

The Sun

**Lobbyist's long-lasting good will; Courtroom: The 39 witnesses called to testify for Bruce Bereano in his attempt to save his law license proved the extensive reach of the popular Annapolis figure.
The Political Game**

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STATE HOUSE lobbyist and convicted felon Bruce C. Bereano took over an Anne Arundel County courtroom last week to try to save his law license.

A fixture in State House circles since the mid-1970s, Bereano called in friends from all reaches of his life to vouch for his character and his fitness to practice law.

The parade of 39 witnesses provided a remarkable glimpse of the good will an energetic lobbyist can generate over a quarter-century.

Rep. Steny H. Hoyer, for whom Bereano worked when Hoyer was president of the Maryland Senate, praised him for drafting environmental legislation that Hoyer sponsored and won political credit for.

Former Del. Kay G. Bienen of Prince George's County described how Bereano, at her request, helped get her daughter out of jail after a brush with drugs and crime.

Former Washington County Circuit Judge John P. Corderman, who served in the Senate when Bereano worked there, said he hired Bereano to represent family members in traffic court.

Former Gov. Marvir Mandel described his admiration for Bereano's skill as a legislative staff person. Mandel never mentioned Bereano's efforts to win him a pardon after his conviction -- later overturned -- for mail fraud.

The most vivid display of Bereano's deep reach into Annapolis was from Martha F. Rasin, chief judge of Maryland District Court. Twenty-five years ago, Rasin answered a newspaper ad to work for Bereano as a legal secretary and stayed with him, off and on, for a dozen years.

Rasin became a judge, and later chief judge of the District Court.

When asked, Rasin said Bereano's 1994 conviction on seven counts of mail fraud did affect her opinion of him.

"It has changed my opinion only perhaps for the better," Rasin testified, noting the humility with which Bereano has handled his legal troubles.

One of the more curious observations was made by perhaps the most unlikely witness -- former Anne Arundel County Executive Joseph W. Alton Jr.

Alton, who went to federal prison in the mid-70s after pleading guilty to a bribery scheme, later got to know Bereano.

Now in his 80s, Alton said Bereano had always impressed him with his eagerness to assist clients and friends.

"Not to psychoanalyze you, but you may have had more of a desire to be liked," Alton told Bereano. "And that motivated you to help other people."

When they weren't praising Bereano, several witnesses expressed contempt for the case brought by federal prosecutors against the lobbyist.

Particularly pointed was Corderman, who was injured in 1989 by a package containing pipe bombs sent to his apartment, a crime that has never been solved.

"I only wish the federal government had been half as zealous in seeking the person who sent me that bomb as they were in prosecuting Bruce," Corderman said.

Miller sets fund-raisers, plans another run in 2002

Legislative fund raising continues to roar along this fall with Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller leading the way.

The longtime Democratic boss of the Maryland Senate will preside over a \$1,000-a-head event Oct. 7 at the Georgetown mansion of physician and veteran political fund-raiser James A. D'Orta.

Miller said he plans to tap into Washington-area contacts he's made through national groups such as the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee and the Senate Presidents Forum.

Miller is also planning a less pricey, \$250 event in December at the Ravens' stadium in Baltimore.

While some in Annapolis have speculated that Miller will not seek an eighth term in the Senate in 2002, Mr. President seems eager

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to put that theory to rest.

"I'm going to run for re-election," Miller said flatly.

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LINDA COAN: SUN STAFF

Caption:

State House acquaintances: Bruce Bereano (right) shakes hands with former state Sen. Larry Young during a break in their respective court proceedings in Annapolis.

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