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IN MEMORIAM: HARRISON I. STEANS (1935-2019)

The DePaul family mourns the loss of **Harrison I. Steans** (LAS DHL '05), who was a member of the DePaul Board of Trustees from 1990 to 2008, a Life Trustee from 2008 on and a valued benefactor of the university. He served on the Egan Urban Center Advisory Council during the 1990s and was on the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences Advisory Council from 1990 to 2015. Through a generous endowment and their leadership, Steans and his family were the driving forces behind the establishment of the Steans Center, which has been connecting DePaul students with service learning opportunities grounded in Vincentian values since 2001.

Howard Rosing, director of the Steans Center, said Steans “was one of the happiest people, one of the most humorous people I’ve ever met. He was able to make you feel good about yourself and feel good just to be around him and be a part of his world.”

Rosing believes Steans’ dedication to DePaul was strong because “he saw that DePaul really had a deep commitment to our mission. He saw us working in neighborhoods and that we were engaging students in service. He saw that DePaul really could make a difference in the neighborhoods of Chicago, and that’s what he was committed to.”

Steans, a longtime resident



of Bannockburn, Ill., was born in Chicago and grew up in Springfield, Ill. He graduated from Princeton University in 1957 with a bachelor’s degree in economics and then spent three years in the U.S. Navy.

He began his career in banking in 1967, eventually buying six Chicago-area banks through a bank holding company called USAmeribancs. He sold the company to NBD Bancorp in 1987. That same year, he set up the Steans Family Foundation to begin

what would be his lifelong devotion to philanthropy, while continuing his business career by founding Financial Investment Corp., a private equity investment firm, with his daughter Jennifer in 1994.

Steans and his family contributed to a wide variety of philanthropic causes. Shortly after its founding, the foundation set up the “I Have a Dream” program for students in two elementary school classes serving children of color. The program is modeled on

one in New York City that Jennifer and Steans’ two other daughters, Illinois State Sen. Heather Steans and Advance Illinois President Robin Steans, observed.

Steans had a keen interest in Chicago’s North Lawndale neighborhood. He directed substantial funds to the underserved community to establish gardens, provide counseling for teen parents, expand health care services, build new housing and beautify the neighborhood. Steans also helped establish the North Lawndale College Prep High School.

The Ravinia Festival in Highland Park, Ill., continues to benefit from Steans’ generosity. He endowed the Steans Music Institute in honor of his wife of 61 years, Lois, and fully funded the 60 fellowships that allow young musicians to attend the institute’s summer conservatory each year. Steans also had the distinction of being the only male member of the Ravinia Women’s Board.

Steans also served on the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club and the boards of the Chicago Botanic Garden and the Ounce of Prevention Fund. He was a life trustee of Highland Park Hospital.

“Harrison had his unique style, a deep understanding of what matters to make a difference in Chicago communities,” says Rosing. “He really was a game changer for residents and for youth especially.”