

TRIBUTE TO JIM ROUSE BY PADRAIC KENNEDY APRIL 12, 1996

It's wonderful to celebrate Jim Rouse's life because to Jim life itself was a celebration. His was crowded with accomplishments and awards. It was peopled with countless friends and admirers. He was an amazing man. He probably was the only developer in the country who anytime could walk into a room crowded with residents and invariably get a standing ovation. He loved the people of Columbia and they loved him. He even loved the name Columbia -- said it "had a kind of hallelujah sound." He got such pleasure out of talking with Columbia's residents whether old friends at the Interfaith Center or people he'd just met walking around the lake.

Jim absolutely revelled in showing Columbia to visitors. I remember a few years ago David Rockefeller was visiting Columbia and Jim Rouse decided to give him one of his famous tours of the town. Now, I don't know if you ever saw Jim drive, but it was a pretty frightening spectacle. He'd speed along, waving his arms to the left, pointing out things to the right, totally ignoring the road.

Well, that day Jim asked me to join him for the tour. As we were driving through Longfellow, Jim pointed out the elementary school there and sailed right through the stop sign. Rockefeller was obviously uncomfortable. He slid down in his seat and mumbled something about the police. Naturally, Jim took that as a cue and immediately began singing the praises of Howard County's Police force. All of a sudden sirens were wailing, lights began flashing and Jim got pulled over to the side of the road. The next thing we knew a policeman approached the car, asked Jim for his driver's license and promptly gave him a \$50 ticket. David Rockefeller sat through the whole incident in silence. But once the policeman got back into his car he turned to Jim and said "Now we know how much influence you've got in Columbia." Rouse loved it. To him it showed that Columbia really worked.

Over the years the thing that pleased Jim most was that Columbia was an open, racially integrated community. That had been one of his key goals. Something as important as that, however, doesn't just happen. People make it happen. And from the beginning it was Jim Rouse who provided the moral leadership that swept aside traditional barriers. Let me give an example that illustrates the point.

Shortly after one of Columbia's barber shops opened Jim got a call from a resident who said "I love Columbia, Mr. Rouse. I truly love it here, but I've just had the most unpleasant experience. The barber refused to cut my child's hair." Her child happened to be black. Rouse confronted the barber who said it was true. He just didn't know how to cut black children's hair. Jim's response was clear and simple. "Learn," he said, "learn." The barber learned.

That is the kind of direction I'm talking about. Columbia is an open, integrated and caring community today, because of the philosophical and moral leadership Jim Rouse provided from the very beginning.

Everyone talks about Jim Rouse's legacy: Is it Columbia? Harbor Place? The Enterprise Foundation? To me, Jim's greatest legacy is the unshakable faith he had that an individual could make a difference. Jim never accepted things as they were. He always held up the Ideal as his frame of reference. He made us lift our sights. He made us see what could be. Truly, the most important gift he gave us was his deep conviction that the individual counts and that anything is possible if people are willing to work for it. Inspired by Jim, thousands of people all over Columbia have gotten involved in so many ways shaping the future of this community.

Jim Rouse liked to quote Daniel Burnham's famous lines: "Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with every growing insistency."

Jim did just that. His plans were bold, his hopes so logical and high they stirred the imagination and conscience of the country.

Columbia is very proud of Jim Rouse. He was a creator of community, a champion of the poor, an uncommon man. But, I think what makes Columbians most proud is that Jim chose to live here, to work here, to be one of us. He was our neighbor and our friend. He was Jim, and we thank him for it.