

# On Being a *First Citizen*

## Remarks

by Dr. Edward C. Papenfuse

**on the occasion of the presentation of the *First Citizen* Awards to former Treasurer Richard Dixon, and to Senators Thomas Bromwell and Walter Baker**

*Wednesday, February 13, 2002*

President Miller, members of the Senate, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen: I am delighted to be here today for two reasons:

first to provide you with a gift from the editorial expertise of Professor Ron Hoffman, Sally Mason, and Eleanor Darcy, who with the financial and moral assistance of the Maryland State Archives have just published the first three volumes of the papers of Charles Carroll of Carrollton,

and second, I am here for the tenth year in a row, to present, on your behalf, the *First Citizen* Awards of the Maryland Senate.

For nearly twenty years Dr. Hoffman, Sally Mason and their staff have struggled valiantly to edit and interpret the correspondence of Maryland Signer, Charles Carroll of Carrollton. The first finished products are before you in three volumes entitled *Dear Papa, Dear Charley*, the wonderfully edited correspondence of Charles Carroll of Carrollton and his father, Charles Carroll of Annapolis. This huge endeavor has been funded in part by the Maryland State Archives, with the support of the Governor and the General Assembly. The full title of the set is worthy of a work that took so many years to complete: *Dear Papa, Dear Charley: The Peregrinations of a Revolutionary Aristocrat, as Told by Charles Carroll of Carrollton and His Father, Charles Carroll of Annapolis, with Sundry Observations on Bastardy, Child-Bearing, Romance, Matrimony, Commerce, Tobacco, Slavery, and the Politics of Revolutionary America.*

*Dear Papa, Dear Charley* follows the distribution at last year's First Citizen Award of Professor Ronald Hoffman's book *Princes of Ireland, Planters of Maryland, A Carroll Saga, 1500-1782*, and the re-installation in the Miller Senate Building of the exhibit about Charles Carroll of Carrollton and the history of Maryland that is still on view in the third floor gallery. All of these events serve to highlight the achievements of an extraordinary public servant.

In addition to its special significance to this body, the publication of *Dear Papa, Dear Charley* is a landmark event in the understanding and interpretation of the history of Maryland, as well as of 18th century America. Carroll was one of the richest men in America and one of Maryland's most remarkable patriots. *Dear Papa, Dear Charley* begins in the late 1740's when young Charles Carroll left Maryland to be educated in Europe and began a correspondence with his father at home in Annapolis. The letters detail Charles Carroll's pivotal role in the American Revolution and its aftermath. They also provide insights into the dynamics of one of the country's most prominent Catholic families.

President Miller's gift to the Senate of *Dear Papa, Dear Charley* has special significance this year for another reason: 2002 marks the 10th anniversary of the presentation of the *First Citizen* Award. This award was created in 1992 by the Archives, at the request of the Senate. In these ten years, the award has

been presented to some of Maryland's most distinguished citizens.

The text of the award says best what it means to be a *First Citizen*:

"First Citizen is the name that Charles Carroll of Carrollton chose to sign a series of articles published by Ann Catherine Green in the Annapolis Maryland *Gazette* in 1773. They form a strong defense of an independent legislature and were among the earliest arguments for a new concept of government based upon traditional community rights and liberties that protected its citizens from arbitrary rule. At the time, Carroll, as a Roman Catholic, could neither vote nor hold public office. With the publication of these articles, Carroll launched a career of public service that would not end until his death at the age of 95 in 1832. In addition to helping draft Maryland's first Constitution and signing the Declaration of Independence in 1776, Carroll served as President of the Maryland Senate, of which he was a member from 1777 to 1800, and as one of the first United States Senators from Maryland (1789-1792). To be a First Citizen is to be a dedicated and effective participant in the process of making government work for the benefit of all."

Although not yet fully articulated in the *First Citizen* letters, Carroll was beginning to ask all citizens to think about much needed changes in government, changes that would allow people like him "freedom of speech and thought," changes that would separate the powers of the Executive and the Legislature, and that would ensure that taxation could not be imposed by anyone not subject to the laws passed by the Legislature. Carroll was among the first people in the colonies to advance a new concept of government based on the advice and consent of the people. This led to one of the most creative experiments in defining self-government that the world has ever witnessed and which abides well with us still.

To Carroll, and to others such as his distant cousin, Charles Carroll the Barrister, Samuel Chase, and William Paca, all of whom served in the Maryland Senate, making government work for the good of the whole meant a thoughtful reworking of the structure of government by writing it all down, debating the results, and crafting the final product in committees separately and of the whole. Carroll as *First Citizen*, saw government much as every citizen should see it today, in constant need of attention and thoughtful legislative action.

Today three distinguished First Citizens are to be honored:

The first recipient of the award is former Treasurer **Richard N. Dixon**.

Treasurer Dixon has his roots in the county named after Charles Carroll of Carrollton. One of his ancestors, Abram Jones, served with distinction in the Civil War in the 30th regiment of the United States Color Troops, a tradition Treasurer Dixon followed with his service in the U.S. Army and as a recipient of the Bronze Star. The first African American to serve as Treasurer of Maryland, Richard Dixon has had a distinguished career in both the private and public sectors. As Governor Glendening recently pointed out, "From his work on the Carroll county school board to his leadership in the House of Delegates, to his tremendous contributions as a member of the Board of Public Works, he has shown a great commitment to serving the citizens of Maryland. The hallmarks of his public service have been the ability to bring people together, a keen focus on the long-term interests of the State, and dedication to sound fiscal management. Throughout his career he has broken down barriers, earning recognition for both his performance and leadership." On behalf of the President and the Senate of Maryland it is my privilege to present him with the *First Citizen* award.

The next recipient is Senator **Thomas L. Bromwell**. A member of the Senate since 1983, Senator

Bromwell, is an outspoken advocate of causes in which he believes, including a program to help seniors pay for prescription drugs, an issue of deep concern for all Senior Citizens. Nearly a year ago, Barry Rascovar noted in the Sun that "For someone who shot off part of his foot even before the General Assembly opened its 2001 session, Tom Bromwell had a great 90 days in Annapolis. The line backer-sized Democrat from northeastern Baltimore county remains among the strongest legislative chairmen. He speaks his mind -- forcefully-- and yet knows how to get his bills passed and block those he dislikes." Senator Bromwell is, in many respects, like Senator Charles Carroll of Carrollton. His heart is in the Maryland Senate. When Carroll was faced with a choice between the U.S. Senate and remaining in the Maryland Senate, he chose to remain in this body. Senator Bromwell has done likewise. For his courage of his convictions, for his flair for making good theater out of politics, and for his leadership in health care and patient rights, it is my privilege on behalf of the President and the Senate of Maryland to present him with the *First Citizen* award.

The third recipient this morning is Senator **Walter M. Baker**. A member of the Senate since 1979, Senator Baker has put his training as a Staff Sergeant in the U. S. Army to good use in this body. In debate he is both colorful and effective. As Marshall Norton noted in the *Star Democrat*, Senator Baker is "a no-nonsense Democrat" who "has always preached that it is not only important to craft new laws, but make sure that bad legislation does not pass through the General Assembly." He was once quoted as saying that "I never met a bill I liked," when asked about his reputation for dealing with legislative ideas that were not well thought out. In many respects, Senator Baker is the Legislative Conscience of the third branch of Government, while pursuing such issues as the Right to Farm, and advocating laws to protect children and pursue 'deadbeat' fathers. For his devotion to the law and to protecting the rights of those least able to defend themselves, for his fierce protection of legislative prerogatives and the careful crafting of meaningful legislation in his over 20 years of service to the Maryland Senate, it is my privilege on behalf of the President and the Senate of Maryland to present him with the *First Citizen* award.