

NEWS



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Orange County Executive

August 10, 2011

For Immediate Release

08-10-11 THIS WEEK IN ORANGE COUNTY BY EDWARD A. DIANA

This week we said goodbye to a beloved matriarch and generous supporter of our Orange County community. Ruth Blackburne Hart Ottaway passed away on August 6, a little more than a week after her 101st birthday. Ruth, and her husband James H. Ottaway Sr., who predeceased her in 2000, were well known for their generosity, community involvement, and commitment to maintaining the quality of life for the people of our County. While they will be dearly missed, they will not be forgotten. Ruth and James Ottaway Sr. have left their mark on Orange County in ways that will be appreciated by Orange County residents for generations to come. They were especially instrumental in the growth and development of the Orange County Department of Parks, Recreation, and Conservation.

Mr. Ottaway served on, and chaired, the Orange County Parks Commission Board from 1963 to 1970. He was responsible for hiring the County's first Commissioner of Parks – the well known and dynamic Graham Skea. Mr. Ottaway was a staunch supporter of land preservation and encouraged the acquisition of additional County parkland; property we continue to enjoy to this day.

Mrs. Ottaway served on the Board of the Friends of Hill-Hold. Her philanthropic support helped bring many original Bull family furnishings back to Hill-Hold when they had been placed in auction. She chaired the annual Maypole ceremony and Herb Day and served as a docent at both Hill-Hold and Brick House Museums.

While President of the Orange County Citizens Foundation, Mr. Ottaway led the charge to raise funds to preserve the lands at the D&H Canal for recreational and educational purposes. Today, the D&H Canal Park in Cuddebackville, a National Historic Landmark, is part of the Orange County Parks system.

If you've ever enjoyed a program or time strolling at the Orange County Arboretum, you have the Ottaway family to thank for your pleasant visit. The family generously donated to the development of the Arboretum. Their support includes the Ruth and Jim Ottaway Education Center, raised garden area, bronze statue of Pan, and the perimeter fencing that protects the Arboretum's plantings.

Most recently, a generous gift from the Ottaway family allowed the County to acquire the beautiful Blackburne Farm in Campbell Hall which is being developed as an equestrian park. Mrs. Ottaway was an avid horseback rider and we look forward to carrying on her passion for the sport in this park.

Rest in peace, Mrs. Ottaway. Thank you for all that you, and your family, have done, and continue to do, for the people of Orange County. You have left a legacy that will positively impact our community for many years to come.

Until next week, wishing you good health and happiness.

Edward A. Diana
County Executive