

It is to the credit of Verda F. Welcome that she evolved from a social butterfly into a hard - working, hard - fighting and productive member of the Maryland General Assembly, serving most of 25 years in the State Senate.

Fortunately for us all, she is remembered most, or wholly, for her public service. These years, with the fullest support of her late husband, Dr. Henry C. Welcome, paid untold dividends to Baltimore and the state.

She started out as a public school teacher but, after a stint in the classroom, she withdrew to become a homemaker and a volunteer to neighborhood groups and to the larger community.

Increasingly, however, as the Welcomes saw the Black population grow in numbers but lose out in political influence, they talk, more and more, at the dinner table about "doing something" APRO-AMERICAN

Others had preceded them in breaking the first barriers (1954) and to these the Welcomes made substantial contributions. In another few years, however, it seemed "only natural" for Verda to be a regular, full-time candidate for the legislature.

This was in the mid-1950s, before the Civil Rights Acts and the surge of anti-discrimination sentiment.

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This was also still the time of



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A4

A tribute to Verda Welcome

political "bosses" and their "machines." And, so far as African Americans were concerned, bosses meant "White bosses," overlording Black as well as White political precincts and districts.

There was also political clubs, "for White only," where the political fate of Black Baltimore was determined.

Verda had the time to be a politician and her husband was willing to be her banker.

She was first elected to the lower house (the Assembly) in 1959 and then to the State Senate in 1963, from the Fourth Democratic District (Baltimore) — a heavily Democratic enclave.

She weathered all the customs of rural Maryland at that time — public accommodation, untold

"slights" from fellow members and loneliness. APRO-AMERICAN

These idiosyncrasies dwindled, however, as they usually do, with time, and the Maryland legislature became civilized.

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Senator Welcome sponsored or co-sponsored most of the important civil rights and other laws in the state during her tenure in the upper house. She forged friendship and coalitions with fellow - members — always from the point of view of her constituents' interests.

Eventually, she was included in everything, but she never forgot her first obligation — to serve the people of Baltimore, especially the African - Americans who made up a substantial part of the population (now a majority).

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Senator Welcome was a member of the National Order of Women Legislators, American Association of University Women, Task Force to Study Campaign Financing, Committee to Study Rape and Related Crime, and the Committee to Study Juvenile Crime.

She was also a member of the Fourth District Democratic Organization of Baltimore and the Valiant Women Democratic Club. APRO-AMERICAN

The honorary degrees and other awards presented to Verda Freeman Welcome pay testimony to the full and serviceable life she lived.