



**96 Years of Legislative Reporting in Ohio**

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### **JAMES A. RHODES, OHIO'S GOVERNOR FOR 16 YEARS, DEAD AT AGE 91**

James A. Rhodes, who served as Ohio's governor during 16 years of the state's best and worst times over three decades, died Sunday at The Ohio State University Medical Center in Columbus. At the age of 91, Mr. Rhodes succumbed to heart failure after being admitted to the hospital last week.

A funeral service is scheduled for 10 a.m. Thursday at the Upper Arlington Lutheran Church. He will be buried in Greenlawn Cemetery in Columbus. His body will lie in state from 7 a.m. to 2. p.m. Wednesday in the Statehouse Rotunda. A private service is scheduled for 2 p.m. Wednesday in the Statehouse Atrium.

Governor Bob Taft will interrupt a trade mission to South America that he undertook over the weekend to return for the funeral.

James Allen Rhodes worked his way out of boyhood poverty in southeast Ohio's hardscrabble coal fields and went on to serve as governor for an unprecedented 16 years. He changed the face of Ohio. He built highways, bridges, universities, vocational schools, airports and hospitals. He traveled the nation and world to bring job-providing industries to the state.

Mr. Rhodes became a millionaire in private business in between his two eight-year stints as governor (1963-1971 and 1975-1983). In the early 1970's, with borrowed money that he later repaid with profits, he became a major stockholder in the then-fledgling Wendy's fast-food chain and watched the stock soar. He joined wealthy business friends to form a company that built Howard Johnson hotels in Chicago, Atlanta, Indianapolis and near Disney World, south of Orlando, Fla.

As a politician, Mr. Rhodes dominated Ohio's Republican Party throughout his years as governor. He helped groom future Governor George V. Voinovich by making him his lieutenant governor running mate in 1978. He rubbed shoulders with Presidents Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan and George Bush. They sought and usually heeded his advice in their Ohio campaigns.

He lived to see a statue of himself erected on the Statehouse lawn. It wasn't bad, commented the smiling, six-foot governor upon its unveiling, "considering what they had to work with." Mr. Rhodes' solitary statue was the only one at the Statehouse of an Ohio governor who did not go on to be president.

Much has been written about Mr. Rhodes, a whirling dervish of a governor with incredible energy who was a rare breed of Republican. He was an activist and innovator but most of all a populist. He loved giving the public what it wanted and more often than not, knew what it was. For that reason, he often fought with GOP conservatives. When he lost their support on issues, he compensated by building a coalition composed of conservative of Democrats and independents.

State Senator and former Rep. Patrick Sweeney of Cleveland - long before he became the Democratic leader of the Ohio House, shed some light on how Mr. Rhodes developed support outside the Republican Party. When Mr. Rhodes returned for a third term, after a four-year absence, Mr. Sweeney said he looked forward to having him back in the governor's office. "I love the guy. If the grass needs cut along the highways in my district. all I do is call. It gets done the next day."

Mr. Rhodes' legacy may be marred in the eyes of some by a fateful day in 1970 when he ordered National Guard troops to the Kent State University to quell an anti-Vietnam War riot. Four students were killed and nine wounded by Guard gunfire. Mr. Rhodes, although described by aides as remorseful, refused to the end to discuss the tragedy publicly. He was questioned for a court deposition but his responses, apparently on the advice of attorneys anticipating lawsuits, were vague.

If Kent State hurt Mr. Rhodes politically, there were was no convincing evidence of it. He was elected governor twice after the tragedy, in 1974 and 1978. His margins were less than before but there were other factors, including a recession that numbed Ohio and restricted Mr. Rhodes' economic agenda.

In 1975, voters defeated a massive, \$4.5 billion bond package he proposed to finance myriad projects across the state, despite his claim it would boost the economy. Parts of the package resurfaced in later capital improvements bills and became reality. The new cancer hospital at The Ohio State University is an example, and Cleveland got a downtown sports complex that Mr. Rhodes envisioned in 1975.

The late John M. McElroy, who was Mr. Rhodes' executive assistant during the latter's two terms always insisted that his boss was a visionary, with an ability to foresee future economic problems of the state and nation. Mr. McElroy pointed to Ohio's national leadership in the area of vocational education, in which the governor provided alternatives to students not equipped or desirous of a college education. He was a pioneer in the use of once-frowned-upon bond issue financing as a hedge against inflation, Mr. McElroy said.

**The campaigner:** Mr. Rhodes was a masterful campaigner who loved to meet voters in stores, shops, factories and other settings where he would liked to show up unannounced. People usually would recognize him but were surprised to find a governor tugging at their elbow in places like the market or barber shop. He loved the spotlight and, in his retirement years, was kept in the "loop" by Statehouse reporters who would call him for an opinion on issues of the day. One of his last political appearances came in early October 1998 when he hosted a fundraiser for Republican state Rep. William Schuck of Columbus. He imparted a few observations to a veteran reporter who stopped by the event and, a few days later, called the reporter at home to "strengthen" his previous comments.

His fundamental strength during a campaign was his ability to catnap between appearances. Whether on a bus or plane - he seemed at home in any environment - from bowling alley to corporate boardroom. Once, during a campaign appearance in a northern Ohio farming community, Mr. Rhodes joked with the small gathering that a farmer, when asked what he would do with a \$1 million lottery prize, replied that he would continue farming until all the money was gone. He then proceeded to outline a plan to assist Ohio's farm community.

He could cut hair. He liked to drop into a busy shop, ask the barber for the clippers and work on a surprised customer's hair for a few minutes. He would tell a joke or story, sometimes an account of old-time, rough and tumble politics in southern Ohio and some of the characters it spawned during his childhood. He often spun tales about a one-armed judge in Pike County who couldn't seem to stay out of trouble.

In his first two campaigns for governor - before television advertising all but replaced the stump - Mr. Rhodes traveled the state in a bus, usually loaded with aides and reporters who were given a rough outline of an itinerary. However, he often would change it on a moment's notice. He would stop along the way to join boys shooting baskets in school yards. He shots usually went in, leaving the boys wide-eyed. He would often order a campaign bus stopped, quickly alight, disappear into a nearby market, and reappear loaded down with a bag of groceries, usually bread, baloney, chips and soft drinks. However, anyone wanting a spirituous libation was left to his own devices.

In 1966, while running for a second term, the bus pulled onto the grounds of the Hardin County Fair in Kenton. Mr. Rhodes spotted a Democratic campaign booth and headed directly for it. He spent almost 30 minutes talking to the Democratic workers about farming and that year's corn crop, without mentioning the election. They were all smiles as he shook their hands and walked away.

Mr. Rhodes liked to campaign at county fairs as well as the Ohio State Fair, where he once slept in a barn to publicize its opening. He appeared to genuinely like the State Fair and all its trappings. But he once said that he learned its value as a campaign forum from former Democratic Governor Frank Lausche, who almost lived there when it was in session. Mr. Rhodes had ignored the State Fair in 1954, when Mr. Lausche defeated him for governor. "I never forgot it. Frank Lausche gave me my Ph.D.," Mr. Rhodes said.

In his 1974 and 1978 campaigns, Mr. Rhodes had to yield to progress and the instant communications of television to match the efforts of Democrats who felt they saw a chink in his armor for the first time since the GOP landslide of 1966. Mr. Rhodes began traveling the state in a small plane, and found himself portrayed in slick television commercials.

He liked the TV but missed seeing people, he said. Mr. Rhodes told reporters that by seeing voters eye-to-eye, he could tell how his campaign was going. "You just get a feeling (from them)," he said. He survived a strong challenge in 1978 by Richard Celeste, who had to wait four years before he would enter the governor's office.

But in 1986, when he sought to return to the governor's office for a fifth term, Mr. Rhodes lost to Mr. Celeste, who had won in 1982. Mr. Rhodes ran an unusually disjointed campaign. He got out the old campaign bus and hit the road, strangely for southern Ohio, where his support had always been the strongest.

He went to Jackson and made a speech at the county fairgrounds, near his birthplace. He stopped in Gallipolis for a similar event. He had dinner with Bob Evans at the latter's restaurant in Rio Grande, on the original Bob Evans farm. Waiters put several tables together to make room for a dozen or more reporters accompanying Mr. Rhodes. He sat with Mr. Evans, whose presence guaranteed extraordinary attention and service.

Mr. Rhodes, riding hills where he hunted, fished and trapped as a boy, was relaxed in the rear of his rented, \$300,000 bus on the way home. A reporter asked why, in a program that he created to eliminate traffic bottlenecks, a bypass never was built at Jackson, where motorists weaved back and forth to cross the same railroad four times and encountered huge, vehicle-swallowing potholes.

He had ducked the question before. He smiled. He said businesses on U.S. 35 sold gas, food and other things to truckers and motorists passing through their town. "They didn't want it," he said of the bypass that eventually was built anyway. It rained much of the day. Crowds were small.

It became evident that the campaign had lost its magic. Mr. Rhodes took it to the friendly confines of southern Ohio again a few days later, rather than reaching out to other areas of the state as he had in the past. Again, the excitement was missing. The bus driver was stopped and cited for speeding on the way home.

**The trail to the top:** The governor probably was the best known Ohioan of his generation, but he was also a private man and a study in contradictions. He was modestly educated - a high school diploma and less than a year of college. He felt insecure in the upper ranks of GOP society, friends said. But he could bark orders like a drill sergeant. He was a hustler and competitor who could play hardball politics but relished horse trading and deal making.

While as a boy he lived with a widowed mother and two sisters in a house that he said had been a "chicken coop," and he later mixed with millionaires while poverty in Ohio, which he knew so well, increased on his watch.

Mr. Rhodes was a "trickle down" theorist who claimed everyone thrives when businesses do. The term "jobs and progress" became a theme. "Profit is not a dirty word in Ohio," was another, as he helped bring automotive and other industries to the state, such as the Honda facilities in Marysville and Anna and the sprawling Ford plant in Batavia, near Cincinnati.

His first two terms as governor were his best. Mr. Rhodes expanded higher and vocational education, helped complete the interstate highway system, sold bond issues that financed parks, new and renovated highway, airports and medical schools, among others things. He said vocational education would produce graduates who would have a diploma in one hand and a job in another.

Mr. Rhodes' second eight years as chief executive were less dramatic. Just as a robust national economy had helped fuel his ambitious programs of the 1960's, a national recession devastated his plans for the late 1970's. He became more of a crisis manager. Budget deficits brought on a rash of nationally embarrassing school closings. The steel industry virtually collapsed. Unemployment skyrocketed. The phrase "when the nation sneezes, Ohio catches cold" was heard in reference to Ohio's economy which was heavily dependent on manufacturing and consumer spending.

Even the weather became a gubernatorial concern. The big blizzard of January 1978 crippled the state. Mr. Rhodes set up a crisis center in the Statehouse and held a prayer service in the rotunda seeking divine relief from the "killer blizzard, looking for victims." Ohio and Jim Rhodes survived. He was elected to a fourth term later that year.

Adversity was nothing new. His family moved when he was a teen-ager from Jackson in southeast Ohio to Springfield where he went to high school. He later wound up as a struggling student at The Ohio State University. Family hardship forced him to drop out after less than a year.

But according to published accounts, Grant Ward, a state senator, Columbus broadcaster and Jackson native who knew and liked Mr. Rhodes, intervened. Mr. Ward became a key figure in the future of the ragged youngster he had seen sell craw dads for a nickel a dozen, shine shoes, sweep school houses and hustle every way he could to help support his family after the death of Mr. Rhodes' father in 1918.

Mr. Ward helped the future governor open a campus restaurant, "Jim's Place," and encouraged him to enter politics. Mr. Rhodes was elected GOP ward committeeman in 1934. He then won a seat on the Columbus Board of Education and went on to become city auditor.

In 1943, Mr. Rhodes, at 34, became mayor of Columbus. Later, he would become state auditor and in a position to run for governor, a goal he said he set for himself as a boy.

Mr. Rhodes was elected to his first, four-year term as governor in 1962 when he unseated Governor Michael V. DiSalle after the Democrat had served a single term. He hammered Mr. DiSalle for having raised taxes due to what Mr. Rhodes claimed was a need to make up for government mismanagement.

In 1966, Democrats nominated state Senator Frazier Reams of Toledo, a wealthy broadcast executive with few credentials as a public servant, to run for governor. Mr. Rhodes won the election by 700,000 votes.

In 1970, Mr. Rhodes sought the GOP nomination for U.S. Senate but lost to Robert Taft Jr., father of Secretary of State Bob Taft. Mr. Rhodes was ineligible to run for a third term as governor that year due to a constitutional ban on more than two consecutive terms.

Mr. Rhodes returned as governor in 1975, defeating Democrat John J. Gilligan by less than one vote a precinct after having gone to bed believing he had lost. During the campaign, Mr. Rhodes accused Mr. Gilligan of hiding a small state revenue surplus and called his rival "Governor Moonbeam" after Mr. Gilligan told reporters at a press conference that he had seen what appeared to be a UFO while returning to Ohio from a trip to Michigan, a statement that made his attending staff blanche.

He defeated Lt. Gov. Richard Celeste in 1978 by about 50,000 votes among more than three million cast.

The ban against more than two consecutive terms forced Mr. Rhodes into temporary retirement again in 1982, when Mr. Celeste became governor. Then came 1986 and the disastrous attempt for a fifth term, at age 77.

Mr. Rhodes had little to say about his loss to Mr. Celeste, other than "the people have spoken," a phrase he had used in the past in response to voter setbacks. From 1986 on, he would devote his time to his Columbus consultant and development firm, James A. Rhodes & Associates (later the James A. Rhodes Research & Development Co), which he founded in 1971.

His company developed an air-cleaning and recirculation system which was used in both for private homes and commercial buildings. He obtained a patent and installed one in his home. He claimed it removed virtually 100% of pollutants and replaced the air throughout the two-story home every few minutes. The former governor sought to market it in California and other states but found the competition strong because other similar systems were less expensive to operate than his more efficient system. Mr. Rhodes' system had its first commercial application when it was installed in the new, 10,600-square-foot building of the Ohio Office of The American Lung Association when it opened in January 1996.

Mr. Rhodes continued to live in the family's Upper Arlington home after his wife, Helen, died in 1987. He piddled in a garden out back and served refreshments to neighborhood children from a stand he set up just inside his garage. He grew tomatoes, and put a tiny American flags on top of each stake.

He and Mrs. Rhodes declined to live in the Governor's Residence during his last eight years in office. Mrs. Rhodes, who devoted almost all her time to the family, was quoted as saying the official residence was drafty and impersonal.

Mr. Rhodes, who often professed his love for his wife publicly, showed no outward grief as he greeted callers at the funeral home in Upper Arlington. Standing near the closed coffin, he thanked a reporter who offered condolences. "Everyone has to go sometime," he said and quickly changed the subject.

The former governor went to his office in downtown Columbus almost daily after returning to private life, until he decided in 1995 to work out of his home. In the years after his last administration, he hired people who had worked for him as governor. They included Pauline Yee, a secretary, and James Duerk, who served as development director in the last Rhodes Administration. He also hired his old Highway Patrol body guard to handle security. He was sensitive to security. His driver took him to and from work on different routes every day to avoid establishing a predictable pattern.

After leaving office, Mr. Rhodes made a point of helping to open the Ohio State Fair. It made no difference if a Republican or Democrat held the governor's office, Mr. Rhodes would appear to extoll the virtues of the fair which gave families an inexpensive form of entertainment with educational value for all age groups. He would tour the fairgrounds in a golf cart, waving to those who recognized him, speaking with those who wanted to talk. In the 1990's, a reporter attending a pre-opening event for the fair was hailed by Mr. Rhodes, who asked the reporter to accompany him to Scioto Downs, a horse racing track on the southern edge of Columbus, where he would be presenting a trophy. "It'll take thirty minutes," Mr. Rhodes said of the trip which certainly would have taken at least two hours in an attempt to cajole the reporter to go with him.

In May 1999, Mr. Rhodes fell at home, was taken to a hospital, treated for a broken collarbone and released two hours later. Several years previous, he tripped on a telephone wire in his bedroom, breaking a bone in his leg. The injury hobbled him in recent years. In the spring of 1995, Mr. Rhodes suffered what was called a mild stroke which left his face slightly drawn. He began to withdraw from public appearances, but arrived at the opening of the 1995 Ohio State Fair. When asked why he was using a walker, he replied that an old athletic injury had flared up and was causing a minor problem. Ever the politician, Mr. Rhodes even then would not admit to a limitation that would give his political adversaries one iota of an advantage. After a period of withdrawal, the governor became active again, routinely attending political events. In 1999, he helped organize a town meeting in Plain City to demand the state get busy constructing a bypass after he got stuck in a traffic jam on his way to his favorite restaurant.

Mr. Rhodes always seemed proud of his health but he followed his own rules. He could nap almost at will, which was how he wore down younger aides and reporters who went along on those 18-hour campaign days. He munched on raw vegetables, fruit and peanuts, insisting that those around him also partake. Mr. Duerk was spotted once eating a roast beef sandwich in a nearby restaurant. "I had to slip out today. I'm tired of raw cabbage," he confided.

The governor didn't believe in jogging. "That's why all these people are having heart attacks," he observed. He added that, "Every time I see one of these guys (joggers), I want to take a nap."

Although he was personable and fun to be around, people who worked for him said he was a tough task master as governor. In an interview, Mr. Rhodes said that being governor is a hard job. "The governor sets the pace. If I'm here at 7:30, everybody's here at 7:30. If I'm here at 8, 8. If I don't work, nobody works."

In 1989, on his 80th birthday, Senate President Stanley Aronoff (R-Cincinnati) and then-House Speaker Vern Riffe (D-Wheelersburg) joined in a tribute. They directed the publication of a book outlining Mr. Rhodes' accomplishments and gave copies to several hundred people who attended a party honoring Mr. Rhodes.

Earlier in the day, state officials and friends accompanied Mr. Rhodes to his Jackson County birthplace, a tiny frame house in Coalton. They then drove to nearby Jackson, the county seat, for a community tribute outside Michael's, an ice cream and candy store that Mr. Rhodes haunted as a youngster. Flags flew, bands played and schools let out for the event. Glowing tributes came from Mr. Riffe and others under a sunny September sky.

Mr. Rhodes, accompanied by his grandchildren and other family members, shook hands until the crowd of several hundred began to drift away. "I get my strength from these hills, and these people," he said.

In October 1997, an 88-year old Mr. Rhodes was honored during a 20-year celebration of Honda's decision to site a motorcycle manufacturing plant in Marysville, a small, then-plains like city west of Columbus. Honda's decision capped months of quiet negotiations between company officials and Mr. Rhodes and his representatives.

Mr. Rhodes toured the manufacturing facility which has been expanded to include an auto manufacturing facility, providing 6,500 jobs and steady employment to generations of Ohioans. At each point during the tour, Mr. Rhodes, who rode in a golf cart, was applauded by plant workers and officials. Mr. Rhodes helped to plant a commemorative tree outside the facility's entrance while a few of the facility's original workers and executives stood by.

At the end of his tour, Mr. Rhodes spoke informally to the three reporters who had covered Mr. Rhodes in 1977 and were invited to attend the ceremony. Among other topics, Mr. Rhodes allowed as how he may have told a stretch or two during his political career to advance a cause in which he believed. He also spoke of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt as a major influence in his life, teaching him a lesson that first and foremost, Americans wanted good jobs that would allow them to realize at least a part of the American dream. He spoke of John L. Lewis, who organized the nation's mineworkers, as a man who contributed much to the American society. The son of a mineworker, Mr. Rhodes said it was Mr. Lewis who helped to bring free public education to poor, rural areas which produced, among others, himself. Speaking to a topic of the day, Mr. Rhodes predicted that voters, if asked, would reject any ballot issue seeking to raise the sales tax to fund education; the sales tax increase was being debated by lawmakers as a way to respond to a 1997 Ohio Supreme Court decision that threw out the current education funding system. The issue made it to the May 1998 and, as Mr. Rhodes predicted, was thumped - badly - by an 80%-20% margin.

**The issues & programs:** Mr. Rhodes took the oath of office for the first time in January 1963 with Ohio's economy strong. With friendly Republicans in control of the General Assembly, he immediately set out to keep promises he made in the campaign. He appointed a "Little Hoover Commission" to recommend ways to streamline government and save money.

Dozens of the recommendations later were implemented by the commission, headed by Finance Director Richard Krabach. Several departments were eliminated, consolidated or scaled down. Mr. Rhodes later would permit Mr. Krabach, at the request of then-Governor Ronald Reagan, to oversee a similar reorganization in California.

Mr. Rhodes created the nine-member Ohio Board of Regents during his first term to oversee higher education in Ohio and allocate state funds. The move was designed to end squabbling among the universities that had become political and resulted in inequities. The university presidents went along reluctantly. Ohio's regents legislation would be copied by other states.

The new governor launched an expansion of higher education to keep a promise of putting a higher education institution within 30 miles of every student in the state. He created Cleveland State University and Wright State University in Dayton. Municipal universities in Youngstown, Akron, Toledo and Cincinnati became state-affiliated. The system now included 13 central campuses and eventually, 24 branch campuses.

He eliminated the existing Department of Industrial and Economic Development and replaced it with a beefed-up Department of Economic and Community Development with a mission to keep and expand existing jobs while marketing Ohio as a state where profits could be made using an available skilled work force.

Mr. Rhodes brought business leaders together to form "Rhodes Raiders" and the group undertook the first of what would be a long series of trade missions to other states and foreign countries. There were notable successes, such as the Japanese-owned Honda plant in Marysville, but the results never were fully documented. The U.S. Labor Department reported that employment in Ohio grew to 4.2 million in 1970 from 3.3 million in 1960. At the same time, the population increased from 9.7 million to 10.7 million.

The former Columbus mayor brought to the governor's office a plan that he had used in Columbus to build long-range capital improvements immediately and pay them off while they were being used. Ohio had issued bonds to finance highways before but there had been a reluctance to borrow for other purposes due to concerns about long-range debt.

Mr. Rhodes pointed out that revenue bonds could be retired with use fees and that money is saved because long delays in construction boost costs due to inflation. His arguments prevailed. The state issued about \$2 billion in bonds during his first eight years in office.

Voters authorized the use of general obligation bonds to finance improvements at correctional institutions, correctional facilities state-supported colleges and universities and state buildings. They adopted Article VIII, Section 2 of the Ohio Constitution to permit both general obligation bonds and revenue bonds. Revenue bonds would be used for higher education, state government, parks, recreation and highways within these entities. General obligation bonds were limited to projects that create jobs and enhance economic development.

Mr. Rhodes and the Legislature created new or empowered existing agencies to manage the pay-as-you-use system and sign off on projects. They included the Sinking Fund Commission, the Ohio Financing Authority, Ohio Public Facilities Commission, Ohio Air Quality Development Board and the Ohio Water Development Authority.

Mr. Rhodes was to use the system to dot the Ohio landscape with new campuses, parks, airports and other facilities. Many new buildings on campuses bear his name. The University of Akron and the University of Cincinnati both have a Rhodes Hall. Cleveland State University has a Rhodes Tower. A 41-story state office building in downtown Columbus, also is named the Rhodes Tower. Many other edifices bear his name.

During the period from 1962-1982, encompassing the Rhodes years, the number of state parks in Ohio increased to 71 from 49. The number of lodges increased to seven from one and the number of rooms from 32 to 589. There were 2,100 camp sites in 1962, compared with 9,285 in 1982.

When Mr. Rhodes first became governor, only one segment of the interstate highway system, I-71 between Columbus and Medina, had been completed. The system had been earmarked to include 1,524 miles in Ohio. By 1982, all but a few urban extensions had been completed, including 1,390 miles by the end of Mr. Rhodes' second term in 1970. The cost was placed at \$3.3 billion, about half of which was bond money.

Mr. Rhodes, in his 1962 campaign, promised to put an airport in each of the 88 counties to enhance and even out industrial development. He built or improved 93 airports in 83. The others said they didn't need them.

He signed Ohio's first Fair Housing Law and another bill that let the state assist non-public schools for the first time. He made bold proposals that included a bridge across Lake Erie to facilitate trade with Canada, and had a study done. He also proposed sports arenas in larger cities and ports on the Ohio River as part of a bond package submitted to voters in 1975. However, voters, perhaps due to a sliding economy, said no.

In contrast to 1962, Mr. Rhodes began his second eight years with the state headed into a recession that would force Ohioans and the state to tighten their financial belts. The Legislature also had come under total Democratic control.

The House and Senate refused to put his \$4.5 billion bond issue package on the state ballot. Mr. Rhodes and the Republican Party circulated petitions to get it on the ballot. In a speech to a joint session, he railed at the Democrats. "You've done nothing (to help the economy)," he charged.

As the economy continued its slide, Mr. Rhodes requested permission to address another joint session. The Democratic leadership refused. Mr. Rhodes made his speech in the Statehouse Rotunda.

But soon, the governor and legislature were confronted by events that required their cooperation. Budget deficits loomed. Schools closed for lack of funding. The Legislature passed a bill outlawing school closings and requiring instead that they borrow from future revenues to stay open.

After a series of closed meetings, the governor, Speaker Riffe and Senate President Oliver Ocasek (D-Akron) announced an agreement on a plan to increase state aid to schools.

The animosity had cooled, but the problems kept coming.

It became clear Mr. Rhodes would spend his remaining time in office as a crisis manager. Instead of spreading bricks and mortar, like before, it would be a matter of keeping the state afloat. It would be tough.

He campaigned each time he ran for governor on a promise of no new taxes. In 1982, he said he was forced to sign a temporary increase in taxes to eliminate a budget deficit. The increase later was made permanent, after he left office. Mr. Rhodes admitted he broke a campaign promise but said he had no choice.

The Constitution required him to keep the budget in balance, he pointed out. Other taxes had increased under Mr. Rhodes' stewardship. The sales tax had gone up a penny in 1967. There also were increases in the alcoholic beverage and gasoline taxes under Mr. Rhodes.

**The man's roots:** Mr. Rhodes was born in Coalton Sept. 13, 1909, the third of five children of James and Susan Howe Rhodes, who both were of Welsh ancestry. A sister and one brother, who was younger than Mr. Rhodes, both died in childhood. Two older sisters, Garnet and Lauretta, later married and made homes in Columbus. The Rhodes were Methodists and Republicans.

Based on published accounts of Mr. Rhodes' early life, the family moved to Jason, Ind. when the coal industry in Jackson County fell on hard times. The elder Mr. Rhodes, who had been a mine superintendent, found work at an Indiana mine and moved his family there when the future governor was four years old. Five years later, the elder Mr. Rhodes died during an influenza epidemic. Mrs. Rhodes moved back to Jackson County and opened a restaurant. But it failed and the family struggled to survive.

About 1923, after Mrs. Rhodes had chased away public assistance case workers who threatened to put her children into a county home, Mrs. Rhodes moved to Springfield. Mr. Rhodes was 15 at the time. He attended and graduated from Springfield High School and was described as a good athlete. However, he quit school in 1926 but returned in 1928 to complete his studies.

The Akron *Beacon Journal*, in a 1978 biography, found a 1927 city director that listed Mr. Rhodes as manager of a grocery store. Sister Garnet was a nurse and Lauretta, a clerk and bookkeeper for the Springfield *Daily News*. After high school, Mr. Rhodes enrolled at The Ohio State University on a basketball scholarship but dropped out after less than a year to help support his mother. He ran a popular student hangout called "Jim's Place." He and his mother lived upstairs.

By the early 1930's, Mr. Rhodes, who had dabbled in campus area politics, decided there was a better life in politics than in the restaurant business. He was elected as a ward committeeman in 1934, the first of 19 elections he would run in over a career that spanned 52 years. He lost only four, all of them statewide races.

In 1941, Mr. Rhodes married Helen Rawlins, described by him as his childhood sweetheart. The new Mrs. Rhodes had grown up in Jackson County. Their three daughters were born in the 1940's. Suzanne married Richard Moore, a former mayor of Upper Arlington. Sandra, wife of Dr. John Jacob of Upper Arlington, died in early 1996 after a lingering illness. The third daughter, Sharon, is Mrs. William Markham of Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

**Disappointments:** Mr. Rhodes appeared to take disappointments in stride. On those rare occasions where he lost, he would say things like, "The people have spoken." He also said that he learned more from losing than winning.

He found the going easy at first, in the 1940's and 1950's, winning his first six elections. Then his string was broken in 1951, apparently because he reached too far too soon. Then in his third term as mayor, he ran against State Treasurer Don Ebright - the party endorsed candidate - for the GOP nomination for governor. Mr. Rhodes lost 2-1. But a year later, he bounced back, winning his first terms as state auditor.

In 1954, Mr. Rhodes won the Republican nomination for governor but was defeated in the General Election by Mr. Lausche, who in all served five, two-year terms as governor. Mr. Lausche's longevity record was broken by Mr. Rhodes midway through the latter's third, four-year term. (Gubernatorial terms were increased to four years in 1958.)

Mr. Rhodes was state auditor for 10 years before he saw another opening in his long effort to become governor. Mr. DiSalle had been a socially conscious governor seemingly obsessed with the issue of capital punishment, which he opposed. Mr. DiSalle had written a book purporting to show that capital punishment was wrong.

Mr. Rhodes said he believed the people were deeply divided on the subject and were more interested in economic issues. He campaigned on promises of jobs and no new taxes, and won the state's highest office with 59% of the vote.

In 1970, his loss in the GOP U.S. Senate primary to Mr. Taft, the late father of Secretary of State Robert Taft II, may have ended any hopes Mr. Rhodes may have had for the White House. He denied aspirations for the presidency but his attempt to enter the Washington power structure belied his assertion.

His defeat by Mr. Taft, coming a day after Kent State but not attributable to the tragedy, may have stemmed in part to a highly-publicized, influence-peddling scandal in the Republican state treasurer's office. Mr. Taft, not a part of the Columbus establishment, went on to win the Senate seat but Republicans in Columbus suffered. Democrats won most of the statewide races after an 18-year drought.

Mr. Rhodes was not directly linked to the so-called Crofters' scandal but he had received a comparatively small contribution from Crofters, a so-called money finding company which was accused of trying to bribe state officials for favors.

At the time, the Legislature had passed a law allowing the state for the first time to invest in short-term notes, at higher interest rates, and Crofters had clients seeking to borrow. Mr. Rhodes apparently sensed something was wrong and gave the campaign contribution back.

**How to make a million:** While out of office, from 1971-1975, Mr. Rhodes launched a series of private business ventures that would make him a millionaire. He borrowed \$495,000 from Cleveland businessman H.C. Shott to buy stock in Wendy's. The stock had doubled in value by 1977 and the loan had been repaid.

Wendy's stock continued to go up, from about \$3 a share initially to more than \$35. At some point, Mr. Rhodes sold his shares but he never said when. His investment may never have been disclosed except for the listing of Mr. Rhodes' \$495,000 loan in documents involving Mr. Shott's estate when he died in 1977.

Meanwhile, Mr. Rhodes had joined Bellefontaine businessman Don Hilliker and others to form H&R Development Co., which built and franchised five hotels in four U.S. cities.

Mr. Rhodes listed his net worth in 1970 as \$65,000. A few years later, he bought his home in Upper Arlington for \$175,000 and a high-rise condominium in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. on Gault Ocean Drive, referred to locally as "Millionaire's Row," for an undisclosed price. In early 1999, Mr. Rhodes, in declining health, sold his Upper Arlington home for a reported \$975,000 and moved into an upscale condominium facility in Upper Arlington where assisted living resources were available. The family that bought his home wanted the lot but not the house so it was turned over to the local fire department which burned it down as part of a training exercise.

**Politics and other things, as seen by Mr. Rhodes:** Here are some memorable quotes from the late Gov. James A. Rhodes:

On political party platforms: **"Platforms are something you run from, not on."** Republican National Convention, New Orleans, 1988.

On jogging: **"Every time I see one of those guys, I want to lie down and take a nap."** Statehouse news conference, 1982.

On how to divert attention from controversial subjects: **"When there's flies in the kitchen, put manure in the living room."**

On being asked if he would be at event in Columbus featuring Richard Nixon during the former president's post-Watergate rehabilitation period: **"I have to be home to pay the paperboy."** Columbus, impromptu chat with reporters, 1982.

On Democratic challenger Richard Celeste's campaign slogan in 1978, "Jim Rhodes, pack you bags:" **"I'm not going to pack my suitcase."** News conference in Columbus, 1978.

On his reaction in viewing the Great Wall of China on a 1979 trade mission: **"If they really wanted to make some money, they'd build a tram up there and charge \$5 apiece."** The Great Wall, 1979.

On how he felt on his 80th birthday about his unprecedented 16 years as governor, while visiting the tiny frame house in Jackson County where he was born: **"Very lucky."** Coalton, Ohio, September, 1980.

On being asked, after becoming a millionaire by making investments with borrowed money in Wendy's hamburgers and other enterprises: **"The best way to get rich is to use other people's money."** Akron *Beacon Journal*, 1983.

On being asked to comment on the death of Bob Miller, who worked as an Ohio Statehouse newsman for 35 years for the Associated Press and Gongwer News Service: **"I can say that there was no finer gentleman to represent the newspaper industry at the Statehouse than Bob Miller. He was a good guy. We're not talking about some stray reporter just looking for dirt. He dealt with the facts and put them in order."**

**Note:** This report was written and continually updated for Gongwer News Service by Robert 'Bob' Miller prior to his death on April 4, 2000. Mr. Miller covered 12 of Mr. Rhodes' 16 years in office as governor. This report reflects only minor editing changes and the addition of information subsequent to Mr. Miller's death.

**Governor James A. Rhodes' elections record:** Mr. Rhodes was the consummate political creature. Politics got in his blood early in life and never really left him. The record of his defeats and triumphs is as follows:

- 1934: Elected ward committeeman in Columbus (age 25).
- 1936: Re-elected ward committeeman.
- 1938: Elected Columbus School Board (age 29).
- 1939: Elected Columbus City Auditor.
- 1941: Re-elected Columbus City Auditor.
- 1943: Elected Mayor of Columbus (age 33).
- 1947: Re-elected Mayor of Columbus.
- 1950: Defeated of for governor in GOP Primary.
- 1951: Re-elected Mayor of Columbus.
- 1952: Elected Auditor of Ohio (age 42).
- 1954: Defeated as GOP candidate for governor.
- 1956: Elected Auditor of Ohio (age 46).
- 1960: Re-elected Auditor of Ohio.
- 1962: Elected Governor of Ohio (Age 52).
- 1966: Re-elected Governor of Ohio.
- 1970: Defeated in GOP primary for U.S. Senate.
- 1974: Elected Governor of Ohio (age 61).
- 1978: Re-elected Governor of Ohio.
- 1986: Defeated as GOP candidate for Governor (age 77).
- March 4, 2001: Dies at The Ohio State University Medical Center in Columbus (age 91).

*(Reported by Bob Miller, Gongwer News Service, Inc. Gongwer staff contributed to this report)*

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