

Pioneering engineer laid to rest



By TREVOR KAPRALOS, Observer-Dispatch

The Rev. Robert O'Meara gives a benediction Monday morning at the conclusion of the funeral for John F. Dove at the First Presbyterian Church in Rome. The founder of Dove Electronics Inc., Dove died Jan. 20 at age 79.

Rome's John F. Dove remembered as energetic, witty, kind

By ELIZABETH COOPER
Observer-Dispatch

ROME — John F. Dove was remembered at his funeral Monday as a man of intelligence, integrity and humor.

In the many eulogies offered at the service, held in Rome's First Presbyterian Church, the pioneering African-American engineer's boundless energy was referred to with awe and affection.

"He found the time to be everywhere and do everything," Herbert Thorpe, a life-long colleague and friend said. "He never stood still. He was always on the go."

In his 79 years of life, Dove channeled this energy not only into his work, but into his personal relationships and countless community endeavors. His best known achievements as an engineer include the invention of key components of compact discs, video discs and compact disc drives. He spent many years working for Rome Air Development Center

(now the Air Force Research Laboratory). When he retired in 1983, he started his own businesses, Dove Electronics Inc. and Dove Photonics Inc.

"He was a scientific man," Thorpe said. "His achievements are a matter of record. He had a highly respected, long and excellent career with the federal government."

The Rev. John O'Meara of First Presbyterian said he had known Dove for many years. He said Dove's deep religious faith had fueled his pursuit of scientific research.

"It motivated him to be an explorer in technology," he said. O'Meara also said Dove had told him he had created his first laser recording after a church in Taiwan had asked him if it were possible to fit the entire new testament on one recording.

"He did that for them," O'Meara said.

In his free time, Dove served on numerous boards, including those of



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Soloist McKinley Collins sings "Deep River" during the funeral for John F. Dove Monday.

the Jervis Library and the Presbyterian Home in New Hartford. He worked on behalf of the NAACP and the Rome Community Foundation. In 1998, Dove helped the Urban League of Syracuse set up facilities where low-income urban children could learn computer skills. He was also an elder at First Presbyterian.

Thorpe also recalled how Dove helped young African-Americans, including himself, who moved to the Rome area.

"One young man only had a few dollars in his

pocket," Thorpe recalled. "John said 'pay me back when you can.' That's the kind of man he was."

During several eulogies, the roughly 175 family and friends who filled the church — including many prominent members of the community, such as U.S. Rep. Sherwood Boehlert, R-New Hartford — broke out into quiet laughter at references to Dove's love of eating and talking.

Dove was also remembered as a loving family man. He is survived by a

daughter, Susan, a grand daughter, Zayla, and members of a large extended family. His wife, Zelder, passed away in 1983.

His brother-in-law, the Rev. Charles Jackson, gave a warm, humorous perspective on the scientist's family life.

Jackson told of how hard it had been for him to compete with the shining image of his wife's older brother, but said the two had nonetheless become the closest of friends.

"If you look at a great man like John, you think he's never going to die," Jackson said. "But he had to leave."

James Semp, the son of Dove's long-time close companion, Virginia Semp, read a poignant letter from his mother about her feelings for Dove.

Over and over, family and friends spoke of Dove's wellspring of energy — for work, for family and friends, and for the community.

"I said, 'John, when are you going to retire?'" Thorpe said. "He said, 'Probably never.' He was right. John has earned his rest."