

MARYLANDERS OF THE CENTURY

Theodore R. McKeldin modernized Maryland

■ **Governor and mayor:** *Baltimorean envisioned today's airport and Inner Harbor, practiced racial equality.*

LEGACIES of Theodore Roosevelt McKeldin, Maryland's pre-eminent political leader after World War II, are all around us: In his two terms as governor and two terms as Baltimore mayor, he built what today is the Baltimore-Washington International Airport, started the Inner Harbor rebirth and oversaw a massive highway program that included the Baltimore and Washington beltways and the first car tunnel under the Patapsco River.

Equally important was the civility and moderate tone this Republican set for the overwhelmingly Democratic state. In words and deeds, he promoted racial equality, a stand that led to his exclusion from the Southern Governors Conference. But, then, McKeldin was a man of principle and strong convictions.

Even though he had won prominence at the 1952 Republican National Convention by making a stirring nominating speech for Dwight D. Eisenhower, 12

years later McKeldin rejected the GOP's choice of Barry M. Goldwater, throwing his support behind Democratic President Lyndon Johnson.

So important was McKeldin's backing that Johnson helicoptered to Baltimore to thank him. After the election, the president made federal funds available to start the Inner Harbor revitalization.

Remarkably, 25 years after McKeldin's death at 73, dozens of aging Republicans and Democrats around the state look back to their time with him as defining moments. Veteran real estate agent James Crockett, who worked for McKeldin in Baltimore's African-American neighborhoods, notes, "If he told you something, you could depend on that. He never disappointed you."

Little in McKeldin's early life suggested he was destined for greatness. The tenth of 11 children, he was born to an illiterate South Baltimore stonecutter so fond of drink that Teddy swore off liquor forever. At 14, he quit school

and took a bank job. Evenings he studied for his high school diploma; on weekends he toiled as a gravedigger, investing his savings in Dale Carnegie speech classes.

At 25, he graduated from the University of Maryland evening law school. He soon put his famous oratorical skills to work for William F. Broening, another Republican who overcame the formidable odds to become Baltimore's mayor.

America was at war when McKeldin himself was first elected mayor in 1943. In 1950, he defeated Democratic incumbent William Preston Lane to become governor.

He inherited a state undergoing vast, fundamental economic and

social changes. During his two terms as governor, suburbanization altered Maryland profoundly, creating unprecedented demands for public spending and services. Equally significant were fundamental social changes, above all the breakdown of Jim Crow laws and racial segregation.

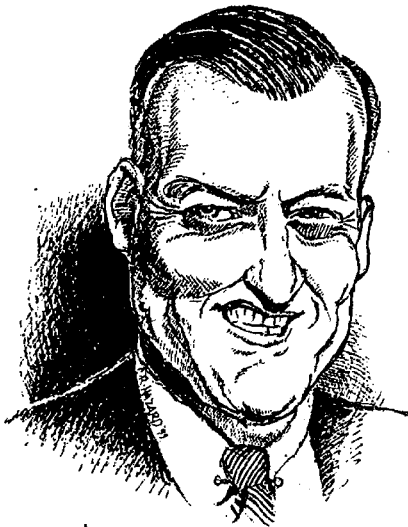
This rapid transformation fueled demagoguery. But McKeldin would have none of that. "The minority groups — they elected me," he proclaimed, appointing blacks, Jews and women

to offices they had not occupied before.

Publicly and behind the scenes, he worked to end segregation in Baltimore theaters, stores and lunch counters. As governor, he ordered the integration of state ferries and beaches, abolished racially based lists for state jobs and played a crucial role in ending school and hotel segregation.

By 1963, when he was elected mayor of Baltimore for the second time, the nation was in the midst of its civil rights struggle. Open accommodations and fair employment became sensitive local issues. In 1966, when the Congress on Racial Equality held its convention here and announced Baltimore as its target city for the next year, McKeldin addressed the group, embraced its goals and promised full cooperation.

"McKeldin was ahead of his time," says Peter Marudas, who left *The Evening Sun* to become the mayor's chief of staff during those years. "He always practiced the politics of inclusion."



C.R. HAZARD

THEODORE
MCKELDIN