



27 of 226 DOCUMENTS

Copyright 2010 Daily Times
All Rights Reserved
Daily Times (Salisbury, Maryland)

May 13, 2010 Thursday

SECTION: WCT

LENGTH: 624 words

HEADLINE: Cane dies soon after retiring from public service

BYLINE: By, Jenny Hopkinson

BODY:

POCOMOKE CITY -- For the past 25 years, when local nonprofit groups and other causes approached the Pocomoke City mayor and Council in search of money, they may have walked away with a little bit more in their pockets than expected.

Regardless of whether the town could produce any funding, Councilman Honiss W. Cane, Jr., would often slip the groups cash from his own pocket.

"I saw him do it more than once," said Mayor Michael McDermott. "It was his way of saying that he wanted those people to know they were supported, that they had a worthy cause."

Cane, who finished his tenure on the council at the end of his sixth term in April, died May 4 after a brief battle with cancer. He was 78 years old.

"I'm going to miss him," said his younger brother, Delegate Rudolph C. Cane (D-37A). "We talked every day -- in fact my wife used to say 'look, don't be on the phone all day with your brother,' and his wife would say the same. I had a friend who described it as, Honiss could eat the watermelon and I would spit out the seeds. We were that close."

Cane was born in Marion Station on New Year's Day in 1932, growing up in a family of six children. His first view of politics came in 1946 when his father, Honiss Cane Sr., ran to represent Somerset County as a state delegate. He lost the race, but only by a narrow margin, Rudolph said.

"He was told on election night (his opponents) paid \$75 for votes because they thought he was going to win," Rudolph said. "We admired our father, all of the things that he did."

In 1952, Cane was drafted and served two years fighting in Korea. When he returned, he took a job at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. He retired as the supervisor of the student union 32 years later.

Cane dies soon after retiring from public service Daily Times (Salisbury, Maryland) May 13, 2010 Thursday

"I can remember being a student and Honiss would say, 'White, come here,' and we would talk," said James White, associate vice president of student life and enrollment management for UMES. Cane was a figure on the small campus, often buying sandwiches for hungry students, providing rides to the bus station or lending a sympathetic ear, White said.

"This was regular Honiss," he added. "This was nothing special -- he always had a smile, and if he had a frown on his face it was out of concern of what that person was sharing with him."

After a failed run for County Commissioner in Somerset County, Cane moved to Pocomoke City, where he settled with his wife and five children and became involved in the Shiloh United Methodist Church. In 1984, he helped the town win the All-American City designation. Two years later he won a council seat, becoming the first African-American to serve on the board.

Over the years, Cane played a role in improving race relations in the area and modernizing Pocomoke City.

"Honiss was really an iconic figure," McDermott. "He was responsible, in large part, for a lot of the changes to the political jurisdictions that paved the way for a lot of the first African-Americans elected in the county."

That included the election of the first black Worcester County Commissioner, James L. Purnell, in 1995. Purnell still serves on that board and plans to seek a fifth term this fall.

Cane was also responsible for integrating Pocomoke City's Fire Department, McDermott said.

"That was something he was extremely proud of," the mayor said. "Instead of going to court or forcing people to do something, he sat down and talked to people, and it opened doors."

Earlier this year, Cane announced he would not be seeking another term. Diane Downing, a Pocomoke native, was elected to the seat with his support.

"He was very pleased that he was able to retire at the completion of a term," Rudolph Cane said. "That his illness didn't effect his ability to serve."

jhopkinson@dmg.gannett.com

410-213-9442, ext. 17

LOAD-DATE: May 14, 2010