

43rd Ward Voice Cheers to 50 years of Tumbling

by Tim Egan

There's a tremendous amount left to be desired about the game of politics today. Some of those who have the honor of being announced as Honorable because they've been elected to public office have certainly proven to not live up to the honor.

On the other hand, there's a Mister among us in Chicago and Illinois that deserves every honor that can be bestowed upon him... Secretary of State Jesse White.

The United Center on Chicago's Westside played host to the 50th Anniversary of the Jesse White Tumbling Team. It was a swell gala attended by over 650 guests including 43rd Ward resident and Cook County Commissioner Bridget Gainer and our own golden toned Bill Curtis.

Before Mr. White became our most successful, innovative and longest serving Secretary of State he began a tumbling team as a way to keep kids out of SWU, SideWalk University, in 1959.

Mr. White used the lessons he learned from a Hall of Fame athletic career as a professional baseball player and superstar prep basketballer to pass along life's lessons to challenged children on Chicago's near Westside.

Today over 11,000 people can claim their benefits from the leadership of Mr.

White.

"They Call Heroes Mister, The Jesse White Story" was published in 2006 and on the back of the jacket is a memorable and eloquent quote from U.S. Senator Dick Durbin; "Jesse White is almost mythical in terms of his reputation... he teaches the kids from the toughest streets of Chicago to do good things with their lives."

On Wednesday, just a little over 12 hours after attending Secretary White's triumphant event for the Tumblers, I had the chance to hear him speak at a Black History Month luncheon at the Niagara Foundation. Mr. White never fails to give a memorable speech. He knows how to make a point. Whether it's his rapid fire pledge that his Tumblers get high without the help of "roots, herbs or spices" or his remembrance of historic encounters with historic individuals, the man can please a crowd.

He did share a story with the lunch attendees that I had never heard before about his relationship with the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. Both heroes met in Montgomery, Alabama during the height of racial tensions in the South. Mr. White was a student athlete at Alabama State after attending Waller High School (now Lincoln Park H.S.) in Chicago. Rev. King was a



pastor at the
"http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dexter_Avenue_Baptist_Church" \o "Dexter Avenue Baptist Church" Dexter Avenue Baptist Church
"http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montgomery,_Alabama" \o
"Montgomery, Alabama" \o
Montgomery, Alabama. They came together when Rosa Parks defied a ridiculous transportation standard of the time.

There was to be a march in protest of the arrest of Rosa Parks when she refused to sit in the back of the bus and Rev. King had explicit instructions for those who would march, including a young Jesse White. "If you are slapped across the face today," Rev. King told Mr. White, "I want you to turn the other cheek."

"I'm from Chicago," White said, "it doesn't work that way up there."

The man whom the great Chicago Cub Ernie Banks called a "social entrepreneur" has a grand sense of humor.

Mr. White is also a true professional as he heads the largest Secretary of State office in the nation. If you ever have lunch with the man and you say you're not an organ donor over appetizers, you'll be one by dessert. His push for the miraculous and gifts-of-life Donor Program has been unequalled.

On President's Day, those on the email distribution list of a local elected official were subject to an arrogant comparison of that official to President Abraham Lincoln that fueled responses of the absurd.

You won't get email blasts from Mr. White. He doesn't need them. The international acclaim he has created for the Jesse White Tumbling Team is genuine and deserved. His service to our country as a paratrooper in the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division and his decades of service to the people of Illinois are only part of the reason why he's a hero. Even more important to humanity are the efforts he makes everyday to keep at-risk kids away from gangs, drugs and crime.

Mr. White, you're more than a hero – "you da man."

For more information about the Jesse White Tumblers please see: jessewhitetumblingteam.com. To contact Tim Egan, please email 43rdWardUnited@gmail.com



Tim Egan with Jesse White
Secretary of State & Founder of the
Jesse White Tumblers