

REMARKS OF JOHN DESTEFANO, JR.
NOVEMBER 20, 2013

THANK YOU

TO KATHY, - GREAT JOB! YOU, JIM, DAN, KATIE, CHAR AND JOANIE, TOM AND LARRY, NANCY AND CHRIS, ALL THE KIDS - YOU MEAN THE WORLD TO ME. AS IT SHOULD BE! THANK YOU! I LOVE YOU ALL.

TO THE COMMITTEE WHO ORGANIZED THIS - YOU GUYS ARE THE BEST! EVER SINCE ANNOUNCING MY INTENTION TO RETIRE, THE LAST 10 MONTHS HAVE BEEN A DREAM OF HUGS AND THANK YOU'S. AND TONIGHT, WELL TONIGHT JUST MAKES ME SO HAPPY!

TO FATHER BOB, MICHAEL, ROSA, BRUCE; TO BILL FINCH AND BILLY CARBONE; AND TO MY GREAT FRIEND AND PARTNER REGGIE MAYO; THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR WORDS JUST NOW, AND, FOR ALL THAT WE HAVE DONE TOGETHER THESE MANY YEARS.

AND FINALLY, TO ALL OF YOU HERE TONIGHT – WOW! ANOTHER TICKETED EVENT AT ANTHONY'S FOR MY BENEFIT! HOW UNUSUAL! REALLY, THANK YOU ALL FOR MAKING THE EFFORT TO BE HERE.

EACH OF YOU HAS BEEN A MEANINGFUL PART OF THE WHOLE OF THE LAST 20 YEARS IN NEW HAVEN. AND IT IS TRUE – WE HAVE DONE SOME AWESOME THINGS TOGETHER!

34 YEARS AGO

34 YEARS AGO THIS MONTH, IN NOVEMBER 1979, I RECEIVED A PHONE CALL. IT WAS FROM A WOMAN NAMED CAROL LEWIS. NOW CAROL WAS MY PROFESSOR OF BUDGETING IN THE MASTERS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM AT UCONN, FROM WHERE I WAS EXPECTING TO COMPLETE MY COURSE WORK THAT DECEMBER. KATHY AND I HAD JUST BEEN MARRIED 3 MONTHS EARLIER IN AUGUST, AND WE WERE LIVING ON NORTH EAGLEVILLE ROAD IN STORRS, CONNECTICUT ON THE UCONN CAMPUS, IN MARRIED GRADUATE HOUSING. \$112 A MONTH, REMEMBER KAT?

ANYWAY CAROL TOLD ME THAT NEW HAVEN, MY HOMETOWN, WAS LOOKING FOR A BUDGET ANALYST, AND, WOULD I BE INTERESTED IN INTERVIEWING FOR THE JOB? MY DAD, A 29 YEAR CITY COP, HAD DIED TWO YEARS EARLIER. MY MOM JUDY WAS ALONE . AND IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA TO EXPLORE.

SO A COUPLE OF WEEKS LATER I FOUND MYSELF ON THE 3RD FLOOR OF THE HALL OF RECORDS AT 200 ORANGE STREET BEING INTERVIEWED FOR THE JOB BY MIKE MILONE, WHO WOULD BECOME MY FIRST BOSS AT THE CITY IN SHORT ORDER – AND A FRIEND SINCE.

I TOOK A SECOND INTERVIEW WITH THE CITY'S DEPUTY CONTROLLER: A GUY BY THE NAME OF LARRY RUSCONI. LARRY HIRED ME, AND, TWENTY SIX YEARS LATER LARRY AND I WOULD WORK TOGETHER AGAIN, WHEN HE BECAME THE SECOND BUDGET DIRECTOR IN MY ADMINISTRATION IN 2006.

ANYWAY THE NEXT 14 YEARS, FROM 1980 TO 1993, WERE A BLAST:

- **6 YEARS IN THE CONTROLLERS OFFICE; INCLUDING 1 BOY BORN (DAN); AND, 1 YEAR AT THE SHUBERT WITH JUDY LISI WHEN THE THEATER GOT INTO TROUBLE RIGHT AFTER RE-OPENING.**
- **IT WAS IN THOSE YEARS THAT I MET A GUY WHO HAD GONE TO UCONN YEARS BEFORE ME. LEON MEDVEDOW. LEON TOOK THE PLACE OF MY FATHER IN MY LIFE. YOU JUST SAW HIM IN THE VIDEO AS HE SWORE ME IN FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 1994. HE WAS ALSO AT MY 10TH AND LAST SWEARING IN ON JANUARY 1, 2012. AND HE PASSED AWAY THE NEXT DAY. BUBIE – THANK YOU.**
- **THEN IT WAS 1985 AND 3 YEARS AS CAO; AND, 1 YEAR AS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATOR. THOSE WERE THE YEARS I MADE SO MANY FRIENDS BY DOING THINGS LIKE STANDING AT THE ENTRANCE TO CITY BUILDINGS 5 MINUTES BEFORE THE SCHEDULED STARTING TIME TO SEE WHAT TIME WORKERS WERE ARRIVING. AND OH, A 2ND BOY BORN (JIM);**
- **AND THEN IT WAS 1989. BEN RETIRED; I RAN FOR MAYOR; I GOT RID OF THE AFRO (NOW THAT WAS A HAIRCUT); I LOST THE ELECTION; I BUILT A TENNIS STADIUM; THE CENTER COURT SURFACE FAILED; AND, HELICOPTERS CAME IN.**
- **THEN IT WAS 1993. I DECIDED TO RUN FOR MAYOR A SECOND TIME; I CHANGED MY HAIR STYLE A SECOND TIME; AND THIS TIME, I WON THE ELECTION!**

AND, AS YOU JUST SAW, HOW YOUNG, AND CONFIDENT AND OPTOMISTIC I WAS!

THE LAST 20 YEARS

AND THE LAST TWENTY YEARS?

WELL FIRST, I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS GOING TO BE 20 YEARS. THAT WASN'T A PLAN. IT JUST HAPPENED. AND I THINK THAT WAS SO BECAUSE THE CITY KEPT CHANGING AND I ALWAYS FOUND INTERESTING THINGS TO DO. YOU KNOW IT'S ONE OF THE THINGS I LOVE ABOUT NEW HAVEN. YOU THINK YOU KNOW IT – THEN YOU SEE SOMETHING YOU NEVER SAW OR THOUGHT ABOUT BEFORE. AND IT CHALLENGES YOU AND MAKES YOU REALIZE WHY CITIES IN THEIR CONSTANT REMAKING OF THEMSELVES, TRULY ARE THE GREAT AUTHOR OF THE AMERICAN STORY.

AND SECOND, I NEVER COULD HAVE IMAGINED THAT NO MATTER HOW HARD I WORKED, THAT IT WOULD ALL BE GIVEN BACK TO ME SO MANY TIMES BEYOND ANYTHING THAT I CONTRIBUTED:

- THESE LAST 20 YEARS AS MAYOR HAVE GIVEN ME SUCH INCREDIBLE FAITH IN THE DECENCY, EMPATHY AND GOOD WILL OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS COMMUNITY. WHATEVER THE CHALLENGE OR DEFEAT; THE CELEBRATION OR THE NEXT GREAT IDEA; TIME AFTER TIME PEOPLE STOOD UP FOR ONE ANOTHER. THE CHARACTER AND STRENGTH OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS CITY IS ABSOLUTELY AWE INSPIRING TO ME;**
- THE LAST TWENTY YEARS HAS ALSO TAUGHT ME ABOUT THE PERSISTANCE AND DETERMINATION OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS CITY. KNOCK THEM DOWN BECAUSE THERE WAS A PROBLEM IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, OR AN INJUSTICE TO THEMSELVES OR A NEIGHBOR - AND THEY COME BACK – AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN; AND,**
- THE PEOPLE OF THIS COMMUNITY TAUGHT ME ABOUT LOVE. REGGIE USED TO SAY, “MAYOR, WHENEVER I’M HAVING A BAD DAY, I GET OVER TO ONE OF THE SCHOOLS – AND THOSE KIDS JUST MAKE IT RIGHT”. AND ITS SO TRUE.**

WHETHER IT WAS THE KIDS WHO WOULD EMBRACE YOU AT THE DROP OF A HAT; OR A CHURCH COMMUNITY; OR SOME NEIGHBORS YOU MET AS YOU BIKED AROUND THE CITY; WHATEVER IT WAS, THIS IS A PLACE THAT BURSTS WITH CARE AND LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER.

YOU SEE FOR ME, IT HASN'T BEEN THE SCHOOL BUILDINGS. OR A TOWER DOWNTOWN. OR A HOUSING PROJECT – PROUD AS I MIGHT BE OF THOSE THINGS. FOR ME IT HAS BEEN AN EDUCATION ABOUT BEING PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER THAN JUST MYSELF. AND THE SENSE THAT WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE THAT MEANING AND PURPOSE IN LIFE IS FOUND IN MAKING ONE ANOTHER WHOLE.

AND WHILE YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE MAYOR TO DO THAT, OR TO SEE THAT, THE LAST 20 YEARS HAS GIVEN REAL DEFINITION TO ME OF WHAT LIFE'S TREASURES ARE. IT'S PEOPLE.

THE PEOPLE

LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF NEW HAVEN.

- **YOU SEE, YOU LOOK OUT YOUR OFFICE WINDOW EARLY ONE MORNING. AND, YOU SEE A LINE OF PEOPLE STRETCHING DOWN CHURCH STREET, AND AROUND THE CORNER DOWN ELM TO ORANGE. PEOPLE WAITING PATIENTLY IN LINE FOR CITY HALL TO OPEN, AND JUST FOR A CARD. A CARD. A CARD THAT SAID THEY WERE RESIDENTS OF NEW HAVEN.**

WAITED, AS HATERS SCREAMED AT AND FILMED THEM, JUST FOR THE SIN OF BEING THE HARD WORKING PEOPLE OF NEW HAVEN – WHO JUST WANTED TO EARN SOMETHING MORE FOR THEIR KIDS, THAN THEY THEMSELVES HAD. YOU SEE PEOPLE TAKING THAT, AND YOU LEARN SOMETHING WONDERFUL ABOUT THE HUMAN SPIRIT.

- **OR, YOU GO TO THE ER AT 20 YORK STREET ON A SEPTEMBER NIGHT (9TH) IN 2008, AFTER A HORRIBLE COLLISION OF 2 POLICE CRUISERS AT EAST AND CHAPEL. THE CARS WERE 'LIGHTS AND SIRENS' RESPONDING TO A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CALL IN FAIR HAVEN. THE SQUAD CARS COLLIDE AND, IN AN INSTANT SGT. SCOTT APONTE IS KILLED, AND, OFFICER DIANE RODRIGUEZ IS IN A COMA - FROM WHICH SHE HAS YET TO RECOVER.**

YOU GREET THE FAMILY AS THEY COME TO VIEW THE BODY OF THEIR LOVED ONE. YOU SPEND TIME WITH THE OTHER OFFICERS FAMILY ACROSS THE FLOOR. YOU GO DOWN TO THE CAFETERIA WHERE HALF THE PD IS AND TELL THEM THE NEWS ABOUT THEIR FELLOW OFFICERS. YOU LEARN PRETTY QUICK ABOUT THE COURAGE AND COMMITMENT OF NEW HAVEN PEOPLE.

- **OR, 15 YEARS AGO YOU WATCH COACH GARY MOORE'S GIRLS TRACK TEAM AT HILLHOUSE PUT IT ALL OUT. AND YOU SEE THE EXHILARATION AND POSSIBILITY OF ALL THOSE STRONG, AMAZING YOUNG WOMEN. SO YOU BUILD A FIELD HOUSE THAT HALF MEASURES UP TO THOSE GIRLS. AND THEN YOU BUILD SCHOOLS - AND EXPECTATIONS ABOUT ACHIEVEMENT ALL AROUND THE CITY THAT BEGINS TO BE WORTHY OF THEIR TALENTS. AND THEN THE CITY'S GREAT INSTITUTIONS FUND COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR ALL THESE STUDENTS BECAUSE EVERYONE IN THE CITY GETS IT. THAT WE CANNOT BE A GREAT CITY IF WE DO NOT INVEST IN THESE KIDS. AND YOU SEE A JUST AND COMMITTED COMMUNITY.**

- **OR, A FAMILY OF FIVE: MOM, DAD, 3 KIDS COMES TO MAYOR’S NIGHT IN. THEY COME TO YOUR OFFICE AND TELL YOU ABOUT THE DREAM OF THEIR OLDEST CHILD TO GO TO COLLEGE. THE KID IS A GREAT STUDENT, BUT HIS PARENTS, EVEN THOUGH BOTH WORK, DON’T HAVE THE MONEY FOR TUITION. AND THE STUDENT, WELL HE CAN’T QUALIFY FOR A STUDENT LOAN OR A PELL GRANT, BECAUSE HE CAME HERE AS A BABY AND IS UNDOCUMENTED.**

THEY TALK ABOUT HOW HARD HE WORKS IN SCHOOL, HOW HARD THEY AS PARENTS WORK – AND THE FATHER TELLS YOU THAT HE FEELS LIKE A FAILURE BECAUSE HE CAN’T PAY FOR HIS SON’S COLLEGE EDUCATION. YOU LEARN PRETTY QUICK ABOUT ASPIRATION AND DETERMINATION AND GOOD PARENTING IN NEW HAVEN. AND YOU LOOK AT THIS FAMILY AND HOPE YOUR OWN SONS THINK YOU’RE HALF AS GOOD A FATHER AS THIS GUY SITTING ACROSS THE TABLE FROM YOU IS;

- **AND YOU GO THROUGH THE LABORATORIES AND SEE THE SCIENCE THAT IS INCREDIBLE; AND THE PERFORMANCE AND DISPLAY ART THAT JUST BURSTS OUT IN CITYWIDE OPEN STUDIOS, THE GALLERIES AND THE FESTIVALS; THE PEOPLE RENOVATING HOMES AND REBUILDING PUBLIC HOUSING; AND GOING TO SCHOOL AND GRADUATING - AND - IT - TAKES - YOUR - BREADTH - AWAY.**

YOU THINK ABOUT THESE THINGS, AND YOU TELL ME WHO GOT THE BETTER DEAL OVER THESE LAST 20 YEARS? IT WAS ME.

BEING MAYOR

AND I KNOW THAT SOMETIMES I WAS HARD HEADED – AND PLAYED HARD. AND SOME TIMES, NOT PATIENT.

FOR THOSE THINGS I SHOULD, AND I DO REGRET MY BEHAVIOR. BUT I ALWAYS FELT, WHAT WAS THE POINT OF BEING MAYOR OF AN AMERICAN CITY:

- **IF I WASN’T THERE TO DO SOMETHING;**
- **TO DO IT WITH PASSION; AND**
- **WITH AN UNCOMPROMISING PERSISTANCE AND IMPATIENCE TO DO RIGHT AS BEST I COULD SEE THE RIGHT?**

IF NOT ME, WHO THEN?

SO I DO APOLOGIZE FOR MYSELF – BUT I WILL NEVER, EVER APOLOGIZE FOR THE SPIRITED, THE BRILLIANT, THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE INCREDIBLE PEOPLE OF NEW HAVEN. EVER, EVER, EVER. AND IF THAT MEANT HAVING AN ATTITUDE WITH WHOMEVER –WELL SO BE IT.

THE OATH

SO THANK YOU. AND THANK YOU FOR THE INDULGENCE OF TONIGHT. BUT MOSTLY, THANK YOU FOR GIVING ME MORE THAN I COULD HAVE EVER DREAMED WHEN LEON ADMINISTERED THAT OATH FOR THE FIRST TIME 20 YEAR AGO. THE OATH THAT,

‘ I SOLEMNY SWEAR THAT I WILL FAITHFULLY AND IMPARTIALLY PERFORM THE DUTIES OF THE OFFICE OF MAYOR TO THE BEST OF MY ABILITY AND ACCORDING TO LAW AND THAT I WILL AT ALL TIMES STRIVE TO USE THE POWER ENTRUSTED TO ME AS SUCH OFFICER FOR THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CITY OF NEW HAVEN, SO HELP ME GOD.’

AND WHILE 20 YEARS LATER I AM NOT AS YOUNG AS THEN – LET ME ASSURE YOU THAT I AM MORE CONFIDENT AND EVEN MORE OPTOMISTIC ABOUT OUR PEOPLE, AND OUR CITY, AND OUR FUTURE THAN I WAS ALL THOSE YEARS AGO.

LEAVING

I HAD HOPED THAT WHEN THIS TIME TO LEAVE CAME, THAT I WOULD BE ABLE TO SAY THREE THINGS:

- 1. THAT I LEFT THE CITY A BETTER PLACE THAN I HAD FOUND IT;**
- 2. THAT I HAD LEFT NOTHING, NOTHING OF MYSELF ON THE FIELD; AND,**
- 3. THAT WHEN I LOOKED AT MYSELF IN THE MIRROR THAT I COULD TRUTHFULLY AND IN FULL SELF AWARENESS SAY, THAT I ‘ACTED FAITHFULLY, IMPARTIALLY, ACCORDING TO THE LAW, AND, IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CITY, SO HELP ME GOD’.**

I AM COMFORTABLE LEAVING IT TO OTHERS TO JUDGE THE FIRST TWO.

BUT ONLY I, IN ALL HONESTY AND GOOD CONSCIENCE , CAN JUDGE THE THIRD.

YOU SEE THE REASON THAT I AM SO HAPPY TONIGHT, WITH ALL OF YOU MY FAMILY AND MY FRIENDS, IS THAT I AM ABLE TO LOOK IN THE MIRROR AND KNOW THAT, WHILE CERTAINLY NOT PERFECT AND OFTEN WRONG, THAT I LIVED UP TO:

- **WHAT MY CITY EXPECTED OF ME;**
- **WHAT MY PARENTS JOHN AND JUDY RAISED ME TO BE;**
- **WHAT KATHY AND THE BOYS DEPEND UPON ME TO BE;**
- **WHAT MY FRIENDS COUNT ON ABOUT ME; AND,**

AND THAT FOR WHATEVER I HAVE GIVEN, THE PEOPLE OF NEW HAVEN WHOM I RESPECT, WHOM I LOVE, AND WHOM I STAND IN AWE OF, HAVE REWARDRED ME MANY TIMES OVER – AS ALL OF YOU DO TONIGHT BY YOUR PRESENCE.

LOOKING FORWARD:

- **TO THE BANK;**
- **TO TEACHING;**
- **TO YEARS, GOD WILLING, OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS;**
- **TO CHALLENGES YET TO OVERCOME; AND,**
- **TO FOOLS WHOM I WILL CONTINUE TO NOT SUFFER –**

I THANK YOU, FOR MAKING ME THE HAPPIEST PERSON IN NEW HAVEN.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL.

GOD BLESS OUR PEOPLE.

GOD BLESS OUR CITY OF NEW HAVEN.

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