

Mandel being painted for State House

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Marvin Mandel is returning to Maryland's historic State House, this time on canvas.

Twenty-four years after Mr. Mandel replaced Spiro T. Agnew as Maryland governor, 16 years after he was convicted of mail fraud and racketeering and sent to federal prison and four years after he was exonerated of his crimes, his official portrait is finally being painted.

Unlike the paintings of most other high state officials, however, the \$25,000 painting of the former governor by Southern Maryland portraitist Peter Fogel is being paid for entirely with private funds.

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BRUCE C. BEREANO

It was commissioned late last year by Mr. Mandel's wealthy friend and longtime supporter, Annapolis lobbyist Bruce C. Bereano. Mr. Bereano, who worked tirelessly to obtain a grant of clemency from President Reagan in 1981 that enabled Mr. Mandel to be released from prison five months early, said he embarked on the project after discovering that no portrait of Mr. Mandel as governor was ever done.

“His portrait deserves to hang in the State House just like everyone else’s,” said Mr. Bereano, who in more recent times has hired Mr. Mandel to help him represent the lottery firm, GTECH Corp.

Mr. Bereano said he mentioned the plan for a portrait to Gov. William Donald Schaefer, whom he described as “a very dear friend” of Mr. Mandel's, last year.

“He was very pleased and thought it was wonderful I was doing it, and he was very supportive of it being done,” Mr. Bereano recalled. “He even made a contribution.”

Page W. Bolnest, Governor Schaefer's press secretary, said the contribution was a private matter and declined further comment.

The painting of Marvin Mandel's portrait is more than an oversight

belatedly corrected. It is the latest step in the gradual restoration of the 73-year-old former governor's reputation.

Since a 1989 U.S. Supreme Court decision reversed his on-again, off-again conviction for the final time, his license to practice law has been restored, and he now serves as legislative lobbyist for one of the state's most prestigious blue-chip clients, the state medical society.

He is increasingly active in Maryland politics, testifying before General Assembly committees about how in the 1970s his administration started the state lottery, set up a hospital cost control commission that now is nationally recognized, and reorganized the structure of state government.

Memory of the 19 months he toiled sorting laundry in a Florida prison has begun to fade.

If all goes as planned, sometime later this year Governor Schaefer will accept the donation of his longtime friend's portrait. It then is expected to be hung beside those of other governors on the walls of the State House's second floor Reception Room, where Cabinet meetings, bill signings, press conferences and meetings of the Board of Public Works are held.

Mr. Mandel said he, too, was supportive when first approached with the idea, but said he insisted it be done with private funds.

“I said I'd rather not have the state appropriate the money. With the [state's] budget problems, and money problems, it was not the time,” he said.

Last November, Mr. Bereano mailed letters to dozens of longtime friends of Mr. Mandel asking them to contribute \$500 or more to the “Marvin Mandel Portrait Fund.” He declined to say whom he solicited, or who donated.

His letter urged recipients to participate “in view of your particular friendship and relationship with Governor Mandel, and the historical significance” of the portrait. Mr. Bereano — whose own success is intertwined with his ability to raise money for political campaigns — also noted helpfully: “This is not a political contribution and corporate and personal checks may be used.”

So far, he said last week, he has raised about \$16,500 and has sent follow-up letters to nudge reluctant recipients to chip in. Mr. Mandel said

he has not contributed to the project. Mr. Bereano said he himself expects to donate at least "a grand," but said he is waiting to see how close he gets to the \$25,000 goal before deciding exactly how much to donate.

The former governor said he has been posing for the portrait in Mr. Egell's St. Mary's County studio once every four to six weeks for the past four or five months. He said the painting is almost finished.

Dr. Edward C. Papenfuse, the state archivist, said he knew nothing of the plans for a portrait of Mr. Mandel, but said if it is done properly and by an approved artist, "the state would accept it gladly." A portrait of Mr. Mandel when he was speaker of the House of Delegates currently hangs on the wall of the House chamber along with those of other speakers.

Two of those paintings, of former Speakers John Hanson Briscoe of St. Mary's County and Benjamin L. Cardin of Baltimore, also were done by Mr. Egell, whose brother and father also have painted portraits of prominent Marylanders.

Mr. Papenfuse said a quality portrait and frame generally cost \$15,000 to \$25,000.

A portrait of Mr. Schaefer's predecessor, Harry R. Hughes, hangs on the wall of the Governor's Reception Room just inside the double glass door entrance. Next to it is a picture of former Gov. J. Millard Tawes.

But portraits of the three men who served in between, Governors Agnew and Mandel and former acting Gov. Blair Lee III, are absent.

When Mr. Hughes was governor, he had Mr. Agnew's \$2,000 portrait removed, presumably because of the kickback scandal that forced the then-vice president to resign in disgrace.