

# Spiro T. Agnew, ex-vice president, dies in Md. at 77

Former governor,  
Balto. Co. executive  
rose to 2nd office

Forced to resign in scandal

He spent later years  
as broker of business  
deals, out of limelight

## FROM STAFF REPORTS

Spiro T. Agnew, a former governor of Maryland who was twice elected vice president of the United States, then forced to resign in 1973 after pleading no contest to a charge of federal income tax evasion, died yesterday of undisclosed causes at an Eastern Shore hospital.

He was 77.

John Ulrich, owner of the Ulrich Funeral Home on Ocean Gateway in Ocean City, said the establishment received Agnew's body yesterday evening.

A desk clerk at English Towers in Ocean City, where Agnew had an 11th-floor apartment, said that about 3 p.m. the former vice president was taken by an Ocean City volunteer fire company

ambulance to Atlantic General Hospital in Berlin.

"He was a friend," said former 2nd District Rep. Helen Delich Bentley, a Republican. "He served Maryland well. He served President Nixon well. And the misfortunes that came his way should be allowed to die with him."

Victor Gold, who was Agnew's press secretary, said that although the former vice president was known for his political rhetoric, he appreciated him for his intellect.

"This somehow shocks people when I say he was more a man of ideas and he was more interested in ideas than he was in politics," Gold said last night from his home in Falls Church, Va.

"He's always been a friend, and I owe him a great deal. A lot of us do," he said.

In a span of six years, Agnew rose from Baltimore County executive to the governorship of Maryland, then to the vice presidency in the administration of President Richard M. Nixon.

His downfall was even more startling. On Oct. 10, 1973, he simultaneously resigned as vice president, and, in a negotiated settlement with the Department of Justice, plead- [See Agnew, 6A]

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ed no contest in a Baltimore courtroom to the charge of income tax evasion during his two years as governor of Maryland.

It was a deal that sent Agnew into political obscurity, denying him the chance to ascend to the presidency when Nixon resigned in disgrace less than a year later.

But before he left the national stage, Agnew had forged a persona as a tough-talking law-and-order candidate who reviled Vietnam War protesters and criticized liberal academics and the press.

His most famous lines came in a 1970 speech, when he attacked the media as "nattering nabobs of negativism" and "the hopeless, hysterical hypochondriacs of his-

tory."

In recent years, Agnew underwent a sort of rehabilitation. In May 1995, he attended the unveiling of his white marble bust in the Capitol in Washington, joining images of the vice presidents who preceded him.

"I'm not blind or deaf to the fact that some people feel that this is a ceremony that should not take place," Agnew said. "I would remind those people that, regardless of their personal view of me, this ceremony has less to do with Spiro Agnew than with the office I held, an honor conferred on me by the American people two decades ago."

Three months earlier, in February, Gov. Parris N. Glendening rescued Agnew's portrait from a stor-

age room and hung it along with the other past Maryland governors in the State House Reception Room.

In a reconciliation of sorts, Agnew attended the April 1994 funeral of Nixon, where he confided to his former speechwriter, William Safire, that he and Nixon had not spoken since Agnew's forced resignation in 1973.

Spiro Theodore Agnew was born in Baltimore on Nov. 9, 1918, the son of Theodore Spiro Agnew and Margaret Akers Agnew.

In 1937, he enrolled at the Johns Hopkins University, majoring in chemistry, but withdrew three years later to study law.

He attended night classes at the University of Baltimore Law School and worked days at the Maryland Casualty Co. as an assistant insurance underwriter.

There, he met a file clerk, Elinor Isobel "Judy" Judefind. After several dates, they discovered that they had both attended Forest Park High School (she two years behind him) and had lived only a few blocks from each other when they were children.

sponsibility and danger, he acquitted himself well," author Theo Lippman Jr. wrote in his biography of the Marylander, "Spiro Agnew's America; The Vice President and the Politics of Suburbia," published in 1972.

After the war, Agnew returned home with the nickname "Ted," picked up in the Army, and completed his law studies at the University of Baltimore.

Determining that lawyers were not in great demand at that time, he went to work as an insurance adjuster for a year, then switched to personnel work at a large Baltimore supermarket.

Agnew returned to the practice of law in Baltimore but opened a branch office in Towson, the county seat of Baltimore County, which was being rapidly populated by young veterans and their wives.

Though he was a Republican in a heavily Democratic county, he became chairman of the Baltimore County Board of (zoning) Appeals and acquired a reputation of honesty in a job fraught with opportunities to accept bribes.

They became engaged in April 1941 but postponed a December marriage when Agnew was drafted that September, three months before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

After preliminary training at two Army bases in the South, Agnew was selected for Officer Candidate School at Fort Knox, Ky., and upon graduation in May 1942 he received his commission as a second lieutenant. He and Jude-  
find were married a few days later.

In 1944, he was sent to the European Theater of Operations, where he saw combat in France and Germany as the Allies closed in on Hitler's Germany.

As a member of the 10th Armored Division, he earned four battle stars, the Bronze Star, Combat Infantryman's Badge and, in late 1944, was present at the Battle of the Bulge, Germany's desperate Christmas thrust against the Allies at the Belgian town of Bastogne.

"In this brief encounter with re-

When a group of Democrats tried to remove him from office, Agnew rode the waves of citizen outrage to the office of county executive in the 1962 election.

In that post he acquired a reputation as a Republican liberal, supporting civil rights causes and backing a public accommodations law, one of the first in the nation at a county level.

Running for governor in 1966, he was the liberal choice over conservative Democrat George ("Your home is your castle") Mahoney. Agnew won handily with the support of blacks and liberals from the Washington suburbs.

As the 1968 presidential election approached, Agnew was openly supporting the Republican liberal governor of New York, Nelson Rockefeller. But Rockefeller dropped out of the race as it became apparent he did not have the votes to gain the nomination.

Meantime, candidate Richard M. Nixon had had several interviews with Agnew and had stated privately that "he was genuinely impressed with Agnew's views," Lippman noted in his book.

After Nixon was nominated, Agnew received his invitation to be on the ticket in a telephone call from the president-to-be. Agnew told reporters his selection to the

ticket had come "like a bolt out of the blue."

The Nixon-Agnew ticket won a close election against Democrats Hubert H. Humphrey and Edmund S. Muskie after a campaign that featured tough talk from Agnew.

"A spirit of national masochism prevails, encouraged by an effete corps of impudent snobs who characterize themselves as intellectuals," he criticized intellectuals on one occasion.

Four years later, the Republican ticket won again, despite newspaper accounts of Nixon administration figures and the break-in at the offices of the Democratic National Committee at the Watergate complex in Washington.

The Watergate scandal led, of course, to the resignation of Nixon in August 1974, but by that time, he already had lost Agnew in a separate scandal.

This second bolt from the blue occurred on a carefully orchestrated day in October 1973, when Agnew stood before a federal judge in a Baltimore courtroom and read a statement in which he pleaded *nolo contendere* (no contest) to a government charge that he had failed to report \$29,500 of income he had received in 1967 when he was governor.

A no-contest plea, while not an admission of guilt, is a considerable distance from a plea of innocent in legal parlance.

Indeed, federal Judge Walter E. Hoffman observed in the courtroom that hectic day that a plea of no contest was "the full equivalent of a plea of guilty."

Hoffman fined Agnew \$10,000 and prescribed three years unsupervised probation after U.S. Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson urged leniency.

Five days later, Agnew appeared on national television, denied the Justice Department allegations against him and said his no-contest plea was not a guilty plea but "the only way to quickly resolve the situation."

The following year, he was disbarred from the practice of law by the state's highest court.

In 1981, Maryland won a civil judgment against the former vice president for \$147,000, an amount that a state Circuit Court judge ruled he had accepted in kick-backs while governor.

Agnew is survived by his wife; a son, James Rand; and three daughters, Pamela Lee, Susan Scott and Elinor Kimberly.

*Sun staff writers John Rivera and Richard Irwin contributed to this article.*