

## Anthony J. Celebrezze

Tony Celebrezze was born into a large, typically, hard working Italian family. There were many siblings. His father worked as a track labor for the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad in Cleveland. Tony, like most kids of that time, worked at odd jobs to contribute to family finances, — shining shoes and selling newspapers. One of his chores was to walk the railroad tracks and pick up stray pieces of coal to help heat their home.

He worked his way through school at Fenn College and John Carroll as a railroad labor and truck driver - even did a little boxing. After graduation, he went to Ohio Northern University where he earned his LL.B. degree. In 1938 he passed the bar, returned to Cleveland and began the general practice of law. That same year he married my Dad's sister, Anne Marco, a school teacher, remaining married to her until his death. He often said, "Just think how far I could have gone if I had her brains."

Always interested in public service, his political career is unique in that he served in all three branches of government, the legislative, administrative and judicial.

A Democrat, he ran for and was elected to the Ohio State Senate in 1951. He didn't always get along with the party leaders. In 1952 he resigned his Senate seat and, encouraged by many prominent citizens (Governor Lausche and Louis Seltzer editor of the Cleveland Press) he ran for mayor of Cleveland and was elected for a record five two-year terms.

Under Mayor Celebrezze, Cleveland began a massive \$140million urban renewal program — the first such program in the country. It was the first to actively clear slum and blighted areas by acquiring slum property through these of eminent domain, tear down the buildings and sell the property to private individuals for development in accordance with an approved plan. One of the property owners in Erieview filed suit to declare the process unconstitutional. The Supreme Court of the United States reviewed the procedure used by the City of Cleveland and declared it constitutional authorized. This became the national standard.

Uncle Tony did resist having the new Federal Building in Erieview named for him, but it is the Anthony J. Celebrezze Federal Building. The Archive room at Ohio Northern University's Law School in Ada, Ohio is also named for him as is the Cleveland Fire Department fire boat.

In 1961, President Kennedy offered Tony a lifetime federal judgeship. He turned it down in order to run for his fifth term as Mayor. He won easily by more than 72% of the vote. The following year, President Kennedy called Mayor Celebrezze (who was on a fishing trip in Canada at the time) to offer him an appointment to the cabinet position of Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. Tony accepted and was easily approved. After Kennedy's death, he continued in this cabinet position under Lyndon Johnson. The following were attributed to Once Tony.

Two notable acts are rightly attributed to Secretary Celebrezze - The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Social Security Act of 1965. The former was primarily under Kennedy's Administration and the latter identify Medicare and Medicaid. The original Social Security Act of 1925 did not provide any health insurance coverage.

\*\*The Social Security Act of 1965 includes Medicare which is a basic plan affording protection to persons over 65 on social Security against the cost of hospital and related medical care. Medicaid is a public assistance program for medical coverage to persons of all ages that meet certain criteria. These programs came into existence under President Johnson.

\*\*\*The Civil Rights Act of 1964 came into existence while Kennedy was president that outlaws discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin and prohibits unequal application of voter registration requirements, racial segregation in schools, employment and public accommodations. It was originally proposed by resident Kennedy but opposed by filibuster and lapsed forward by Johnson.

As noted, Tony was a humble and caring person. While Secretary, he was provided a chauffeur driven limousine. Tony was a modest unassuming person and didn't like riding alone in the back seat, so got into the front seat to sit next to the driver and talk seat with him. The next morning he received a note from the Secretary of Protocol saying, "the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, does not ride in the front seat with the driver

Tony was the last person to hold the position of Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. , After he left the office, the work was divided and a new cabinet position of Secretary of Health and Human Services was created along with a separate Department of Education.

President Johnson apparently asked Tony if he would be willing to act as his running mate for re-election to the presidency. Tony's comment was, "Love to, but you will have to change the Constitution first." Tony was not born in the United States having been brought from Anzi, Italy, when he was two years old. He hadn't know he wasn't born here until he enlisted in the navy during WWII.

Finally in 1965, he asked President Johnson to accept his resignation. He told him that he could no longer live in Washington and Cleveland on the \$25,000 a year salary of the cabinet position and was afraid he would lose his home. The president told Tony, "You are too honest for Washington. You are the first cabinet secretary to go broke while working for the White House."

Two days later, Johnson appointed Celebrezze to a lifetime seat on the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit in Cincinnati, Ohio. While there he wrote many distinguished opinions including *Beasley vs. U.S.* which provided a standard for "effective assistance of counsel."

He retired from active service in 1980 but continue to serve as senior judge until his death in 1998.

I was visiting him in the hospital the day before he died. He couldn't speak and appeared to be completely unaware of his surroundings. When it was time to leave, his visitors said goodbye and he didn't respond. As I was leaving, I said "I can't be here tomorrow. I have to be in court."

He opened his eyes and said, "Be prepared."