



## Ronald Bean

March 31, 1943 - November 20, 2025

Ronald Bean, a pioneering public servant with unshakeable faith, whose life's mission was rooted in the belief that one must "do all you can, for as many as you can, for as long as you can," died in November 2025. He was 82.

A native son of Chicago, born in March 1943, Ron carved a legacy defined not by titles, though he held many, nor by accolades, though they were plentiful, but by the countless lives strengthened and uplifted by his service. He grew up with the quiet determination of a man called to purpose, shaped by the values of his parents, William and Camilla Bean.

His path led him to DePaul University College of Law, where he earned his Juris Doctorate and began a legal career that would become a springboard for civic transformation. But it was in Park Forest, Illinois, where he moved in 1969, that Ron made history, and made a community stronger. Elected its first Black village trustee, and ultimately its first Black village president, he guided Park Forest during a pivotal era when the village became one of the nation's first successfully integrated communities.

His presidency from 1981 to 1986 was marked by bold initiatives and a belief that communities thrive through collaboration. He championed the redevelopment of Norwood and Blackhawk Centers, advanced early Tax Increment Financing strategies, and helped launch ventures that broadened the village's cultural and social fabric. The professional Park Forest Symphony, later known as the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra, took root under his watch, along with the senior housing facility Garden House and the

PIZZAZZ festival, a celebration of the village's diversity and creativity.

Ron's influence extended far beyond Park Forest. For 15 years, he served as Executive Director of the Illinois Development Finance Authority, overseeing the issuance of billions in bonds that spurred statewide economic development and job creation. His leadership later proved indispensable at the Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County (CEDA), where he guided the organization through a fiscal restructuring that strengthened its capacity to serve families in need.

Education, however, was the thread woven most tightly through his life's work. In 2010, he became Board President of Southland College Preparatory Charter High School, helping build it from the ground up into the top-performing charter high school in Illinois. He also served as President of the SPEED SEJA 802 School Board, spearheading the modernization of its special education facilities to promote life skills, independence, and dignity for students with diverse needs. For more than thirty years, he served on the School District 162 Board, most recently as President. Throughout his life, he consistently championed educational excellence.

To nurture the next generation of public servants, the Ronald Bean Community Service Scholarship at Governors State University was established in 2009. Created by his wife, Dr. Sharon G. Bean, the scholarship honors students whose dedication to community mirrors his own.

A consummate servant leader, Ron lent his expertise to numerous boards, including the Bank of Matteson, Great Lakes Bank, Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra, Goodman Theatre, PACE Advisory Board, and the GSU Foundation. His footprint - civic, economic, and educational - was broad, but his approach intimate.

Those closest to him describe a man whose faith was not loud but lived. Whether navigating complex policy decisions or consoling a community member in hardship, he carried himself with humility, patience, and a certainty that he was guided by a higher purpose. His belief in God shaped not only his service but his joy, his resilience, and his ability to see the potential in every

person and every place he touched.

In every endeavor, he was guided by a profound sense of duty, a vision of equity, and a belief that communities rise highest when they rise together.

He was preceded in death by his parents William and Camilla Bean as well as his sister Camilla Smith. Ron is survived by his wife, Dr. Sharon G. Bean; his five children, Ronald (Erin) Bean, Karmen Green, Jerold (Jennifer) Bean, Mia (Johnny) Mullins, and Pilar (Brandon) Summerville; his 10 grandchildren: Marlee, Maci, Kayla, Morgan, Myles, Jahlil, Justin, Jade, Zarah, and Braxton; and siblings William Bean, Birdette (Tom) Terry, and Linda Manning as well as several nieces and nephews.

He leaves behind a region shaped by his vision, a family fortified by his love, and a legacy that will continue to guide all who believe in service as a way of life.

# Cemetery Details

## Oak Woods Cemetery

1035 E. 67th St.  
Chicago, IL 60637

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

DEC 7. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CT)

Southland College Preparatory Charter High School  
4601 Sauk Trail  
Richton Park, IL 60471