

October 2, 2019

Report of the Ossining Village Historian

On September 8, 2019, I met with Jim Drohan, Jr., to discuss the street sign he'd like to have erected in his father's honor at Croton Avenue and Sherman Place. The following is a summary of James A. Drohan, Sr.'s history of community service and his contributions to the village of Ossining.

1. **Residency in Ossining.** James Drohan lived in Ossining for a total of 38 years. He moved to Ossining from Yonkers with his family in 1971. He was Leader of Boy Scout Troop 49 at St. Augustine's Roman Catholic Church, where the family, which includes two sons and a daughter, attended regular services. He lived in Ossining until the mid 1990s, when he moved to New Jersey with his second wife. A banker for Citibank and later AIG (his nickname was "Banker"), Drohan returned to Ossining in 2006, and lived here until his death on October 18 2018, at age 73.
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3. **Firefighting volunteerism.** Drohan was a dedicated and passionate member of the Ossining Fire Department for 38 years. He belonged to two fire houses, Holla Hose (where he served as captain) and later Steamer Co. 1. He fought many local fires, including "the big house fire" at Sing Sing Correctional Facility in 1984. Drohan was a founding member of the Fairchester Hose Haulers of the Hudson Valley, a "muster group" established in the late 1960s that performs old-school fire drills with antique equipment. He collected local vintage firefighting memorabilia, most notably a 1935 American LaFrance fire engine that had belonged to Holla Hose. He tracked it down in Oregon and had it shipped back to New York, spending countless hours on restoring it. Because the cost of storing the truck is prohibitive, he lent it to a collector in Middletown, NY, for display in a future fire truck museum (though the family retains ownership). Drohan also served as Secretary of the Southern New York Volunteer Firemen's Association and the Westchester County Volunteer Firemen's Association.
4. **9/11 survivorship.** On September 11, 2001, Drohan was filling in for a coworker at a meeting in the Twin Towers. He was 56 at the time. He was getting coffee in the lobby when the terrorists struck. Drohan escaped the building and spent the rest of the day helping people and police officers. His firefighting experience was invaluable. He spent hours helping people find escape routes from the scene and taking the injured to EMS. Using disposable cameras, he took many haunting images of the scene after the towers' collapse. Later he made his way to the Bronx, where his son's fire company was stationed during the emergency. He was so covered in dust that his own son did not recognize him at first. He rarely spoke about that day.
5. **Crossing guard career.** In 2006, Drohan retired and moved back to Ossining. Looking to stay busy, he took a job as a crossing guard at the corner of Croton Avenue and Sherman Place. The job became his life. As his son put it, "He lived for those kids. He enjoyed making sure they got across the road safely. He knew every kid by name. He was a

people person; it was a job he was meant for.” He was a crossing guard for seven years, until his death in 2018. Many of the kids who crossed the street to Roosevelt School under his watchful eye are in high school today and no doubt remember Mr. Drohan.

6. **9/11-related illnesses.** Drohan’s health began to fail while he was a crossing guard. In 2014 he suffered a massive heart and survived, thanks to the recommendation of Walgreens pharmacist Marlene Muranelli, who took his blood pressure and urged him to get an emergency room. (She received a commendation.) A year and a half later, he was diagnosed with COPD and emphysema. The doctors connected his disease to exposure to toxic dust at Ground Zero. He went on to develop stomach pain and kidney problems, causing near-constant nausea and pain, yet he rarely missed a day as a crossing guard. Because he didn’t want to upset the children, he kept his oxygen tank and sickness bags in his car, so they wouldn’t see him throw up. In October 2018, a CAT scan turned up a mass on his pancreas, and he passed away a week later. According to his doctors, the pancreatic cancer is also 9/11-related. James Drohan is buried in St. Augustine’s Catholic Cemetery.

**Resolution- Approval of Honorary Naming of the Corner of Croton Avenue and Sherman Place for James Drohan, Sr.**

**WHEREAS**, the purpose of the Honorary Street Naming Policy (“Policy”) approved by the Village of Ossining Board of Trustees is to, “honor current and former residents of the village who have made contributions to the village through accomplishments during the honoree’s lifetime”; and

**WHEREAS**, on August 8, 2019, the Board of Trustees received a letter from James Drohan, Jr. requesting the honorary street naming of the corner of Croton Avenue and Sherman Place for his father James Drohan, Sr.; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to the Honorary Street Naming Policy, the Board of Trustees by resolution referred the application to the Village Historian for a report; and

**WHEREAS**, on or about October 2, 2019, Village Historian Dana White provided to the Board of Trustees her report on the application which included a summary of James Drohan, Sr.’s history of community service and contributions to the Village of Ossining; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to the Policy, a public hearing was held on the application on November 6, 2019 at the Joseph G. Caputo Community Center at which time members of the public were given the opportunity to address the Board of Trustees on the application, after which the public hearing was closed; now therefore be it

**RESOLVED**, that the application for the honorary street naming of the corner of Croton Avenue and Sherman Place in honor of James Drohan, Sr. is granted and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that appropriate signage will be located at the aforementioned corner.