mean, the duty dangerous, and the hair-trigger nature of race a trip wire.

When White took office, the city's crime rate was beginning to climb, after dropping in the 1980s. In 1990, there were 4,917 robberies, 3,259 assaults, 171 murders, a total of more than 9,000 violent crimes. During his years in office, crime steadily dropped, despite a continuous change of police chiefs, eight in all.

A central concern of the business community was the access to Cleveland by air.

It was thought that some of the companies that moved to other cities had done so because flights out of Cleveland Hopkins International Airport were limited. The global economy was again pressing the region to react to its requirements. The airport facilities needed expansion and new runways.

Hopkins had been the first city-owned airport, when it was built in 1925. Over the years, the airport's development languished, and the city was

threatened with the loss of a major airline hub, unless it improved. The problem was that Hopkins was land-locked and any expansion would require negotiations with suburbs.

White began a series of talks with Brook Park Mayor Thomas Coyne, who would lose neighborhoods in any expansion. The negotiations between the two mayors over the $528-million project ran an emotionally charged gamut, beginning in 1992, both men belligerent in support of their positions.

In executing White's airport expansion plan, the city became locked in a lawsuit with the City of Brook Park over the IX Center, which was located in that city and provided it with tax revenue. Cleveland lost the legal battle to acquire the center, which sat in the way of runway expansion.

It took four years of litigation and failed negotiations, before an agreement was reached in August of 1996, that enabled the airport to build a new runway, expand an existing one and create a taxiway out of yet another. The agreement preserved the IX Center, for the time being.

In 2001, after reopening negotiations with Brook Park, Cleveland bought the IX Center for $66.5 million, twice what the next bidder offered, a deal which included a land swap with Brook Park. The purchase of the exhibition hall would result in the 2005 conviction of Ricardo Teamor, one of the mayor's confidants. Teamor later was sentenced to prison for bribing City Councilman Joe Jones and confessed to paying kickbacks for city contracts.

When the administration's attention shifted back to the airport, so did the omnipresent shadow of Nate Gray, who became involved with airport parking. Several things enabled him to weave his special interest into the fabric of major projects in which the city engaged.

While it reported the news from City Hall, *The Plain Dealer* failed to investigate the emerging suspicions over the conduct of city affairs. There was an internal conflict in the way *The Plain Dealer* went about its business. On the one hand, the publisher, Alex Machaskee, liked to court power, particularly City Hall, and that very implication sent a message to the reporting staff to tread lightly.

Mike White used this situation to drive a wedge between the publisher and the editor. In doing so, he changed the culture of the newspaper in 1999, when a new editor, Doug Clifton from Knight-Ridder, began to bring outsiders to staff the newspaper.

The coverage of City Hall intensified and the tension between the newspaper and City Hall magnified.

The other failure was that of the county prosecutor's office, by now thoroughly politicized and blind to public corruption. More than one prosecutor would argue that the office did not possess the resources to combat white collar crime. Yet, it never made an effort to gain those resources.

Six years into his tenure, White drew increased attention from the media. *The Plain Dealer* reported that the turnover at City Hall under White was running twice that of the Voinovich administration. Some 45 people had departed the administration. By this time, he had gone through four police chiefs and four fire chiefs.

Shrugging off increasing criticism from the City Council and the media, White sought a third term in office. Despite his drop in popularity, there was no political figure that was a serious threat to White. Councilwoman Helen Smith stepped forward to offer some opposition, but lost by 25,000 votes.

In the always problematic school system, the mayor had not only positioned his candidates on the school board to gain control of a situation replete with problems, but sought to have the state legislature grant him the power to have City Hall take over the operation of the entire school system.

In July of 1998, White took over responsibility of the troubled school system, with its $600-million budget, and implemented new leadership and reforms. It was a burden so immense that even the toughest taskmaster found the path toward achievement littered with obstacles.

From 1990 until White left office in 2001, the Cleveland schools had seven changes in its top leadership, which illustrated the chaos in which the system was operating. His selection of Barbara Byrd-Bennett in 1998 temporarily halted the turnover, as she lasted as the system's chief operating office until February 2006.

Instability became the hallmark of a school system in dire need of help. The instability, in fact, seemed at times to be contagious in the city. It struck the Flats in 2000. The Flats had gained a regional reputation as an entertainment spot that drew visitors from adjacent states. To sit in one of the waterside bars during a summer evening and watch the boats dock, four and five deep, alongside the restaurants, was one of the city's joys.

One public official described the Flats as "Cleveland's front door." The problem was that the throngs of thousands of visitors were not accompanied by needed security.

The alcohol and proximity of the river resulted in several drownings each summer and assaults became synonymous with the revelry.

White ordered the police department to crack down on the clubs in the Flats. Fire and health code violations began to close clubs. Some bar owners saw racial overtones in the police enforcement, as City Hall complained that minorities were not being treated equally in the operations in the Flats.

Slowly, what had been a showcase for the region went dark.

And then, in a surprising move, on April 23, 2001, Mike White announced at Miles Standish School — where he was once a student — that he would not seek a fourth term. He said he had done what he had come to do and would never again run for public office.

Even his most severe critics acknowledged that White's achievements were impressive. He built stadiums, expanded the airport, set an ailing school system on a new path, built housing, and brought jobs to the city. It was not perfect. City Hall finances were a mess and under a state audit.

But history would not offer a satisfying conclusion for the man who was mayor longer than anyone else, and clearly one of the best.

Four years after White left office, a shadow descended over the record of his administration. In a packed courtroom in the Carl B. Stokes Federal Courthouse overlooking the Flats, Nate Gray, White's best man, friend, and confidant was sentenced to 15 years in prison and ordered to pay $1.5 million in taxes, for his role in public corruption.

White was adamant in telling reporters that the case was about Nate Gray and not Mike White.

The media would find this not to be true.

It was White, who was the target of the investigation. The affidavit that the FBI submitted for the federal court's permission to wiretap suspects was a sealed document, meaning it was illegal for the media to possess, let alone publish it, which happened.

The FBI affidavit asked for the wire taps, in order to investigate former Mayor Michael White. He was never indicted. Nate Gray refused to cooperate with federal lawyers and served more time in jail, where he remains (as of 2012).

Authorities found that Gray had deposited $13.4 million in his bank account, during the 12 years of the White administration.

It was a dark ending to a decade that had begun with such promise and held so much achievement. Mike White retired to raise alpacas on a farm in Newcomerstown, Ohio, in Tuscarawas County. He rarely makes public appearances and almost never deals with the media.

Undeterred, the city moved into another century, with many old problems still lingering and even more beginning to fester. It was time for new leadership and new challenges. And, in time, there would be more corruption in public office, which would lead to startling developments.

Cleveland in the 2000's

By Michael D. Roberts

Since the end of World War II, Northeast Ohio underwent continuous change in almost all ways. As 2000 and a new century appeared, there was one serious exception to those metamorphoses. There had been no change in the way the people who lived here were governed.

The heart of the region---Cuyahoga County---was ruled by a political system that was born in post colonial days, and in the two centuries since, had become wasteful, ineffective and virtually invisible. It hardly met American standards of democracy let alone the demands of a future that was global in scope.

This government had been sustained by a political culture that by the last half of the 20th century had become corpulent, corrosive and corrupt. There had been more than a dozen attempts to change the archaic government since 1917, but they were thwarted by politics mired in patronage and the past.

These politics were perpetuated by the fractured nature of the county itself. Over the years, first ethnic politics and later black politics focused on narrow interests. The county stretched for 458.49 square miles and was made up of 38 cities, 19 villages, and two townships and included 31 school districts.

By 2002 the total cost of all government in Cuyahoga County was nearly $7- billion annually or $5,079 per resident. The frightening statistic, though, was that the expenditure per capita had risen 68 percent between 1992 and 2002.

There were many reasons for this government morass. The terrain and transportation system had enabled people to escape the crowded conditions of the city. Over the years, cheap land and plentiful jobs had enabled the creation of an array of suburbs that spanned the economic ladder.

As these suburbs emerged, the city's petty political squabbles created a distraction in Cleveland City Hall, which failed to grasp how this growth would ultimately effect the city. This sprawl of suburbs would ultimately drain the city of population and taxes, the result of poor planning and insular thought.

Thus, the nature of politics led to the creation of 59 separate entities at a time when it was becoming more and more evident that Cleveland and Cuyahoga County needed to adopt a regional approach to its government.

But to take this step into the future was a threat to the status quo, mainly the political structure, which held the power and patronage and by 2000 could see no farther into the future than the next government paycheck.

For more than a century and a half, the most prominent political figure in Northeastern Ohio was the mayor of the City of Cleveland. From that position, political careers were launched that could reach to the U.S. Senate, Congress and the governorship. It was generally accepted that Cleveland City Hall was a point of departure to a higher realm of political stardom, a fact that teased and cajoled the ambitious.

Such were the thoughts of Jane Campbell in 2001 when she set out to become the first female mayor to preside over the city. She defeated an unheralded black candidate, Raymond Pierce, with 54 percent of the vote. Pierce, who served in the Clinton administration and was a lawyer, seemed an unlikely candidate in that he did not have the presence that voters had grown to expect from the black community. Gone were the days when the Lou Stokes, George Forbes and Arnold Pinckney held power.

In fact, the key to Campbell's victory was the number of votes she pulled from the city's black east side. She won 27 percent of the vote in ten of the city's predominant black wards while Pierce could garner only 16 percent in the seven overwhelmingly white wards.

It was an interesting victory, aided by the more than $700,000 she raised in campaign funds and strong labor support.

At 48, Jane Campbell came to the city hall with notable achievements, serving as in the state legislature for six terms and two terms as a Cuyahoga County commissioner. In the legislature she was selected by the Democrats as the majority whip and later the assistant minority leader.

She was a revered leader in women's rights organizations, stressing the need for more involvement by women in community and government positions. Her work in promoting civil rights helped gain the black vote that was the key to her election.

Like mayors before her, she intended city hall to be a stepping-stone in a political career that would spiral to a higher office, namely that of the governor. However, unlike most of her immediate predecessors, Campbell grew up in Shaker Heights, which was a political stigma that she would carry throughout her one term as mayor.

The city hall that Campbell inherited on January 1, 2002, was in turmoil. In Mayor Mike White's last term in office, he had let government fall to ruin. City departments were barely functional, and the state auditor reported that city finances were in serious disarray.

Business leaders had lost faith in White. The momentum that he had generated for the city early in his term in office was petering out. Any thought of addressing the growing need for regionalism was remote as White had angered a swatch of suburban leaders.

Jane Campbell represented hope for a new day, but the task before her was daunting. The economy in post 9/11 years was feeble and for a time the city was ignorant to the deficits it faced. Plus, the political glow was beginning to dim over city hall.

When she campaigned, Jane, as she came to be known, liked to tell voters that one of her goals was to attract enough new residents to

the city to bring its population back over 500,000. The 2000 census counted 477,459 people in the city, down 28,157 from ten years before. Cities with less than 500,000 population became ineligible for certain federal grants.

In that same period Cuyahoga County lost 18,295 residents, while each abutting county gained in population. If these statistics did not illustrate the spreading regional nature of Northeastern Ohio, nothing did. However, against this backdrop it had to be noted that the state lost 506,025 persons since the last census or a staggering 4.7 percent of its population.

For the past 20 years both the city and county government had worked to stem this flow and maintain Cleveland as a major metropolitan center. New stadiums were built, as well as a sports arena, The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and a new science museum adorned the lakefront.

Plans called for additional pieces to be added. A convention center was needed to replace one that was built in 1922. A plan to spend $200 million to refurbish Euclid Avenue was in place, and there was the omnipresent problem of the lakefront. No single issue bothered people in the region more than the condition of the lakefront.

The lakefront had been seized in the city's early years by industrial interests, which created the port and the railroads, bringing wealth and jobs, thus propelling Cleveland into the forefront of American commerce. But the industrialization of the lakefront marred the natural beauty of the lake. Over the years city hall paid lip service to the development of the waterfront, but aside from empty headlines little was done to change it.

Jane Campbell wanted her legacy to be the lakefront and she set out to plan for its future on a scale that had never been attempted. By the time the 2004 Waterfront District Plan was completed, some 5,000 people had participated in some 125 meetings at an expense of $2 million. In a city were secrecy in government was a

way of life, the transparency in Campbell's planning effort was refreshing.

Another issue confronting the public was that of the convention center. Studies had convinced the business community that Cleveland lost $150 million annually because of its antiquated convention center. The problem was that to build it, would require a tax levy passed and most politicians were fearful of voter repercussions.

The convention center involved the classic Cleveland conundrum. Was the use of public money to generate private wealth at the expense of the taxpayer good for the community as a whole? No politician wanted to be on the wrong end of that argument.

The issue also contrasted the difference a century could make in community spirit.

In 1916, community leaders decided there was a need for a convention center and sought the public's view on the matter. Some 200,000 persons representing 116 organizations helped vote for a $2.5- million bond issue, which passed four to one in the largest turnout in the city's history. The project they built was the largest in America and among the best in the world.

Amazingly, the Public Auditorium paid for itself in one year, attracting 162 conventions with 72,000 visitors generating $2.5 million in revenue.

Now, one hundred years later, there was no political leadership for the project; the business community was left to squabble over the site. It was a contentious issue that would cost more than one public official their jobs.

There was no consensus as to where to build a convention center. Forest City lobbied heavily to put it in the flats behind Tower City on land that it owned. Other suggestions included the Warehouse District, the Mall and the Galleria.

No one seemed to have a grip on the issue, Campbell said she did not oppose its construction, but the city's fragile financial picture made it impractical as a priority for city hall.

But it was with the convention center, that Campbell began to show serious leadership flaws that would end her political career here. While she had experience in legislative and administrative government, she lacked the decisiveness of an executive.

And the convention center was an issue that needed careful shepherding through the thicket of self- interest that stood in its way. Supporters sensed that her ambition for higher office had made her cautious, measuring every move in political terms. In the end, she came to symbolize the status quo, which victimized her as well.

"She actually enjoyed ending a meeting where nothing happened," said a former staff member. "She sank the convention center because her decisions were all political and not what was good for the community".

If she would not engage in substantial issues involving the city, she did not shirk from its social life. Campbell could be found at every ribbon cutting, throwing out the first ball, and marching in the gay pride parade, reminiscent of the ethnic mayors who knew the city polka bands and neighborhood fairs better than they knew the city budget.

The reporters covering her administration sensed something else that was different about Jane. She may know about the city, but she was really a product of Shaker Heights, and people in Cleveland wanted a native ingredient in their mayor. In one publicized incident, Campbell appeared on a national television show for a beauty makeover. The performance was disdainfully regarded in the city's poor neighborhoods.

The publicity that her lakefront plan garnered irked the county commissioners, who had long sought increased representation on

the city-county port authority. City hall appointed six board members, but the county appointed only three. Citing the exodus of population from the city, the commissioners wanted more seats on the board.

Part of the reason the commissioners wanted more control of the port authority was that it would consolidate the planning process. As it was, the city, through the port authority, could make plans for the lakefront, but had no financial wherewithal to execute them. But always in the background, was the issue of patronage.

The port authority had been created during the Stokes administration and was visionary in that it represented one of the first elements of regional government.

When she was a commissioner, Campbell supported a transfer of seats, but as mayor she reversed her position creating friction between her and the county. She had little choice because City Council President Frank Jackson was adamantly opposed to the realignment.

After the anger of the Mike White years, Campbell seemed refreshing and accessible. She sorted out the city's tangled finances, used her consensus skills to bond with city council and spoke of overcoming the economic and educational problems that paralyzed the city. However, halfway through her term political observers began to wonder whether that she was too busy with small things to accomplish the larger tasks.

As she danced away from leadership on the convention center, the business community changed its tune. Two business groups, Cleveland Tomorrow and the Growth Association, that had actively supported Campbell's lakefront plan, dropped it in favor of the convention center.

For all of its hail and hype, planners were beginning to question the lakefront effort. For one thing, it had taken on massive proportions and had embraced input from thousands of citizens

making its scale so grand that it was impossible to achieve. After spending millions of dollars, and thousands of hours of manpower the plan was unmasked for what it had become.

The plan had evolved into nothing more that a public relations platform for Jane Campbell's city hall. Like every waterfront plan in the past it was quietly relegated to a dusty shelf and with it the political ambitions of its architect, Jane Campbell.

Other events were in motion that would play a role in shaping the area's political future. At first they went unrecognized, dismissed as business as usual, but slowly the elements took shape and gathered into the perfect storm.

As the business community fretted over an unresponsive city hall, federal investigators were in the midst of a probe into corruption allegations of the Mike White administration. At the same time, the Cleveland Bar Association was sponsoring yet another in depth study into the merits of regional government.

While the two incidents were seemingly unrelated, they were the beginnings of profound change in the way Cuyahoga County would be ruled. The publicity generated by each would alert the public that all was not well with the way they were being governed.

While the U.S. attorney's office prepared to prosecute a number of people with connections to city hall, including Nate Gray, Mike White's best friend, those running the bar association study were attempting to find a way to put regional government on the ballot. To be successful the issue needed the support of the black political community.

There was no enthusiasm among black leaders for such a change and they offered no help. Despite that setback, the bar association managed to present its case to the public through a series of meetings and a report. This sparked interest in the community regarding the quality and cost of its government.

In April of 2004, City Council President Frank Jackson gave an unusual speech at the City Club. He called for the adoption of regionalism to support all public schools. He called efforts to change the way we are governed was destined to lead to "alienation, divisiveness and doom." These were ironic words for a man who would have an opportunity later to help make a change, but failed to act.

In 2005, Nate Gray was found guilty and sentenced to 15 years in jail after having made a reported $13 million through corrupt practices tied to city hall. Others were convicted and sent to jail. It was, in all probability, the single largest such case in the city's history.

Meanwhile, Jane Campbell's tenure as mayor was becoming increasingly shaky. When it became known that black ministers, formerly Campbell supporters, were now pushing the administration to put more blacks in leadership positions in the safety forces, she was embarrassed.

Campbell's next blunder occurred months before a vote for a convention center tax, when she refused to support the issue, throwing the business community and the county commissioners for a loss. She attributed her decision to polls that said 65 percent of the public was against the tax.

Then an accord she made with City Council President Jackson erupted into a conflict in which he charged that she failed to keep the council informed on matters regarding a nagging city deficit as well as layoffs and a plan to raise the income tax for the schools. Jackson told the media he could no longer trust Campbell.

Slowly, she alienated nearly everyone.

Meanwhile, the debate over regionalism heightened and the business community issued a report calling for the establishment of gambling casinos to give some life to downtown and provide revenue for a struggling school system.

The political tension between Mayor Campbell and Council President Jackson heightened as well, when in November of 2004, speculation began that he would run for mayor in the next year's election. It did not take Jane Campbell long to react to the emerging challenge.

Sensing the growing momentum in the business community for casino gambling, Campbell, in an uncharacteristic move, announced her support and reopened the dormant convention center proposal. She also initiated a study on the future of the Lakefront Airport. The airport was a thorn in any planning of the lakefront's future.

But it was too late.

Frank Jackson was 58 when he decided to run for mayor. A sitting councilman had not been elected mayor since 1867, and it had not been Jackson's ambition to seek that office. He said he had no choice because the city was struggling under a person who avoided difficult decisions by looking through rose-colored glasses.

Almost on cue, Campbell backed off another difficult decision, seeking a tax increase to aid the struggling school system which had failed to pass a levy the previous fall. The community chastised the decision and accused the mayor of putting her own future ahead of that of the school children.

As a politician, Jackson was somewhat enigmatic. His speech was slow and sometimes awkward, and he had a demeanor so retiring that he sometimes appeared not to have enough energy to deal with a city. Those who knew and worked with him described his character as honest and contemplative. For a man in his position, ambition and ego were hardly evident. Conversely, some worried about the depth of his drive and spirit.

The offspring of bi-racial parents, Jackson grew up in the city, attended its school system, its community college, served in Vietnam, and took three degrees at Cleveland State University,

emerging as a lawyer. He was elected Ward 5 councilman in 1989 and became council president in 2002. If Jane Campbell knew the city theoretically, Jackson knew it practically.

In truth, the campaign for mayor in 2005 held little drama. Eight candidates vied in the primary for the two runoff positions which were won by Jackson and Campbell. It was the first time an incumbent mayor finished second in the primary in 26 years.

The turn out was light, some 52,000 voted, and Jackson overwhelmed Campbell with 38 percent of the vote to her 29 percent, while the rest was scattered among the other contenders.

Then a month later, Jackson would win the general election with 55 percent of the vote.

The election that fall of 2005 returned Tim Hagan as a county commissioner. He had served for 16 years before retiring in 1998. Over the years Hagan had become a perennial political candidate running for mayor and governor and losing. Voters liked him as a county commissioner.

The business community had been so angered at Commissioner Tim McCormack's negative stance on the convention center that it threw its money and resources behind Hagan. It was presumed by some businessmen that Hagan would take the lead on the convention center issue. He, along with commissioners Jimmy Dimora and Peter Lawson Jones, would have much to say about its future.

Elsewhere a series of events were unfolding that would have a profound effect not only on the future of city hall, but of the region as well. Part of it would reveal that the Nate Gray case was not an isolated incident, but an example of systemic corruption throughout the region's political subculture.

The problem with the county political system was there was only one viable party, the Democratic Party. The fragmented Republicans could hardly assemble enough votes to win a county-

wide office. And the death of *The Cleveland Press* in 1982 had removed an essential check and balance from the community. By 2005 the county was so riddled with corruption and larded with patronage and inept leadership that it was a government in name only.

The county commissioners spent $45 million on the vacant Ameritrust Tower as a new administrative building only to find it was unsuitable. This came about after the commissioners paid a consultant $3 million to locate appropriate office space. It was puzzling, and *The Plain Dealer* began to call for more transparency in county business.

The commissioners responded angrily, especially Dimora who, in one meeting, ordered reporters ejected. To add to the tension, citizen groups were actively organizing, continuing to cry for a regional government that would replace the commissioners.

In the past, the Democratic Party had shrugged off attempts at reform. Reform of any kind was anathema to the entrenched office holders whose friends and family enjoyed political largesse. But political observers sensed there was something different at work.

Meanwhile, a tax increase to pay for the $465-million convention center was turned down by voters. In response, the commissioners unilaterally levied a .75 percent increase on the county's sales tax to meet the cost. To accompany the project, a medical mart was proposed that would house medical suppliers and in turn attract conventions.

The plan was bold, but controversial for it involved the participation of a private company.

MMPI, a Chicago trade show company that managed marts nationally were hired by the commissioners to oversee the construction of both complexes and manage them. At the head of MMPI was Chris Kennedy, a friend of Commissioner Tim Hagan, and the son of the late Robert F. Kennedy.

Then on July 28, 2006, federal agents, in a stunning raid of the offices and homes of top county officials, produced search warrants that indicated that they were looking for evidence of government corruption. In the succeeding weeks, it became clear that the county was in the midst of its biggest scandal in history.

Among those who followed the day-to day events of the area, there was a feeling that *The Plain Dealer* had not covered government as closely or as impartially as was warranted. Certainly, Mike White's years as mayor deserved more scrutiny, but the scope of the county corruption case far overshadowed it and that, too, had gone undetected by the media.

In fact, the media was beginning to have problems of its own. The internet was becoming such a phenomenon that it was cutting into the revenues and readership of newspapers and eroding television news and advertising. News staffs were reduced and the size of the newspapers drastically cut. The internet presented the greatest challenge to the traditional media in its history.

Despite the internet, story after story of bribery and deceit played out on a daily basis in the newspaper with a new zeal. Page one was dark with headlines outlining the betrayal of the public trust by a coterie of Democratic office holders led by County Commissioner Jimmy Dimora and County Auditor Frank Russo.

Day after day, *The Plain Dealer* hammered at the corruption until the very foundation of the sitting government was an issue in doubt. There were some who thought the newspaper's coverage had lost its objectivity. Others countered that there was no objectivity to display, the situation had lost any sense of fairness or balance.

A citizen's group, formed out of the earlier interest in government reform, was launched in an attempt to put a charter change on the county ballot. Passage would streamline government and be a step toward regionalism. The main problem again was getting support from the black leaders. They were reluctant to give up their hard-

earned political base.

Events were moving fast. The federal investigation mounted with each week and the newspaper devoted more and more space and resources to the story. There was no topic discussed more in town than the extent of probe, which touched on more than 100 persons.

The citizen's group was successful in putting the charter change on the November 2009 ballot as Issue 6. But Democrats and labor leaders countered with Issue 5 that called for the creation of a commission to study the situation. Given the circumstances and the mood of the community, it was a tired tactic aimed at confusing the issue of reform.

Only one black political leader, Nina Turner, supported the charter change and she was castigated by her community. It was a critical moment for black leaders, especially Frank Jackson, who could have used his support to barter for possible concessions to aid his beleaguered school system. He did nothing.

On November 9, 2009, voters passed the charter change with a decisive 66.18 percent of the vote while Issue 5 went down hard, losing by 72.03 percent. It was truly an historic moment. The voters slammed the door on the past with vengeance.

The charter called for a county executive and an 11- member council that would eliminate the three county commissioners and eight other elected offices. The first election of the new government was held in 2010 and Lakewood mayor Ed FitzGerald was elected to the executive's office.

FitzGerald, a former FBI agent who ironically opposed the charter change, wasted no time in reforming a bloated and unresponsive government. He cut $20-million in payroll and expenses. Some said he moved fast because he wanted to run for governor. Just the thought was an indication of how the new government had superseded city hall in political importance.

At times, Jackson's stewardship at city hall was unremarkable. A

new lakefront plan developed by the Cleveland-Cuyahoga Port Authority under the mayor's direction floundered, wasting a million more dollars to say nothing of time. City hall announced yet another plan, but the lack of money and leadership most likely will doom it, too.

One of the big blows was Jackson's failure to convince Eaton Corporation to follow through with plans to build its new headquarters on the lakefront. Instead, the company opted to build it in Chagrin Highlands.

City Hall continued to have housekeeping issues. The water department, full to the brim from years of patronage, was having such difficulty in billing and service that suburbs were talking of opting out of the system. The fire department had workforce problems that led to a criminal investigation, and the mayor's expensive plan to create energy out of waste appeared beyond the horizon.

Finally, the city got its casino in the spring of 2012 and it became an immediate attraction in the old Higbee Co. building on Public Square. Businesses surrounding the casino experienced an immediate lift.

Late in his second term, Jackson began to focus on the agonizing problem of a broken school system. His efforts to confront the problems of a school system that long ago had been severely damaged were admirable. The question remained, though, how effective will the restructuring of the teaching system be? It desperately needed an operating levy passed.

The city seemed to be left to its own devices, no longer the political focal point it once was. It had been relegated to the status of another suburb.

In a sense, both the county and the city were at a cross roads. They shared similar problems and for both it was essential that they begin to think as a region rather than yet another subdivision.

The sprawl that had drained population from the central city since the 1920s, was now impacting the city and county in another critical way. By 2010 there were only 2,000 acres of agricultural land left in the county which soon would be the first in the state to be totally built upon.

On study tracing the migration away from cities showed that between 2000 and 2010 some 100,000 people moved from Cleveland, Akron and Lorain. Adjoining counties acquired 40,000 new residents.

The nature of government in some of these counties precluded the ability to levy income taxes making those areas attractive to those who want to leave areas of urban sprawl. Dismally, the study reported that by 2037 there will be another 75,000 houses abandoned in Cuyahoga County.

Ironically, the urban reported say that downtown Cleveland is the key to the region's salvation. It has to find ways to regenerate its economy and entice people back into the city, reversing the trend that sprawl caused which only resulted in a rolling decay across the region.

Every indicator for Northeastern Ohio shows the need for government to abandon the past reorganize itself and adopt new taxing policies, redevelopment strategies and inducements to revitalize the region's core.

The 21st century in the region has to be a time of innovation, leadership, and, above all, necessity.

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