

Maggie Daley



Maggie Daley Born Margaret Ann Corbett was born on July 21, 1943, the youngest and only girl among seven children of Mr. and Mrs. Patrick L. Corbett of Mount Lebanon, a Pittsburgh suburb where her father owned and operated an auto parts dealership.

She attended St. Francis Academy high school and, after graduating from the University of Dayton in Ohio, entered a management-training program with the Xerox Corp.

It was a position that eventually took her to Chicago and a job as a sales representative for Xerox Learning Systems.

She had promised her father that she would only spend two years in Chicago before returning to the Pittsburgh area. But at a 1970 Christmas party she met and was smitten by Richard M. Daley, then a 27-year-old attorney and the oldest son of then Mayor Richard J. Daley, the political boss of Chicago since 1955.

By the following November, the younger Daley and Maggie Corbett had become engaged. they were married in March 1972, in Pennsylvania. Her brother, the Rev. John Corbett, was the celebrant of the mass. Daley's attendants were his three brothers, Michael, John and William. Daley's father and mother, Eleanor, sat in the front row of the St. Francis Retreat House.

It was already clear that Richard Daley was being groomed to enter the family business of politics. In 1969, at the age of 27, he was elected as a delegate to a convention that rewrote

the Illinois Constitution, and three years later, shortly before the marriage, he declared his candidacy for the state senate, a post he won and held for eight years until his election as Cook County State's Attorney.

Any trouble the bride might have had grasping the extent of her new family's clout likely vanished on their honeymoon in Europe.

Maggie and Rich Daley soon started their own family. A daughter, Nora, was born in 1973 and son Patrick arrived two years later. By 1976, the young family was sharing its Bridgeport home with two dogs named Casey and Murphy and dealing with the death in December of that year of Richard J. Daley.

In 1978 the couple's third child, Kevin, was born with spina bifida, a condition in which the spine is not closed. He was hospitalized many times, but the family converted a room in their home into a treatment center so he could spend as much time there as possible.

Many times, the child hovered near death and the family would gather to say its tearful goodbyes. But Kevin proved to be a fighter until 1981 when he succumbed, after being rushed to Children's Memorial Hospital.

"I like to think that the experience with Kevin affected us in a good way," Mrs. Daley reflected a decade later. "We learned to appreciate what's really important and to ignore the superfluous. Kevin taught us to take each day and enjoy each day and each other."

The Daley's youngest child, Elizabeth, was born in 1983. The family would take field trips to the zoo or to movies but, Mrs. Daley once said, "We're as likely to play Monopoly with the kids as anything else."

Once her children were in school, Mrs. Daley began to play an increasingly active role in the civic and cultural life of the city, serving on the auxiliary board of the Art Institute and the women's board of the Chicago Rehabilitation Institute.

She was occasionally on the campaign trail with her husband. Interviewed by reporters at a local deli during Richard's successful run for mayor in 1989, Mrs. Daley playfully asked reporters, "Do I have corned beef in my teeth?"

With her husband in City Hall, many organizations and individuals began seeking Mrs. Daley's help with civic projects. One of the first she eagerly became involved was the city's Cultural Center, the former main branch of the Chicago Public Library on Michigan Avenue.

Richard J. Daley had planned to tear down the 1897 architectural gem, but his wife saved it from the wrecker's ball with an unusual, for her, public statement about how she favored "restoring and keeping all the beautiful buildings in Chicago."

As First Lady, Maggie Daley volunteered to raise funds for the continuing renovation of the old library building. It was the beginning of what would become a close friendship between Mrs. Daley and Lois Weisberg, the commissioner of cultural affairs for almost all of Richard M. Daley's tenure as mayor.

In 1991, Mrs. Daley and Weisberg teamed up to launch Gallery 37, a program to promote arts training and jobs for Chicago youth. That evolved into After School Matters, a private program to provide teens with educational and career-oriented activities in such areas as sports and technology.

Both efforts won widespread praise and were emulated in other cities. At the same time, After School Matters got a quiet boost of city resources courtesy of Mrs. Daley's husband, who took it personally when questions about the program were raised.

After School Matters, housed in rent-free city offices and benefitting from the grant writing and fundraising help of three city workers, received more than \$54 million in city payments since 2004. "It's a charity of teenagers in Chicago," Richard Daley once snapped when asked about those payments. "Are you questioning my wife now?"

Some critics of the mayor claimed Mrs. Daley wielded considerable behind-the-scenes influence at City Hall.

They pointed to lucrative O'Hare retailing contracts that were awarded to two of her closest friends as well as taxpayer funded beautification projects that she inspired.

While Mrs. Daley's focus was largely on charitable work -- she sat on the boards of the Golden Apple Foundation as well as Children at the Crossroads Foundation.

Chicago's first lady, died on Thursday, Nov. 24, more than nine years after she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Mrs. Daley was 68 and died in her Chicago home surrounded by her husband, former Mayor Richard Daley, and her children, Nora, Patrick and Elizabeth, said Jacquelyn Heard, Daley's former spokeswoman and a family friend.

By Rick Kogan, Chicago Tribune reporter

http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-11-25/news/ct-met-maggie-daley-obit-20111125_1_maggie-daley-first-lady-breast-cancer