

WHAT'S IN A NAME



CYNTHIA FORD

FOREWORD BY DENNIS ARCHER, JR. AND DENISE ILITCH

Dennis Archer and Mike Ilitch. Two individuals whose names alone evoke a certain enviable connotation. What with their custom suits, distinguished résumés and impressive social circles, such an inference is almost unavoidable. Yes, it would be easy to assume that the bearers of such polished appellations were born with silver spoons in their mouths – that they did not have to truly work hard to get where they are.

But the fact remains that Archer – who climbed the ranks from successful attorney to State Supreme Court Justice to Michigan State Bar President to two-term Detroit City Mayor to the first person of color to hold the office of President of the American Bar Association – reached success as someone who grew up in a rural neighborhood where he would boil his own bath water in a metal tub and was working by the age of 10. Likewise, Ilitch – who today is one of the most successful entrepreneurs to emerge from

Metro Detroit – began his illustrious career by going door to door selling pots and pans to support his own family, all the while living in his parents' flat on Chalfonte and Monica.

Indeed, a name is not just a name. It is an everyday reminder, a perennial symbol of who our fathers are and what they strived to achieve. Every day that we walk out of our doors, we not only have a responsibility to create a name for ourselves and future generations, but we also have a chance to pay homage to our family names and their legacies.

The following four people – Cynthia Ford, Jesse Jackson, Jr., Patrick Kennedy, and Jay Penske – all face the same challenge of having a surname that carries such international notoriety that it demands a tremendous amount of responsibility. All of these individuals have chosen to embrace their family name while charting their own path and creating their own successes. For this, we ask our readers to ponder, "What's in a name?"

HAVE YOU EVER IMAGINED WHAT LIFE WOULD BE LIKE IF SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS YOUR OWN LAST NAME HELD NATIONAL (AND INTERNATIONAL) POWER AND PRESTIGE? DO YOU THINK LIFE MIGHT BE A LITTLE EASIER? WOULD IT BE MORE OF A CHALLENGE? AMBASSADOR ASKED FOUR OF TODAY'S MOST FAMOUS NAMES ABOUT THE PERKS AND PERILS OF LIVING WITH A LEGENDARY SURNAME.

THINKING FORD FIRST

Experiencing every day with a last name that conjures up an image of a shiny blue oval might have its downside. But Cynthia Ford, wife of Edsel B. Ford II, mother of four, and dedicated philanthropist, says there is only an upside.

"I have great pride in being a part of a family that has served history. There are only pluses with our family name, and of course, it does open 'some' doors. But it also makes you available for opportunities that might not otherwise come around."

Such opportunities, like serving as chair of the Children's Hospital of Michigan Foundation and participating in the American Diabetes Research Foundation, are what Ford continues to pour her energy into. "I never really wanted to go into the family business, but I am interested in what goes on in the company."

All of our sons were involved in the 100th anniversary festivities of Ford, and I have to say that it was probably one of the most inspiring weeks of their lives. It was really life-altering for them. They realized how significant a company it is. It's wonderful to be able to participate and be a part in that. My oldest son just recently joined Ford. We encourage them to seek opportunities to work elsewhere and then, if they have the interest and are qualified to work at Ford, we support the decision."

Ford also feels strongly about being part of a family that has played an integral role in creating the city of Detroit itself. "My husband and I have an enormous soft spot for the city of Detroit. And shame on any of us that don't take advantage of that opportunity to help the city out. Being a Ford allows us to jump in with both feet and do what we can." As she sees it, "Being of a visible family name, there's a sense of obligation, but also a sense of wanting to participate. I want to help make Detroit the best it can be."

IT'S A HARD-DRIVE LIFE

Cars. Not only are they a pivotal part of our lives in the Metro Detroit area, but they are also a vital force around the world. So imagine the significance for Jay Penske, son of automotive royalty whose surname is synonymous with driving.

"My brothers were already doing tremendous jobs running various businesses at Penske Corp., and I was never comfortable with the idea of their shaking things up just so they could squeeze in another desk at the office," says Penske, who is founder, chairman, CEO, and director of his own IT company, Velocity Services, Inc. "I love cars, but my own strengths lie more in technology, the web, wireless...and old books. And so while I'm always happy to assist the family business in any way I can, ultimately I'm happier pursuing my own entrepreneurial interests."

Though Penske's pursuits have taken him decidedly off the automotive track, his choices have nonetheless been a credit to the family name. "I'm presently and primarily involved in three businesses and I am just realizing a lifelong dream, which is the opening of Dragon Books, an antiquarian bookstore in Los Angeles. Developing different kinds of businesses, from the drawing board to the marketplace, is what excites me every day."

As he continues, **"MY DAD HAS SET A SOLID EXAMPLE FOR MY SIBLINGS AND ME BY CONSTANTLY EMPHASIZING THE IDEA THAT 'EFFORT EQUALS RESULTS.' THE PRESSURE IS IN LIVING UP TO HIS STANDARDS OF HARD WORK AND INTEGRITY. BUT I CONSIDER THAT MORE OF A DAILY CHALLENGE, AND REALLY THE BASIS OF MY OWN WORK ETHIC."**

Based in California, for Penske, Detroit is in his heart and is a place he'd like to see flourish. "I did spend a few of my most memorable years in Detroit, especially my time playing hockey. My advice is to develop and expand new and existing industries and jobs in Detroit, especially those in information technology, educational services, biotech and healthcare. I think the city must be constantly thinking of lessening its reliance on the automotive sector." Now who would've thought they'd hear that from a Penske?



JAY PENSKE