Paul Lawrence Ford

Paul Lawrence Ford was the 7th child of nine children.  Paul was born July 15, 1926 on a farm on Stringtown Road, off of US 35 outside of Xenia.

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Paul attended a one room school through the eighth grade.  His teacher wanted him to go to Xenia Central High School, which was an all white school.  The blacks students in Xenia attended East High School which was an all black school. Paul’s first day at school at Xenia Central High School, the principal called him in to his office.  The principal said to Paul “I hope you realize you will not have any social life here.”  Paul replied, “I didn’t come to socialize, I came for an education.”  The principal then said “go on back to class.”  There were 101 students in Paul’s class.  Paul was the first and only black in the school until his brother Jim enrolled the following year. Paul played football all four years in high school.

After graduating from high school, he worked on the farm, at the time they were drafting young men to go into the service. The following year Paul enrolled at Central State.  He got his degree at Central State four years later.  Paul played football for four years while in college.  His degree was in Health and Physical Education.

One week after Paul graduated from Central State, he married Betty Cordell who lived in Yellow Springs.  Paul and Betty dated for 5 years waiting for Paul to graduate.

Paul worked on the farm and he was hired at the Xenia Post Office as a Special Delivery carrier.  Shortly after working at the post office, Paul decided to go to Wright-Patterson to get a better job. The only position that was opened at that time was working in a blue print department as a GS-1 that is the lowest salary in the GS category. Paul took the job because he needed a job, also taking the attitude “if I get my foot in the door I can advance.” Paul also considered the fact he knew he would soon be a father.

Paul decided to go to night school at University of Dayton and get a business degree.  After finishing at UD, he took a test at the base and passed to become a buyer trainee.  Paul retired as a GS 14 Division Chief.

Paul and I both joined Central Chapel AME Church and in 1953 we built our home on Herman Street here in Yellow Springs.  At that time we had two children but we went to church on a regular basis.  Mr. William Perry, a member of our church, who was serving on the School Board (the only minority) told Paul he was going to retire and asked if he would consider running for school board.  Paul decided he would run for the position.  Our son Paul was in the first grade when Paul was elected.  Paul continued to run and was re-elected for 12 years. Paul also served on the Zoning Board for the Village of Yellow Springs.

Paul was an active person and when he was at Xenia Central High School his architectural teacher taught Paul and his younger Jim how to shear sheep.  They were both very good at shearing.  Our children’s teachers would have Paul come to their class to show the children how sheep were sheared and where we get our wool. Paul, also sheared sheep in the evenings and on Saturdays to make a little extra money.  By that time we had two more children.

Paul loved sports, we bowled together in leagues in Yellow Springs and Springfield. We always attended our children’s school functions and any outside sports or activities they were involved in. Paul and I did most things together and when it was a family affair we would all go together.

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Paul was very active in the church. He was on the Steward Board for many years and was the treasurer of Central Chapel AME Church for 35 years until the time of his death. Paul, growing up on a farm, also loved to garden, we didn’t have the space in our yard but we were able to use the space at Com and Goldie’s Williams yard.

Goldie was my first cousin and they were delighted to have us garden on their property.  We shared with them the vegetable that he raised.  Paul had a large garden and he was proud to share his crop with neighbors and friends.

Paul’s high school class would have a class reunion every five years and Paul and I both would attend.  One year Paul was selected to be the MC for the evening, he did an outstanding job.

Paul was very active in the Yellow Springs community, especially after living here for 57 years.  He served on the Yellow Springs Senior Center Board for a number of years and on many committees.

Paul L. Ford, this was the way he always signed his name.  Paul was an outstanding husband and father.

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*Source: Betty Ford*