

"Walter is the quintessential public servant," says Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke. "He remains an important adviser in business and political activities in this community. I just met with him as recently as this week to talk about downtown development."

It all started long before he was appointed to the "Jewish slot" on the city school board in 1948. It started July 25, 1908, in the front room, second floor of 1621 Bolton St. That's where he was born. He graduated from Park School in 1925, then went on to Haverford College. There were 81 graduates in the class of '29. A dozen remain.

On his yearbook page, the editors wrote: "By simultaneously preserving his pride and refusing to take himself seriously, he has practically forced us to consider him seriously as one of the prides of the class."

Not much has changed in 70 years. In the mid-1950s, his calm approach made Baltimore the first school district south of the Mason-Dixon Line to respond to the Supreme Court's landmark ruling outlawing "separate but equal" education. Some one burned a cross on the lawn of his Windsor Hills home, but it didn't stop him.

During the 1960s Mayor Thomas D'Alesandro III sought his help.

"His calling card is integrity and, as I said before, he has no hidden agenda," says D'Alesandro. "My whole concept of Walter was that he was a cut above."

He does not have a "typical" day. It depends on where he is needed. Just the other day, he showed up for the Maryland Art Place's dedication of its miniature golf course at Rash Field. He called himself "Tiger Wouldn't."

"Me, who's opposed to all exercise," he says, of what turned into an awful day. He tripped and fell on the 17th hole. "I ripped my suit beyond repair. I went to get my car, it had a \$20 ticket on it."

He still drives his black Acura Legend, and walks when there is a purpose. Not too long ago he walked from his Harborview apartment to a dinner party on Federal Hill. The hosts were very concerned.

"You know, you shock people if you drive. You shock people if you walk," he says.

At 90, he goes where he wants, when he wants. He does acrostics for fun, and surprises himself by still being able to recite the Keats he learned at Haverford.

"I've had a lucky life," he says, pale blue eyes shining behind his glasses. "It's not because of me. I've been lucky to be in places."

Now there are rumors that he's the odds-on favorite to be the next state school board president. He says he doesn't want the job. Yes, he has been involved with education for 50 years, but he doesn't consider himself an expert.

"I don't think it would be wise for them to pick me," he says, wondering aloud how it would look, a 90-year-old man.

So often in the past people have come to him, seeking his perspective, his gift of compromise. He has said "yes" probably more times than he can remember. His resume lists 78 committees, boards and foundations he once served.

"My wife, who used to chastise me for saying 'Yes,' said, 'It's your curiosity,'" he says. "The truth is, I'm a little bit of a sissy. I don't like to say 'No.' . . . That's not a strength, you know. That's a weakness."

[From the Washington Post, July 30, 1998]  
SONDHEIM TO HEAD MARYLAND SCHOOL BOARD  
(By Ellen Nakashima)

At 90, Walter Sondheim Jr. protested that he was too old to head the influential board that sets education policy in Maryland. Just Friday he insisted, "You don't get wiser with age."

But other members of the Maryland Board of Education would not hear of it. Yesterday, they unanimously elected the self-deprecating Baltimorean—the godfather of the state's school reform efforts—as their new president.

A man who has urged friends to write him anonymously when they felt it was time for him to "hang up the spikes," Sondheim is now the oldest person in the country to lead a statewide education board.

"I'm very grateful to all of you," he told his colleagues yesterday. "It's a nice thing to do to an old man."

Although it's a part-time job with no pay, heading the state board requires an ability to smooth out the ripples created by 12 strong personalities. In the past months, board members have clashed over such issues as whether to require teachers-in-training to take reading courses and how to institute new high school exams for graduation. And Sondheim, a consensus-maker par excellence, was the best candidate to keep the board on a fast track to education reform, board members said. He replaces Rose LaPlaca, whose term has expired.

"This is a man who's a cut above everyone," said State Superintendent Nancy S. Grasmick, herself a recognized leader in school reform. "Very few people have intelligence coupled with integrity. He is as intellectually sharp as someone half his age. Most people have lost more gray matter in their thirties than he has in his lifetime."

Sondheim has a wry sense of humor that is almost always directed at himself. (A Navy lieutenant in World War II, he never served overseas—"It could possibly be why we won the war." What did he do in the Navy? "I didn't interfere.")

He was appointed president of the Baltimore City school board in 1954 on the same day the U.S. Supreme Court handed down the landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* desegregation decision. He has headed the state's Higher Education Commission. And in 1987, then-Gov. William Donald Schaefer tapped him to head to Governor's Commission on School Performance, which in 1989 released what has come to be known as the Sondheim Report—or the blueprint for school reform in Maryland.

They are all posts he says he did not seek. "I've just lived a long time," he said, shrugging off his achievements. "You will find that the older you get, the nicer people are to you."

Sondheim, born and bred in Baltimore, serves on 24 boards and foundations and works full time as a consultant to the Greater Baltimore Committee, a booster group he once headed. He chaired Charles Center-Inner Harbor Management, which sparked the revival of downtown Baltimore. Today, he works on the 15th floor of the Legg Mason Tower, a few blocks from the state board of office. His dress is impeccable, from button-down shirt to wingtip shoes.

"I don't know anything about his genes, except his remarkable physical ability," said Schaefer, 76, who declares himself "just a child beside Walter." Said Schaefer: "He's got the stamina of a man 55 years old. He's amazing. He can outwork guys in their fifties, sixties." And he doesn't exercise.

"Oh, God forbid!" Sondheim exclaimed. "I'm opposed to it. I don't believe in exercise. It's partly because I've never done any form of athletics very well. I'm not an athletic type. I get kidded about that a lot."

He stood for two hours Tuesday night at a birthday party in his honor despite having fallen and hurt his leg. About 100 of his closest friends served him up a three-foot-long cake with 15-inch-high candles. According to Schaefer, he blew them out with one puff and declared: "No presents. No speeches. No exceptions."

Sondheim, whose wife, Janet, died six years ago and who has two children and two grandchildren, gets asked all the time when he'll retire.

"I have no idea," he said. "Somebody may tell me it's time to do it. I keep a watchful eye out for being past my time. And I have some friends I expect to tell me when my time has come."

But Schaefer believes Sondheim will never hang up his spikes. "He'd be bored to death," Schaefer said. "He couldn't retire. He just couldn't. Besides, nobody wants him to."

Sondheim's agenda for the coming year is simple.

"I think what I hope to do in the next year," he said, "is wake up every morning." ●

#### TRIBUTE TO THE SCHUYLKILL TRAINING & TECHNOLOGY CENTER PRACTICAL NURSING PROGRAM

● Mr. SANTORUM. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate the Schuylkill Training & Technology Center on celebrating its 30th year of graduates in their Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) Program.

In June, the program marked 30 years of graduations with its 62nd daytime class and ninth part-time evening class commencement. Since its start, the program's class size has increased from 33 graduates in 1968 to 55 graduates this year. To mark the 30th anniversary of the program the Schuylkill Training & Technology Center will hold a celebration of the program and the success of its graduates on October 18.

Over the past 30 years, acceptance of LPNs by other health-care professionals has increased dramatically. Today students are enrolling in the LPN Program because of multiple job opportunities, and I am proud to say that a large percentage of all graduates find job opportunities in Pennsylvania.

Mr. President, I commend the Schuylkill Training & Technology Center for its excellence in job training, and I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating them on their 30th year of graduates. ●

#### MEMORIAL FOR FRANK HORAN OF ALBUQUERQUE, NM

● Mr. BINGAMAN. Mr. President, I rise to honor the memory of one of the finest public servants ever to have served the citizens of New Mexico, Mr. Frank Horan. Mr. Horan, who served a quarter of a century as the city attorney of Albuquerque, passed away last Saturday, October 3, 1998. His loss will be deeply felt by countless friends and family—two sons, a daughter, and seven grandchildren—who will always remember his dedication to public service, his deep affection for his community, his abiding love for his family, and his legendary sense of humor.

Frank Horan was in a sense one of the founding fathers of modern Albuquerque, moving to the city during the early 1940s, and serving as city attorney during the first years of the city's