

Anne Arundel

AND MARYLAND

Dundalk embraces resurrected Arnick

By Joe Nawrozki
Sun Staff Writer

In the Dunkin' Donuts where the Duke of Dundalk meets his courtiers, the coffee was fresh, the newspaper was spread out before him, and once again, all was right with his world.

"People really know me because I do things like go to the Dunkin' Donuts every morning," said Democratic Del. John S. Arnick. "I meet a teacher, a cop, a construction worker, a doctor. We talk and, if I can, I help them. Around here, actions speak louder than words."

Mr. Arnick, who was forced to withdraw as a nominee for a judgeship last year amid allegations that he made vulgar and sexist comments about women, was officially resurrected Tuesday by voters in Baltimore County's 7th Legislative

*He's back on road
to power after detour*

District.

His comeback had already begun in Annapolis, where the speaker of the House last month appointed him to the powerful Legislative Policy Committee. More could be in store. The same election that brought Mr. Arnick victory saw the defeat of House Majority Leader Kenneth H. Masters, a Catonsville Democrat. That leaves the leadership position vacant and Mr. Arnick as Baltimore County's most seasoned delegate.

"After everything cools down, I want to talk with the speaker about the job," Mr. Arnick said. "I held the position before, and I didn't get any complaints."

Depending on one's point of view, Mr. Arnick's public resuscitation — the latest episode in a roller-coaster political career — is either wonderful or bizarre.

In Annapolis, he developed a reputation as a crafty legislator, a quick wit and behind-the-scenes problem-solver given to custom-tailored suits and fancy cars — he recently turned in his racy Jaguar for a new Cadillac.

But those who know him also say he can take on a cruder, harder edge in social settings, especially after a few drinks.

In 1993, when he was chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, he received a long-desired appointment to the District Court bench. He resigned from the legislature, gave up his law practice and began

See **ARNICK**, 17B



ALGERIA PERNA/SUN STAFF PHOTO

Del. John S. Arnick takes his breakfast coffee every morning at Dunkin' Donuts, where he meets his constituents.

ARNICK: Dundalk delegate on road to power again after detour

Sun 11-13-94

From Page 1B

hearing cases.

But a Senate confirmation that was expected to be a formality turned into a slugfest amid allegations that he had made vulgar and sexist comments about women during a dinner meeting with two female lobbyists a year earlier.

Coming in the wake of the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas sexual harassment controversy and allegations of sexual misconduct against Oregon Sen. Bob Packwood, the accusations created a public uproar. Mr. Arnick apologized for the remarks, but after a bitter 10-day fight, he gave up and withdrew from the nomination.

He was left without his seat and without a law practice, but got another shot at the political game when the man named to replace him, Edward G. Nipper Schafer, died in September 1993.

The county Democratic Party then chose the 60-year-old Mr. Arnick to fill out his own term. Running this year, he led the field in the Democratic primary — the real election in Dundalk. On Tuesday, he came in third, but it was enough for him to get his old seat back as one of three delegates from the district.

Many Dundalk residents still feel the charges leveled against Mr. Arnick should have been viewed with a more skeptical eye.

"These women blew things out of proportion," said Dolores Gregory, a secretary at the Bethlehem Steel Corp. plant who has known Mr. Arnick for three decades. "We need him in Annapolis, he knows his stuff."

"I have no need for feminists," said Barbara Blackburn, a legal secretary who grew up in Dundalk. "John Arnick has always been there for people with problems. And these women who made these charges tried to ruin his reputation."

This view does not sit well in some quarters, especially among those who brought the charges.

"That was then, and this is now," said Judith Hanford of Lutherville,

“Support for John Arnick has been long and strong simply because he’s visible and responds to people’s problems.”

MICHAEL GALIAZO

who testified that Mr. Arnick made sexual advances to her at a 1990 Christmas party. "His comeback reminds me a lot of Jason in 'Friday the 13th' . . . he's baaaack!"

Judith A. Wolfer, the former lobbyist for the House of Ruth shelter for women whose charges ignited the explosion, was more diplomatic.

"The people of Dundalk are entitled to choose whatever elected representative they want," Ms. Wolfer, now an attorney in Takoma Park, said. "If that's who they want to represent them, then that's that."

Mary Jo Neville, a member of the Baltimore County Democratic Central Committee, was one of two women on the panel who voted against Mr. Arnick's nomination to replace Mr. Schafer.

"I was not disputing his legislative ability," she said. "I was motivated by actions he took dealing with women. I voted my conscience. But a lot of people in his district thought he got a raw deal, and they reacted to that. It bothers me, but that's a decision for the people in Dundalk."

Indeed, to understand Mr. Arnick's revived political career, one must understand the cultural subtleties of the community that is Dundalk, a sprawling village of more than 60,000 residents in the southeastern corner of the county.

Long the butt of jokes, Dundalk has been miscast as a territory populated by men who resemble Elvis and women who have elevated gum-chewing to an art. According to this stereotype, everyone drives a Cama-



ALGERINA PERNA/SUN STAFF PHOTO

John S. Arnick lost a judgeship amid furor over sexist remarks.

ro covered with a coat of primer paint.

"Those preconceived views are from the outside, helped by people who never visited Dundalk," said Mary Michalski, who grew up in Sparrows Point and graduated from James Madison University. "People here tend to be very proud, generous."

The real Dundalk has a culture and charm that dates to World War I, when it was one of the first seven government-financed communities built to accommodate a new army of defense workers.

Dundalk's salad days — the rich times when the nearby Bethlehem Steel mills employed more than 30,000 people — are gone, residents say. But the community pride and work ethic remain.

"Some people look down on people from Dundalk," said Michael Galiazo, a Dundalk native and director of the Regional Manufacturing Institute at Dundalk Community College. "They say Dundalk, and they think hair curlers. But those positions are held

from ignorance.

"In these parts, support for John Arnick has been long and strong simply because he's visible and responds to people's problems," Dr. Galiazo said. "In spite of his losing the judgeship, folks down here perhaps don't view political correctness the same way other people do — it's a cultural difference."

Mr. Arnick's political career goes back to the 1960s. Elected to the House in 1967, he rose to become majority leader. He lost a race for the state Senate, won re-election to the House and became majority leader a second time. He chaired two committees, was nominated for and lost a judgeship, was reappointed to his old seat and ultimately was re-elected.

"As you all know," he told fellow legislators at the beginning of the 1994 session, "I've been in and out of here more times than Billy Martin managing the Yankees."

In a surprising move last month, House Speaker Casper R. Taylor Jr. notified Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller Jr. that Mr. Arnick had been appointed chairman of the House Facilities Committee and a member of the Legislative Management subcommittee and the Legislative Policy Committee.

Mr. Taylor called the policy committee "the board of directors of the legislature."

"Nobody is more qualified in this legislature — the way this institution should be run — than John Arnick," he said. "He has the institutional memory, is clearly expert in his understanding of this institution."

As Mr. Arnick prepares for another session, he says he's grown more philosophical about the event he calls "30 seconds out of my life."

"During those rough spots, I found my Marine Corps training and Catholic education invaluable — surviving in the face of adversity," he said. "I'm not certain who had better punches, the drill instructors or the brothers at Calvert Hall."

"But I also derived a lot of strength from my parents, both of whom

worked in a factory and pipe mill all of their lives for us," he said. "I was fortunate to get to good schools, become a lawyer, learn the legislative process from people like Thomas Hunter Lowe and John Hanson Briscoe."

"Everybody's subject to change, and that includes John Arnick," he said, adding ". . . let's just say I've grown more cautious."

As a final thought, he said, "But I kept repeating another lesson I learned from another one of my mentors a long time ago. Roy Staten told me, 'It's better to go down with your head up than up with your head down.'"