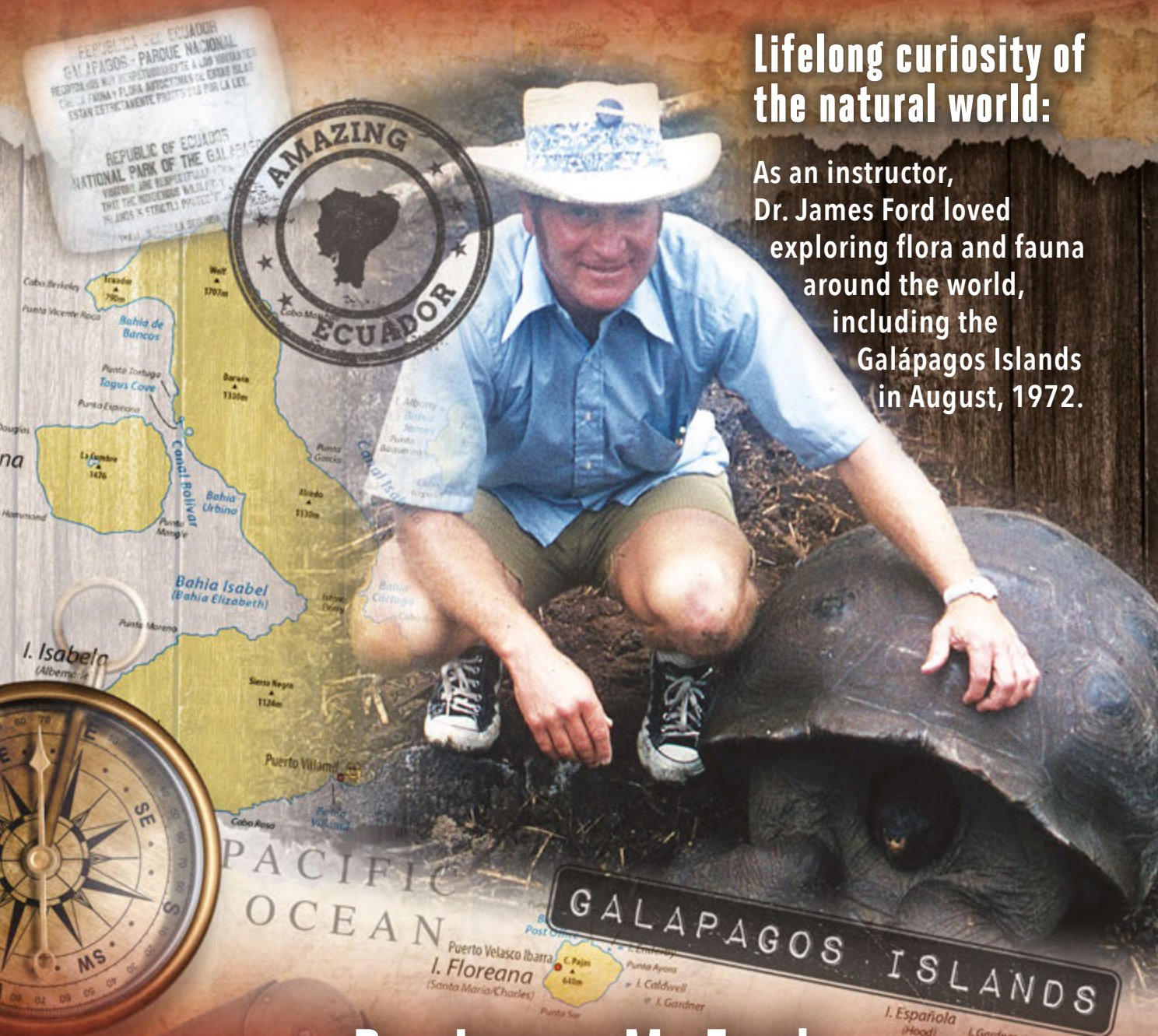


CURRENTS

THE SKAGIT VALLEY COLLEGE PREMIER MAGAZINE • SPECIAL EDITION, JULY 2017

**Lifelong curiosity of
the natural world:**

As an instructor,
Dr. James Ford loved
exploring flora and fauna
around the world,
including the
Galápagos Islands
in August, 1972.



Dr. James M. Ford

Honoring his legacy in higher education.

.....
Focused on Excellence: Access • Achievement • Community



Throughout six decades of dedication to Skagit Valley College and a complete lifetime of leadership, inspiration, and advocacy, Dr. James Ford demonstrated a deep commitment to higher education that inspires all of us to reach higher. We are saddened by his passing in May, yet we know Jim's legacy lives on and will continue to touch our lives — and the greater community — forever.

I first met Jim in 1977 when I was a young student at SVC. When I returned in 1983 as a graduate intern, he was kind enough to take me under his wing, showing me the inner workings of the College. I am grateful that he always remained my mentor, role model, and friend.

Those who knew Jim will also recall his deep passion for writing. Among his many thoughts, he wrote this poignant inspiration in 1989: "I have chosen to stay at SVC throughout most of my professional career, but I believe that everyone has his own SVC in his life."

We are proud to share this special edition of Currents with you as we honor his transformative leadership of the College, the Foundation, and our local community.

On behalf of the SVC Board of Trustees, SVC Foundation Board of Governors, faculty, staff, and students, thank you for joining us in honoring Jim's commitment to opening the doors of higher education to all.

Sincerely,

Dr. Thomas A. Keegan
President

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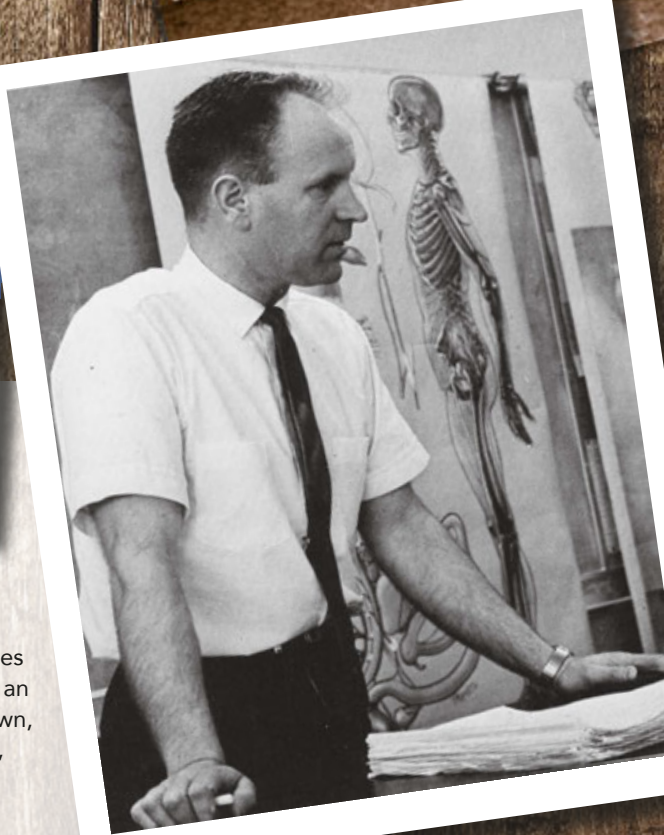
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The Early Years

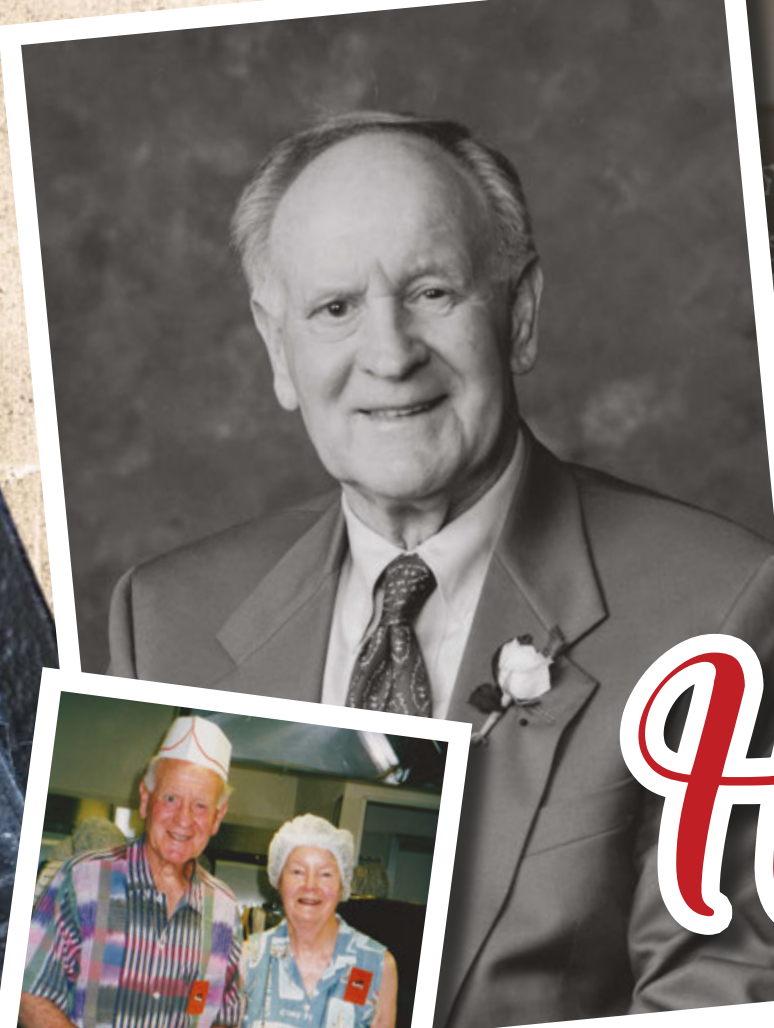


When George Hodson hired Jim Ford in 1954, it was expected that he might need to wear a few different hats. Skagit Valley Junior College had only 160 students at that time and Jim was the ninth full-time faculty member to come on board. So, Jim's duties included coordinating night school, teaching biology and algebra, coaching track and baseball, and even chaperoning student dances. It was a variety of responsibilities, which he enjoyed, but Jim's love was in the classroom, sharing his knowledge about flora and fauna with his students. As a noted expert in the field, several publishing companies approached him about writing a biology textbook. So, Jim teamed up with his long-time colleague and friend, Dr. Jim Monroe, and together, the duo co-authored three editions of their textbook, *Living Systems*.

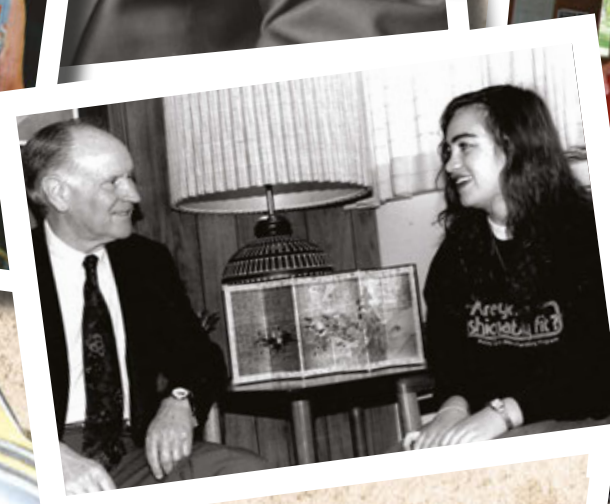
Most often, teaching took place in the classroom or the lab, however Jim also enjoyed learning experiences in the field. Whether it was an outdoor excursion on his own, or a field trip with students, his goal was to explore the natural world first-hand. Memorable trips included exploring the Galápagos Islands and the Sea of Cortez. With each step in the desert sun, or views from majestic vistas, these experiences created opportunities to bring back new knowledge to the classroom.

Jim Ford's commitment to students, and the many hats that he wore in the early days of this College, are unparalleled and appreciated.





Honoring



Keeping track of time with his SVC watch!

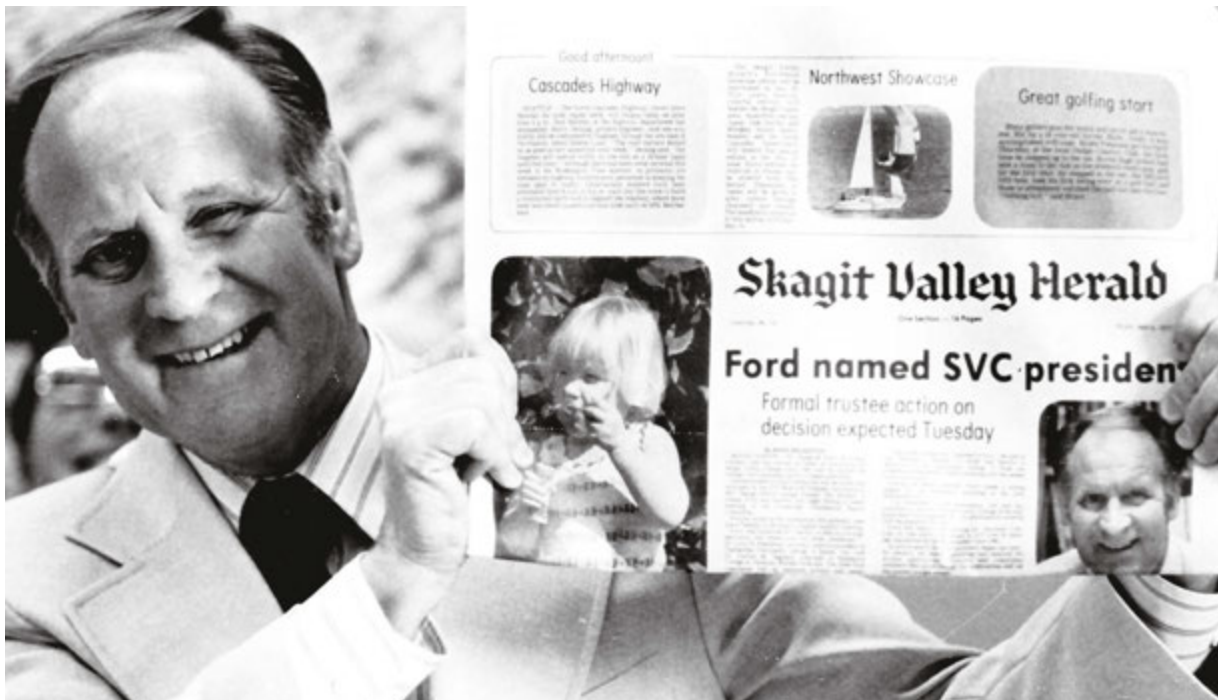


LIVING SYSTEMS Ford Monroe



a Legacy

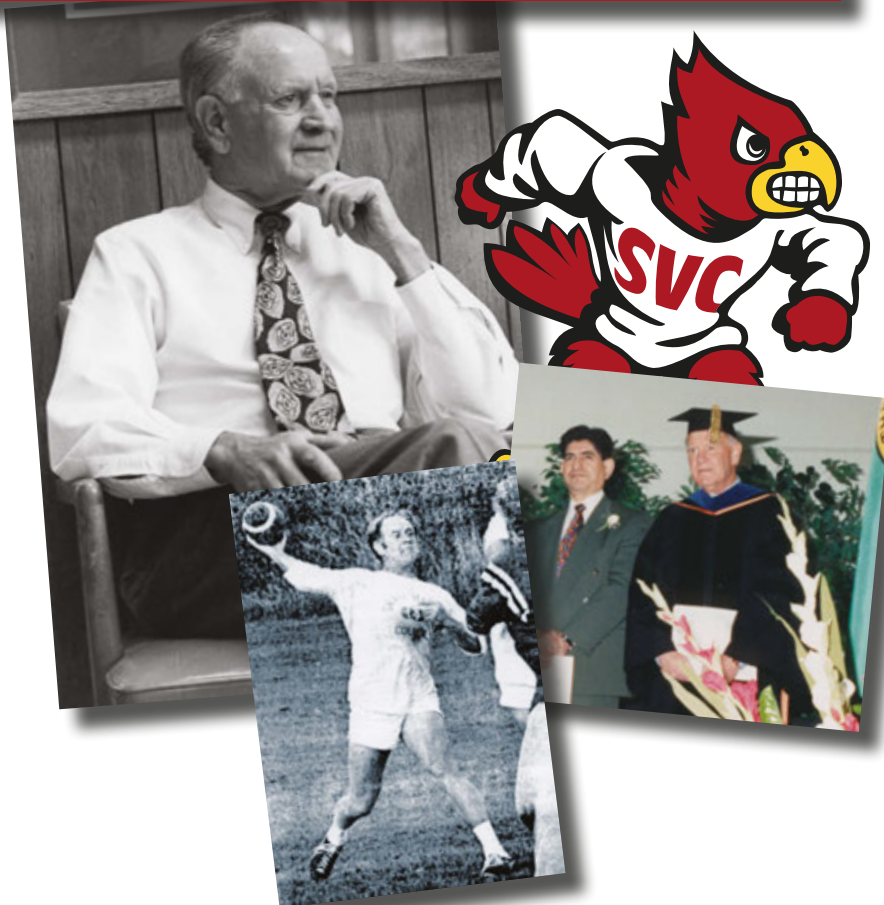




President James Ford - Creating the community college spirit at SVC

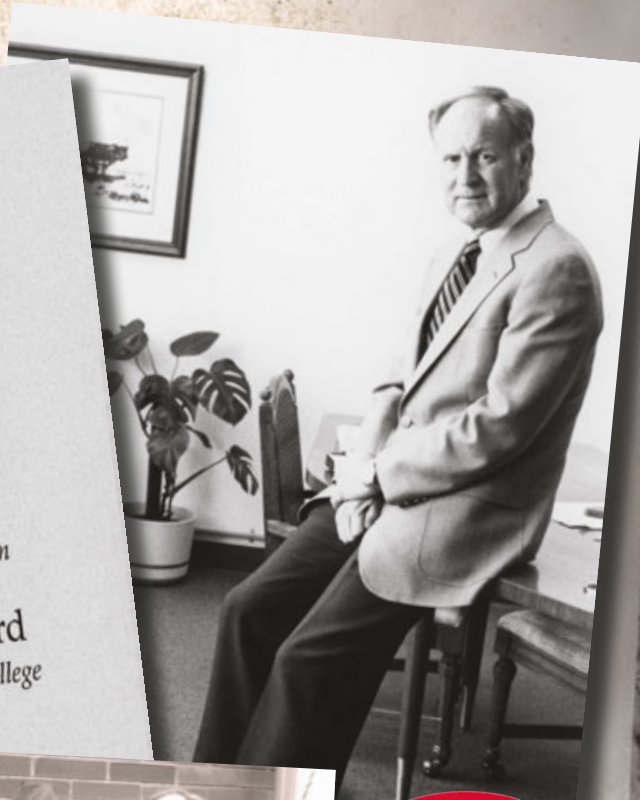
It was September 1954 and the temperatures were mild for September, in the low 60s. That fall, a teacher from the small logging town of Ryderwood, with a natural curiosity of the world, was the ninth full-time faculty member hired at Skagit Valley Junior College. Little did we know at that time, young Jim Ford would teach biology, coach sports, and guide many students, but he would also go on to earn his doctorate, with plans of leadership. Dr. James Ford continued his love of teaching, served as Dean of Instruction, and in 1977 was named SVC's third President.

Throughout his 18 years as President, Dr. Ford's approach to leadership was simple: be genuine, caring, and thoughtful. Whether it was his message at Commencement or a College





An Evening of Appreciation
in Honor of
Dr. James M. Ford
President, Skagit Valley College
June 10, 1995



gathering, a meeting of college presidents, or a service club presentation, he encouraged excellence and appreciated the support shown for students who are seeking a better future. "Jim Ford was the one who put 'community' in community college," recalled Gary Knutzen, former SVC Athletic Director and a long-time friend of Jim's. "His style was to shake hands with everybody. He was genuinely interested in you and people really felt that. He created that community college spirit."

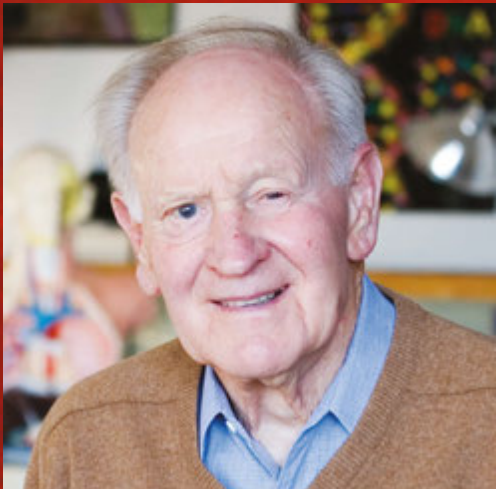
While it's impossible to share all the initiatives that Dr. Ford spearheaded, his leadership,

inspiration, advocacy, and competitiveness transformed the College. Many of the innovations that took place during his presidency continue to touch our students and community today: SVC Foundation, Campus View Village, Hall of Fame, San Juan Center, McIntyre Hall Performing Arts & Conference Center. In reflecting on his deep pride in SVC, he once remarked, "If there's going to be a number one, it's going to be Skagit."

Thanks to Dr. James Ford, Skagit Valley College is number one.

In the spring of 1962, an abstract carving was installed in front of the Cardinal Union. It was a gift to the College from Witco, a local company that designed and made wood carvings and decorative pieces at that time.

Dr. James Ford: Always the champion for higher education.



Dr. Ford's passionate engagement with the community continued undiminished after his retirement. He embraced a wide range of community initiatives, tirelessly advocating for projects large and small.

The over-arching passion of Dr. Ford's life was education. In personal conversations, he encouraged young people to attend college and pursue their dreams. With persistence and behind-the-scenes leadership, he contributed to the creation of many civic institutions, including McIntyre Hall, Senior College in Anacortes, and the North Cascades Institute.

An example of Dr. Ford's devotion to young people was his role as ambassador for his namesake golf tournament, the James M. Ford Classic, held annually to raise funds for scholarships at SVC. For many years, he teamed with his sons and daughter in the competition. In the last few years, he served as host, greeting the golfers and volunteers and personally thanking them.

Corey Mendoza first met Dr. Ford, who lived nearby, when he was 12. "My life," he says, "was completely

changed by his guidance and encouragement. I think many people would say the same thing. Dr. Ford had a positive outlook. He made you feel welcome and cared-about and that you could overcome obstacles."

One of the endearing ways of sustaining his strong ties to friends and community leaders was his habit of sending a personal, handwritten note to celebrate a recent achievement, urge a course of action, or continue a line of thought from an earlier conversation. The notes were kind and articulate. Reading them, the recipient could palpably "hear" Dr. Ford's sincere voice.

Many will recall that their last visit with Dr. Ford was at the May 19, 2017 celebration of SVC Foundation's Removing Barriers Campaign, which he strongly supported. Many guests stopped to talk with him and he demonstrated his memory of names, faces and personal details of old friends and new acquaintances.

Dr. Ford's contributions to our community are a true and lasting legacy.

