

Orville Hubbard

From poor farming roots, Orville Hubbard developed a political formula that proved successful in one of the region's premier communities. Born on April 2, 1903, he was raised in Union City, Michigan. At the age of 16, following his father's death, Hubbard moved to Detroit to find employment, eventually moving permanently to the Detroit area.

He worked numerous jobs before enlisting in the United States Marine Corps. Afterward he received a degree from the Detroit College of Law and enthusiastically entered politics. After nine unsuccessful attempts at gaining office, Orville Hubbard was elected Mayor of Dearborn in 1942, a post he held for 36 years.

Hubbard was a populist who guaranteed good city services, put in long hours and worked hard to maintain the status quo. Outspoken on numerous topics, he became a nationally known political boss and segregationist. Following a stroke in 1974, he served out his fifteenth term in a wheelchair. He died in 1982. He and his wife had four sons and a daughter.



Orville Hubbard's Dearborn

Dearborn is one of Detroit's oldest suburbs, located on the western edge of the city. By the time Orville Hubbard became mayor in 1942, the city was the hub of industrial war production, based at the many Ford Motor Company's facilities located there.

Following the war, Dearborn was a shining example of the nation's prosperity. Along with factories and shopping, the city boasted thousands of acres of parks, tree lined streets, orderly neighborhoods and enviable schools and libraries. The Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village drew tourists from around the world.

Dearborn had a high ratio of foreign-born residents, hailing from such nations as Canada, Poland, Germany, Italy and Lebanon. The population grew from 94,000 in 1950 to 115,000 in 1968, with a median age six years older than Michigan's. It has been estimated that prior to 1970, there were fewer than 20 African-American families living within the city limits.





Hero?

While Orville Hubbard's segregationist rhetoric appalled many in his city and elsewhere, enough Dearborn voters appreciated his leadership to give him landslide victories in his last 14 mayoral contests; in 1967 he won with an astonishing 87% of the vote.

Dearborn claimed to provide the "world's best public service" under Hubbard. Many residents told stories about his personal involvement in solving problems, and a Michigan historical marker near City Hall credits him for Dearborn's punctual trash collection and speedy snow removal. In addition, Hubbard was recognized as an innovative administrator who engineered the purchase of Camp Dearborn, a 626-acre recreational area in Oakland County, and an 88-unit retirement facility in Clearwater, Florida.

Hubbard's skills as a self-promoter also were widely known. Many residents liked having a mayor who could earn two-page photo spreads in *Life* magazine, as Hubbard did twice in the 1950s, not to mention coverage in *Time* and *Newsweek*.

Hubbard often worked 12-hour days on his modest salary. Even his enemies conceded that although he craved political power, at least he never tried to enrich himself through his office. "By political standards, the man was a saint," Doyne Jackson, longtime city publicist, told the *Dearborn Press* on January 6, 1977.

Villain?

