

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO PAUL SARBANES?

In Washington's daily track meet for power and prestige, Maryland's Democratic senator moves like a turtle while the hares around him grab all the attention. In the end, will slow and steady win the race?

THE year was 1965, and in the paneled offices of Venable, Baetjer & Howard, one of the city's most prestigious law firms, a young associate named Paul Sarbanes sat brooding over his future.

Sarbanes, then 32, had wanted to go into politics for as far back as anyone who knew him could remember. But, while he had gotten involved in local Democratic clubs and worked in the 1964 campaigns of Lyndon B. Johnson for president and Joseph D. Tydings for U.S. senator, Sarbanes had done little to further his own ambitions. Time was passing him by.

"Paul was miserable — you could see it just to look at him," recalls Francis D. Murnaghan, a Venable partner and recently-appointed judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th District, who had befriended Sarbanes. "He was working hard and doing a good job in the firm, but he was frustrated. Finally, I couldn't stand it anymore. I said to him, 'Paul, you're making me unhappy because you look so unhappy. Why don't you run for something? You'll lose. But at least you'll feel better.'"

Five stunning victories later, Paul Spyros Sarbanes is the golden boy of Maryland Democrats. After a surprise success in his bid for the House of Delegates in 1966, Sarbanes, in a decade of relentless campaigning, went from obscure young delegate to congressman to United States senator.

The photograph emblazoned on his campaign posters of the thoughtful-looking man with arched eyebrows, short-cropped, curly hair and just a hint of a double chin has become well-known to Maryland voters — from the Eastern Shore where Sarbanes grew up to the neighborhoods of northeast Baltimore that first sent him to Congress in 1970. To many, it is as familiar as the story of his background, which reads like the American dream: a Greek immigrant's son who, through intelligence and hard work, went on to Princeton, a Rhodes scholarship at Oxford, Harvard law school and finally to the floor of the Senate.

Yet despite his considerable public ex-

BY BARBARA PALMER

posure, Sarbanes remains for many people one of the most complex and elusive characters ever to perform on Maryland's political stage. Interviews with those who have known Sarbanes throughout his career elicit numerous theories about the man.

While some see him as an ambitious overachiever, a calculating office-holder wary of alienating any segment of the electorate, others describe him as a "non-politician" whose spectacular success has been based simply on a rapport with ordinary people.

While some see him as an unusually gifted public servant destined to be the most outstanding U.S. senator in Maryland's history, others say Sarbanes may never fulfill his potential because he is sometimes benumbed by cautiousness and procrastination.

What emerges from these conflicting views is the portrait of a politician whose indecisiveness at times seems in direct conflict with his glittering potential.

"I think sometimes people are somewhat baffled by Paul," concedes Christine Sarbanes, a tall, striking brunette who is the senator's English-born wife. "They ask, 'what is he in it for?'"

"Paul's a tough guy to put in a bottle," adds Nick Schloeder, a teacher at Gilman School, a political confidante and one of Sarbanes' closest friends. "He doesn't really fit anyone's preconception of what a politician should be."

ONE unusual political characteristic of Sarbanes is his well-publicized refusal to sponsor legislation. Although he co-sponsors hundreds of bills, he has introduced only six in his two-and-a-half years in the Senate. By comparison, his Republican counterpart, Senator Charles McC. Mathias, has sponsored 146 bills in the same period.

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During his last term in the House of Representatives, Sarbanes introduced only one bill, compared to 31 bills introduced by Representative Barbara A. Mikulski during her first term as his successor. And since the beginning of the 96th Congress in January, Sarbanes has introduced only one bill, a measure enabling Turkey Tayac, the late chief of Maryland's Piscataway Indian tribe, to be buried in Piscataway National Park in Prince Georges County.

Sarbanes explains his failure to introduce legislation by saying that it is a political game he has never chosen to play. An important lesson he has learned since going to Washington, the senator says, is that "you can get a lot done by letting other people take the credit for it."

It's unlikely that anyone will ever accuse Sarbanes of taking undue credit for anything, since most people note that he goes out of his way to avoid attention. According to former aides, Sarbanes despairs at the thought of going on interview shows such as *Face the Nation* and once agonized for days over a five-minute speech he had to give at the 1976 Democratic National Convention.

"Biochemically, Paul is not an animal who loves the limelight; he's an introvert," says a former aide.

Yet less than midway through his first term in the Senate, this biochemical introvert has gained wide respect among his colleagues, who normally seem to gravitate toward the flashier types in their ranks. A hard worker with a reputation for thorough preparation, attention to detail and a savvy understanding of the legislative process, Sarbanes is particularly effective in the committee rooms, where the finishing touches are put on proposed legislation, sometimes after weeks or months of listening to expert testimony and hammering out compromises.

Sarbanes has received unusually good committee assignments for a first-term member. Besides the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, he is on the Banking Committee and the Joint Committee on Economic Affairs, which oversees congressional policy on the economy. There, observers say he has an almost uncanny



•AMY SALGANIK•



Sarbanes during House Judiciary Committee debate on the articles of impeachment for Richard Nixon.

ability to hone in on important questions and to spot details overlooked by other members. During legislative hearings, for instance, where lobbyists tick off endless figures to support their positions, Sarbanes totals them in his head to make sure the witnesses aren't distort the truth.

Sarbanes' habit of soberly reflecting on issues before making up his mind has also impressed Senate leaders. Last year, during the highly-emotional debate over the proposed Panama Canal treaties, Sarbanes helped draft the position chosen by Senate leadership and was then chosen by them to be the measures' floor manager — he had to be present constantly during the two-and-a-half months of debate to represent the administration's viewpoint. After the treaties had been approved, one of their bitterest opponents rose to praise Sarbanes as both "articulate" and "a very able lawyer."

"I think if you polled all the members of the Senate, Sarbanes would come out among the ten most thoughtful and intelligent," says Senator Thomas F. Eagleton (D—Mo.), who often votes with Sarbanes, particularly in matters dealing with American policy toward Cyprus. "Certainly in the field of foreign relations, I think, he's going to be an important leader."

"As I perceive him, he's always at the heart of an issue," added one Banking

Some say that his concern for getting the facts is too obsessive — that he is deliberative to the point of being indecisive.

Committee staffer. "He focuses immediately on what is essential rather than what is peripheral."

Sarbanes first made such an impression nationally while he was a member of the House Judiciary Committee during its widely-covered hearings on the impeachment of Richard Nixon. While some other members of the committee saw political advantage in revealing their opinions, Sarbanes maintained a steadfast silence. When asked why he wouldn't comment, Sarbanes said he felt it would be wrong to make up his mind before hearing all the evidence.

Partly because of the impression of impartiality he created, Sarbanes was later called on by committee chairman Peter N. Rodino to present the first article of impeachment, which accused the President of the United States of obstructing justice.

But some who have observed Sarbanes at close range say that his concern for getting the facts is too obsessive — that he is deliberative to the point of being indecisive about many issues. Because of this, several former staff aides report that

Sarbanes is difficult to work for.

"He's very bright in terms of mastering the details of an issue but sometimes to the point of driving people up the wall," said one former aide, who did not want to be quoted by name. "He'll question everything and, for no reason, brush aside the work of others. He can be incredibly petty and bitchy. In his constant dicker-ing over every detail, he won't make a decision until absolutely forced to."

As an example, the former aide cited Sarbanes' long delay in naming a successor to U.S. Attorney Jervis S. Finney. In December 1977, Sarbanes appointed Russell T. Baker Jr. to the post, but not until after Finney — who had submitted his resignation almost three months earlier — had called a press conference to complain that the senator's procrastination was jeopardizing both office morale and ongoing investigations.

"He's a great second-guesser," added another former aide, who also requested anonymity. "He continues to analyze things after a decision has been made and worries whether it was the right decision when it's too late."

"I've heard that criticism, but I've never fully understood it," says Sarbanes, who, as he speaks, gestures occasionally with his large hands. "I concede that I don't pop off instantaneously. But I think you have to establish a sense among your colleagues that when you address an issue you know what you're talking about and you're making sense. That means doing your homework and thinking things through very carefully so you're not leading people down a blind path."

If Sarbanes' deliberate and low-key style has made him a well-respected junior member of the Senate, he is also something of a puzzle to his colleagues, according to Capitol Hill insiders. He avoids the Washington party scene and, except on rare occasions, comes back to Baltimore every night. When he does spend the night in Washington, he stays with relatives in Virginia.

Shortly after he was first elected to Congress, his friend Nick Schloeder recalled, Sarbanes was invited to a Washington dinner party at the home of a high government official. It was an important invitation for a young congressman, an opportunity to begin making contacts. Unfortunately, the same night a precinct chairman from Sarbanes' home district was giving a party for many of the people who had volunteered in the campaign. Many people wondered what Sarbanes would do.

"When I asked him where he was going to go, he laughed at me," recalls Schloeder. "He said, 'Nick, it's not even a choice for me. I'm going to be in Baltimore that night.'"

Much of his free time is spent with his wife and children, John Peter, 17, Michael, 14, and Janet, 11. Besides play-

The News American

ing basketball with his children, Sarbanes stays in shape by running several miles at the Johns Hopkins University track as often as possible. For relaxation, he listens to opera.

The Sarbanes' social life in Baltimore has also suffered as a result of his being in the Senate, says Christine, who is described by most people as a much warmer, more outgoing person than her husband. According to Christine, the couple rarely has a free evening or weekend because of the demands of staying in touch with constituents, and, as a result, many of their old friends have stopped calling them. "It can get to be a rather lonely existence sometimes," she laments.

Although neither of the Sarbanes appear particularly concerned with money, Christine, a part-time classics teacher at Gilman School, says that her husband's career in politics has been a financial sacrifice for the family. From his \$57,500-a-year salary, she says, Sarbanes pays many expenses related to his office. In the 1976 campaign, Sarbanes listed his net worth at a relatively modest \$86,900, most of which was accounted for by the couple's home in Guilford.

Sarbanes' unassuming style is an anomaly in a chamber where many other senators are said to spend tedious hours openly fantasizing about their chances for the presidency. Sarbanes says he has no apparent long-range ambitions and that he is suspicious of people who "program their lives." And those closest to him insist that he rarely talks about the future. "He's just the kind of person who takes things one at a time," says Peter Marudas, Sarbanes' closest political adviser. "He doesn't have any game plan or life plan. He just concentrates on what he's doing now."

In contrast to most senators, Sarbanes issues very few press releases and rarely speaks from a prepared text. During the House Judiciary Committee hearings on impeachment, for example, Sarbanes waited until the last minute to prepare his speech and then ended up improvising much of it, according to Kalman R. (Buzzy) Hettleman, secretary of the state Department of Human Resources, who, at the time, was special counsel to Sarbanes on the committee.

SOME say the lack of information disseminated from his office may be a deliberate effort to obscure in voters' minds where Sarbanes stands on issues. Although he has done well in some of the most conservative districts in Maryland, Sarbanes has always had one of the most liberal voting records in Congress. In 1976, he received a 94 per cent rating in a test on liberal issues from the Americans for Democratic Action and a 97 per cent rating from Ralph Nader's consumer lobby, Public Citizen. A year earlier, ADA had awarded Sarbanes an extremely rare 100 per cent rating.

Sarbanes' admirers say that, because of



Christine and Paul Sarbanes celebrate the landslide 1976 victory that put him in the Senate.

Sarbanes has gained wide respect among Senate colleagues who normally seem to gravitate toward the flashier types in their ranks.

his cautious and deliberative nature, constituents respect his positions even if they might not agree with them. The senator's critics, however, accuse Sarbanes of deliberately avoiding certain issues and blurring his positions on others for fear of alienating any group of voters. This is particularly true, his critics say, on issues that might portray Sarbanes as a "big spender."

One former aide noted, for example, that during the Senate campaign, Sarbanes was endorsed by a senior-citizens group for supporting increased Social Security benefits for the elderly and better national health insurance. The endorsement was so non-controversial, the aide said, a press release was sent out without first checking with Sarbanes. According to the former aide, when Sarbanes found out, "he hit the ceiling. He said, 'we've got to stop this. It portrays me as a big spender.'" In a state of near-panic, the aide recalled, Sarbanes called the postmaster of Baltimore and was able to get the release returned.

"For some reason, Paul seemed almost pathologically concerned with whether he appeared to be a big spender," said

the former aide. "I saw this as Paul's gluing himself to the maxim that the first duty of a politician is to get elected. It's hard to quarrel with that, but I'd been led to believe it was going to be a stand-up, speak-out campaign."

Also during the 1976 primary, Sarbanes' opponent, former Senator Joseph D. Tydings, accused him of switching committees in the House to avoid having to take a stand on the issue of gun control. Tydings now plays down the charge, attributing it to the heat of a campaign. But he adds, "There are times when I wish he'd get out in front on issues and take a stand sooner."

Such criticism has dogged Sarbanes since former House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Wilbur Mills gave his often-quoted assessment of him. Not long after Sarbanes went to Congress in 1971, when asked to size up the young freshman, Mills reportedly replied, "We had high hopes for him, but he's so political, he can never make a decision for fear of offending someone else."

But Sarbanes' supporters can point to several times when he went dangerously out on a political limb.

Recently, he clashed with President Carter over the appointment process for Federal District Court judges. Carter, hoping to get more blacks and women on the bench, wanted a judicial nominating commission to replace the old system of having senators submit names to him. Sarbanes refused to go along with the president (and then submitted his list of candidates, which included both a black and a woman who were subsequently appointed.)

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Sarbanes

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And Sarbanes once had a bitter public battle with the imperial personage of then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, when he played a key role in the February 1975 ban on U.S. arms sales to Turkey — an issue of deep concern to Greek-Americans after renewed fighting on the island of Cyprus. Because of his rather dogmatic support for Greek issues, because he was the first Greek-American elected to the Senate and because during his first senatorial race Sarbanes went around the country soliciting funds from other Greek-Americans, who contributed about \$190,000 of the \$966,000 he spent to get elected, Sarbanes has been referred to as "the senator from Athens."

Most who knew Sarbanes, however, including some who are critical of him in other areas, say that this charge just isn't fair. "To call him the senator from Athens is like calling [Senator Henry M. "Scoop"] Jackson the senator from Boeing Aircraft because he's associated with defense issues," said one former aide.

His defenders on this issue also cite his past opposition to American support for Greece's former controlling junta of generals as evidence that he is not a "knee-jerk Greek."

STILL, according to Sarbanes' friends, his education in some of the world's most elite institutions has never separated him from his Greek-immigrant background. "I'm not sure that people believe that a guy who goes to Princeton, Oxford and Harvard can feel comfortable in a working-class environment," says

"Biochemically, Paul is not an animal who loves the limelight."

Nick Schloeder, "but one of the things I think is important to remember about Paul is that he never forgets where he came from."

Sarbanes' father, who came to this country as a teen-ager and later set up a Greek restaurant in Salisbury, was an important influence in the senator's life. A self-taught man, he read both the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* daily.

While Sarbanes was at Princeton, his father used to visit and accompany him to classes. Later, he would strike up correspondences with some of Sarbanes' professors. At Oxford, when Sarbanes wrote his parents about Christine Dunbar, a young classics student he had fallen in love with, Sarbanes' father sent her a long letter sharing his views on ancient Greek literature.

Sarbanes remembers his father, who died in 1957, as a "marvelous man" who talked constantly about the importance of education. "He never placed a high premium on making money," says the senator, "but he taught us it was important to make something of ourselves."

When a Princeton recruiter went to Wicomico High School in the late 1940s, Sarbanes had heard of the university but didn't know much about the Ivy League institution that has long been the favorite college of Baltimore's establish-

"There are times when I wish he'd get out in front on issues and take a stand sooner."

ment. Within his family, the senator recalled, it was assumed he would attend a state college in Maryland.

Sarbanes, urged by his high school principal to apply, was the first student from his school ever to attend Princeton. He went on a combination basketball scholarship and loan program. Sarbanes was active in campus affairs at Princeton, became president of the student government and led a drive to end discrimination at the university eating clubs. He graduated in 1954 *cum laude*.

"He did well at school but didn't make *summa*," said someone who has known the senator for many years. "I suspect that was frustrating for him. He always wanted to be the best."

After Princeton, Sarbanes received a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford University in Cambridge, England, where he studied economics and was captain of the basketball team.

(Sarbanes, who has always been athletic, is best-known as a basketball player. But he was also an outstanding baseball player in high school. One year, he came to Baltimore to play on the state-wide American Legion team only to be momentarily disappointed when the team's coach moved him from shortstop to second base. The coach had someone else in mind for shortstop, a young player named Al Kaline, who went on to become an All-Star performer for the Detroit Tigers.)

After graduating from Harvard Law School, *magna cum laude*, in 1960, Sarbanes, by then married, settled in Baltimore, where he began clerking for U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Morris A. Soper. The job was one of the best opportunities available to a young law-school graduate, and Sarbanes remembers Soper as one of the great influences in his life.

He also remembers William L. Marbury, senior partner in the law firm of Piper & Marbury, where Sarbanes had

clerked one summer during law school. According to Sarbanes, it was Marbury who taught him a lesson which obviously took: Don't speak up unless you know what you're talking about. Once, Sarbanes recalled, he went to Marbury hoping to get him to support a cause he had become involved in. When Marbury began grilling him on the issue, it became apparent that Sarbanes knew very little about it. Instead of giving Sarbanes his support, Marbury lectured him on the folly of talking about something unless you have the facts.

After his clerkship with Soper, a restless Sarbanes bounced back and forth between a local law firm and Washington, between the Kennedy administration and Baltimore's Charter Revision Commission, which he headed in 1963.

In 1965, he was working at Baltimore's Venable, Baetjer & Howard, where Francis D. Murnaghan discovered him brooding in his office one day and told him to "run for something."

AND Paul Sarbanes, the procrastinator, wasted very little time when he got to Annapolis in 1967. He immediately locked horns with then Governor Spiro T. Agnew.

Agnew had submitted a budget that did not, in Sarbanes' view, include enough money for the social programs he believed in. In a legislature where some delegates don't even read all of the several thick volumes of the Maryland budget, Sarbanes not only read them, but prepared an exhaustive critique.

"When Sarbanes got up on the floor to present his critique, people were astounded," recalls C. Lawrence Wiser, a former Montgomery County legislator who was close to Sarbanes in the House of Delegates. "But they listened, which was really unusual. Generally, if you speak more than two minutes in the House of Delegates, you're in deep, deep trouble."

Besides waging his one-man stand against Agnew's budget, in his four-year term, Sarbanes frequently opposed the House leadership, including Speaker Marvin Mandel. Once, for example, he was a leader of a group of young — and, as it turned out, naive — delegates who hoped to oust Dale Hess as majority leader. In the course of their plot, the delegates decided they had to inform Mandel of their plans. Within a few hours of their conference with the speaker in one of Mandel's secret meeting rooms, Frank A. DeFilippo, a close friend of Mandel and, at the time, a political reporter for the *Baltimore News American*, had a banner story about the effort to oust Hess. Needless to say, that was the end of it.

In 1969, Sarbanes further alienated Mandel when he joined a group of legislators who supported the late Francis X. Gallagher over Mandel for governor.

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By the end of his four-year term in the legislature, Sarbanes, according to many, was frustrated and determined to move on. "I remember we were sitting in the back of the House one day," recalls Wisner, "and he turned to me and said, 'Larry, I can't stand this anymore. I'm going to run for Congress. Either I get elected or I'll get out of politics.'"

The decision was a risky one for Sarbanes, who was up against incumbent Representative George H. Fallon, a 13-term veteran and chairman of the House Public Works Committee. But Sarbanes, after analyzing voting records for the district over a period of several years, decided it was worth it and took six months off from the law firm to campaign.

With the backing of organized labor, environmental and anti-Vietnam War groups, Sarbanes won the primary against Fallon and easily beat his Republican opponent.

But by the time Sarbanes was up for re-election in 1972, Mandel had managed to get through the legislature a redistricting plan that carved out an entirely new district for the first-term congressman and put him up against another Capitol Hill veteran, former Congressman Edward A. Garmatz. It was apparent to everyone that Mandel's motive was to get rid of Sarbanes. The redistricting plan was so convoluted, City Council President Walter S. Orlinsky, who was then a delegate, described it as looking like "an early Picasso."

Beginning the campaign a year and a half early, Christine met her husband on his way home from Washington with a brown-bag supper and the two campaigned door-to-door through the new district. Eventually, Sarbanes had built up enough support to convince Garmatz to retire rather than risk an upset. Later, Sarbanes would joke that while he was a critic of the congressional seniority

"People expect him to do too much, too quick and in too many areas."

system, he didn't feel as though he should have sole responsibility for ending it by running against every Capitol Hill veteran.

Although some claim that Sarbanes was never happy in the House because of each individual member's limited influence, Sarbanes claims his decision to run for the Senate in 1976 was based on what he considered to be the dismal record of the Republican incumbent J. Glenn Beall.

Once Sarbanes had upset former Senator Joe Tydings in the Democratic primary, the outcome of the race was never in doubt. Throughout the cam-

paign, the polls showed Sarbanes with a wide lead over Beall, who tried unsuccessfully to portray his opponent as a congressman who hadn't done much in Washington except vote for expensive social programs and reductions in the national defense budget.

Beall did manage to cause his opponent minor embarrassment, however, by making an issue of Sarbanes' reported \$53,000 donation to 20 Baltimore Democratic clubs for "walk-around money" — funds spent on election day to distribute sample ballots and get voters to the polls. Beall pointed out that one of the few pieces of legislation that Sarbanes had sponsored in the Maryland General Assembly was a bill to ban the distribution of "walk-around money," which some people consider tantamount to buying votes. In the gamey tradition of Maryland politics, Beall's charges were overshadowed by revelations that he had received campaign financing from a Nixon slush fund in a previous election.

PERHAPS it was the scope of Sarbanes' landslide victory in that election that created an image that no first-term senator could ever live up to. "People expect him to do too much, too quick and in too many areas," says Joe Tydings. "I consider that on the basis of what he has done, he is one of the model freshmen senators . . . I really believe that."

Whether Sarbanes will mature from "model freshman" to leader in the Senate is still a question. After two-and-a-half years in the Senate, after piling up undisputed expertise in certain areas, Sarbanes is still criticized for not getting involved in more issues. Those who voice this position point out that breadth, as well as depth, is the road to leadership in the Senate; and such past and current leaders as the late Senator Hubert H. Humphrey (D-Minn.) and Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) considerably enhanced their power by broadening their range of issues.

"As a matter of course, he's very cautious and deliberate and probably walks into a committee room better prepared than any other member," said a former aide. "But the result is that he's doing fewer things well than he might be doing. If Paul wants to be a leader, that may have to change."

But Sarbanes, who has a relatively small staff of 21 full-time and ten part-time aides, argues he would be spreading himself too thin to venture into areas outside his committee assignments. Another key to effectiveness, the senator says he has learned, is to focus on a few areas and become an expert in them.

Whatever the political future of Sarbanes, it will obviously be reached after much deliberation on his part. In a national arena where speed often outweighs substance, Paul Sarbanes seems to have made the decision that slow and steady will win the race. ●

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ALL LOANS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

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4 N. EUTAW STREET

NEAR BALTIMORE ST NEXT TO THE HIPPODROME THEATRE

Valley Mede

IN HOWARD COUNTY

DIRECTIONS: Take Route 40 West.
Turn right into Valley Mede on
Greenway Drive, one half block to
Longview Drive. Turn left. Follow
street to sample homes.

Phone 465-5252

ZENITH
CONTRACTORS, INC.



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