

Tovey's 'human story' exceeded political achievements

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For all his big projects, big dreams and big ideas, it was the little things about Jim Tovey that were highlighted as his unconventional life was remembered Saturday, June 2.

"For all his achievements, it's the human story that made its mark," Mississauga-Lakeshore MP Sven Spengemann told a sold-out crowd of 400 at the Small Arms Building in Lakeview - which was doomed for demolition before Tovey's intervention.

"In my 30 years on council, I've never seen a politician quite like him," Coun. Nando Iannicca said. "Jim imagined a different path forward."

He was always unusual, recalled sister Jeanette. Tovey's parents, a veteran and his war bride raised six children in a two-bedroom home in Malton's Victory Village.

The one and only time he was left in charge of his younger siblings, Tovey demonstrated how popcorn works by trying to catch the flying kernels in a pot lid. That's when his parents walked in.

When son Daniel was born, he crashed the delivery room, forbidden at the time.

He scaled a fire escape outside Queensway Hospital to see his son's nursery.

Her brother was "a charmer" who could talk himself out of tight corners, was a "phenomenal" lacrosse player and perfected his Mick Jagger moves in their basement, long before he fronted a Rolling Stones tribute band.

He sold newspapers on the street to subsidize his three-bus



Top: Jim Tovey's sister Jeanette wipes away a tear as she recounts details of the life of the former Ward 1 councillor at a memorial event Saturday, June 2, at the Small Arms Building. Their mother used to say that "that boy always has his head in the clouds," she recalled. That same quality later saw him termed "visionary" by his admirers; **Bottom:** John Cassan presents the Melvin P. Jones Award to Lee Tovey in recognition of her husband's contributions to the community during the Saturday, June 2, celebration of life for former Ward 1 Councillor Jim Tovey, who died Jan. 15.

John Stewart photo

trip to Western Tech where he studied visual arts.

He loved the word "potential" and saw it in everything, his

sister said. He fashioned a "dream home" from a Lakeview house advertised as a tear-down.

In the same way, he could look at a power plant and envision a future model community, she added.

The carpenter spent 500 hours cutting spruce shipped from B.C. to build a self-designed canoe.

"Nothing ever stopped him," his sister said.

"He was a force of nature who didn't take no for an answer," agreed Mayor Bonnie Crombie. She called the councillor, who died Jan. 15 of a heart attack, "one of the most passionate and loving people I've ever met."

Tovey didn't even know he would join the Port Credit BIA board when elected, president Ellen Timms said.

He became its fiercest champion, installing restaurant patios and housing Mississauga's Music Walk of Fame there.

"He forged ahead without all the approvals and installed the first five slabs himself. That's not what councillors are supposed to do. He was always doing the heavy lifting," Timms said.

Tovey will be its sole inductee July 22. His plaque will read, "Jim Tovey: musician, councillor, inspiration."

A video highlighting Tovey's life and career was accompanied by Port Credit jazz singer Carol McCartney.

The Primitives, the band Tovey fronted for more than two decades, played his song Brand New Day.

The crowd stood in unison to cheer the announcement that Lakefront Waterfront Connection, the 26-hectare park Tovey inspired, will be named in his honour.

"We will have a brighter future on the shores of Lake Ontario," said Credit Valley Conservation chair Iannicca. "And we will do it all in your name."