

Jim White, 1924-2011

It is with great sorrow that the Oberlin Heritage Center informs members and friends of the passing of our beloved Jim White, past president of the Board of Trustees and a volunteer-extraordinaire for OHC. James W. White passed away at his home at Kendal at Oberlin early this morning, December 7, 2011. Arrangements for services are incomplete at this time, although we understand a memorial service will be held after the holiday season.

Many of you knew Jim, and for those who didn't, let us take a moment to acquaint you with this man who was everyone's friend:

Jim White grew up in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. After serving in World War II and graduating from Muskingum College and attending the University of Cincinnati, he began his career by teaching history and social studies in the public schools in Cincinnati for five years. He then returned to Muskingum College, working in both the Admissions and Financial aid offices until 1967 when he was hired by Oberlin College as the Director of Financial Aid. He remained at that post until his retirement in 1990. He was very active through the years in many Oberlin and Lorain County organizations, and he was an invaluable volunteer for the Oberlin Heritage Center.

Jim's association with the Heritage Center began in 1996 when he first became a member of the organization. In 1999, he was elected to serve on the Board of Trustees. The following year, Jim accepted the role of Board Secretary, then moved on to the Vice President's position in 2003. In 2005, he began five exceptional years of service as President of the Board, and due to term limits, he moved to the position of Past President in 2010. He continued in this Board role until April 2011.

Jim was one of the first Endowed Life Members of the Oberlin Heritage Center. He supported the Heritage Center generously in terms of time, talents and financial contributions. Since 1999, he recorded 1,400 volunteer hours with the organization and countless other hours have gone unrecorded due to his humble nature and preference not to "toot his own horn."

Jim was involved as either a member or a chair of every committee at the Oberlin Heritage Center, and as one admirer aptly stated, "Jim never met a committee he didn't like." Jim was a dedicated fundraiser for the organization and was very

involved in major fundraising campaigns at the Oberlin Heritage Center including the Endowment for History Education campaign and the Annual Fund campaigns.

As Board President, his masterful leadership helped immensely in moving the Oberlin Heritage Center to a new level of organizational excellence. During his tenure on the Board, the Oberlin Heritage Center became accredited by the American Association of Museums, built its endowment, donated the Burrell-King House for use as Oberlin Conservatory of Music's Community Music School, and developed/implemented two ambitious five-year Strategic Plans.

Jim was a devoted community servant in many other volunteer roles over the past four decades. He nurtured leadership and collaboration and built organizational capacity in numerous Lorain County organizations. He was involved in many committees at the Kendal at Oberlin retirement community. He served as the Oberlin Heritage Center's representative to the City of Oberlin's Underground Railroad Design Committee, and served on the Board of the Central Lorain County Ambulance District. He participated in community efforts that led to the creation of Splash Zone in Oberlin. He was a Past President of Neighborhood House of Lorain County. He served on Oberlin City Council for four years. He served on the Boards of the Firelands Association for the Visual Arts, the North Central Ohio American Civil Liberties Union, the Oberlin Cable Co-op, the Oberlin Schools Endowment Board, and as a Trustee of the Ohio United Way and the United Way of Greater Lorain County. He served on the College Entrance Examination Board for four years. He was a 1993 graduate of Leadership Lorain County and a member of the Leadership Lorain County Alumni Association.

Jim was an active member of First Church in Oberlin, United Church of Christ and served as Moderator of the Executive Council on several occasions, most recently from 2005 – 2007. He also was a member of the Investment Committee of the Western Reserve Association of the United Church of Christ.

Jim was a World War II veteran who participated in General Patton's Third Army and saw action in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. His good friends also knew him as a true-blue fan of the Cleveland Indians as well as Oberlin College and Oberlin High School athletics.

Jim White helped to initiate several scholarships for young people and assisted in the development of the former Access program of Lorain County. Upon his retirement from Oberlin College, the Ohio Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators established the James W. White Award which is presented annually

to someone who, like Jim, “exemplifies dedication to students, the greater financial aid community, and the recipient’s local community.”

Among his many honors, Jim White received the Ohio Association of Historical Societies and Museums Outstanding Achievement Award in 2010. He was named Oberlinian of the Year by the Oberlin News Tribune in 2011. Also in 2011, Oberlin College granted him its Distinguished Service Award for outstanding contributions to the community.

Jim White was a model citizen who devoted his life to serving others and who did so effectively and with diplomacy, wit and charm. His leadership as Board President of the Oberlin Heritage Center helped mold the organization into the model small museum that it is today.

Jim remained active in Heritage Center work until the end. He attended a Heritage Center meeting on December 1 and enjoyed reviewing the draft of a forthcoming Oberlin history comic book last week. He was a mentor to many who will continue to be inspired by him, including all of us at the Oberlin Heritage Center. We will miss Jim dearly.

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