

'A humble man who only wanted things to be right' Family, friends pay tribute to OC's Trimper

OCEAN CITY -- Ocean City said goodbye Thursday to Granville Trimper, who friends and family described as a practical man with a big heart, in an emotional funeral service at his lifelong parish.

Volunteer firemen in full dress uniforms served as pallbearers for their fallen lifetime member, and the mourners who filled St. Paul's By-The-Sea Episcopal Church laughed and cried at the stories of a man described by many as an Ocean City icon.

"A measure of our lives is what we do between youth and age," lifelong friend Dale Cathell told the more than 350 people crowded into the church's upper and lower levels. "To the end, he remained a humble man who only wanted things to be right. I say farewell, you kind and generous man."

Cathell said Trimper loved singing loudly in church, weekly poker games with close friends and playing golf when he was physically able. He called Trimper "a practical man" who "always got to the point."

Trimper, a former Ocean City Council member and Worcester County Commissioner, wasn't born into the life of success he knew later, said his son Doug Trimper, calling him "a child of the Depression."

Nicknamed "Junior" by his father of the same name, Trimper moved often as the family sought employment, Doug Trimper said.

He eventually took over the family business, Trimper's Rides and Amusements, and under his stewardship, helped it to grow over the years. Doug said his father's greatest achievement was building the Haunted House at the south end of the Boardwalk in 1962.

Doug also fondly recalled how he and his family would set up and take down the Ferris wheel every summer, an annual tradition he said was constant over four generations.

"Dad was an easy man to admire. He didn't hand out a lot of praise, though, and he was a hard man to work for. Granville's way was usually the right way," Doug said, adding, "it took a tough man to sustain Trimper's rides. It was all he ever wanted to do."

Cathell, a retired Maryland Court of Appeals judge, said he first met Trimper at age 11 in the summer of 1948, and he soon became a close friend. He remembered how Trimper's father always seemed to be working on the rides, something Granville himself would later grow to love.

"For the Trimper family, those dirty, greasy overalls were apparently handed down from generation to generation," Cathell said.

Cathell said the Trimper's operated a traveling carnival in the off-seasons. It was at that time when Granville first met Joanne, his future wife. She had been throwing tomatoes at him, Cathell noted, because Granville was a carnival kid, or carny. The two kept in touch and eventually courted, but not before Granville had to meet her father.

"Being a carny and being from Ocean City was a double negative for fathers of pretty girls," Cathell said.

Cathell said Trimper's family later sent him to Charlotte Hall Military Academy in St. Mary's County. The young Granville participated in football, boxing and wrestling, Cathell said. Some might not know that Trimper was class valedictorian, Cathell added, and his efforts earned him a scholarship offer to the prestigious Sorbonne University in Paris.

But Trimper turned it down, Cathell said, to return to Sharptown and start a family with Joanne. They were married 47 years before she died in 1991.

The couple had three children, of whom Trimper demanded high standards and excellent grades, Cathell said. It was later in life, with his nine grandchildren, that Granville "abandoned his disciplinary tendencies."

Ocean City Mayor Rick Meehan, who was first elected as a town councilman when Trimper was council president, said the many kind words shared during his funeral service would have embarrassed Trimper, "because of the man that he was."

"Icon isn't a word you use lightly, but it was certainly applicable to Granville Trimper," Meehan said. "What I admire so much about Granville is not just all the times he was active in public service, but when his service to the public in elected office was over, he didn't disappear. Granville always stayed committed to Ocean City."