

# THE 11 MOST POWERFUL WOMEN IN THE BALTIMORE AREA (AND 29 OTHER HEAVY-HITTERS)

BY RETTA BLANEY  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PEGGY FOX

## Sally Abrams

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Sally Abrams, a 62-year-old state senator, recently became head of the Democratic party, a position which gives her a formidable power base, allowing her to shape party policy and help decide who the Democratic candidates will be.

She represents the northwest area of the city, a powerful area because of its high incidence of voter turn-out from a primarily Jewish constituency. She has served as a state senator since 1971 and was a member of the House of Delegates before that for four years. (In March, 1978, BALTIMORE Magazine named her as one of the "Ten Best Legislators in Maryland.")

Beginning her working career as a nurse, Mrs. Abrams has been particularly active in legislation affecting health care and aging. For the last three years she has served as chairperson of the Humane Practices Commission which studies mental health hospitals statewide. She frequently has been mentioned as a possible successor to Dr. Neil Solomon, the state health secretary.



## Barbara Mikulski

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Barbara Mikulski has always been a force to be reckoned with. A 4'11", East Baltimore Polish powerhouse. One year ago, columnist Peter Jay included her in these pages as the only woman in a list of the 13 people who "run Baltimore" (BALTIMORE Magazine, November 1977). One year later, her power has, if anything, grown.

Miss Mikulski is shrewd enough to play on her slightly incongruous image, introducing herself to a delighted Washington political dinner (and gaining national coverage) as "Carl Albert in drag." She's savvy enough to have maintained influence far greater than the normal first-time occupant of a desk on the floor of the House. And she's never stopped representing her home district.

The Mikulski Energy Amendment, an amendment of the national energy bill, was recently passed, allowing federal money for city buildings to audit the amount of energy they use, thus aiding in energy conservation. She also was instrumental in defeating the Rail Rate Equalization Amendment which would have meant a loss of between \$17 and



\$20 million in revenue for the city in jobs and traffic to the port. On the Hill, Miss Mikulski has reportedly become a close confidante of Jim Wright, the House majority leader.

Now earning \$57,000 a year, Miss Mikulski is also active in the area of women's issues. "Barbara's our right hand," said a spokeswoman for the Baltimore NOW. "We relish the fact she's in the House of Representatives." She especially cited Miss Mikulski's "eloquent" speech delivered recently on the floor of the House for support of an extension of the ratification of the ERA.

"I like helping people," Miss Mikulski says. "I was a social worker and still think of myself as a social worker. It gives me personal pleasure to help people and bring bucks to Baltimore. I get a bang out of it." She claims to keep in close touch with the mayor's offices to ensure programs are drafted for the city's best interest.

Miss Mikulski, 42, has never been married, and lives in a restored house in Fells Point where cupboards and appliances are all lower than normal to make them easier for the diminutive representative to reach.



### St. Clair Wright

St. Clair Wright's power is visible in the look of Annapolis today. She has been primarily responsible for saving or restoring at least 300 buildings in the city. Though her work as chairman of the board of Historic Annapolis, Inc., an active preservation group which she helped start in the early '50s, is voluntary, her influence can be measured by the very fact that her unrelenting fight to preserve her city is succeeding.

"She bulldozes her way through, lobbying in the legislature, and is the person most responsible for the appearance of Annapolis today," says a local reporter, who also warned: "Don't cross her."

### Shoshana Cardin

Shoshana Cardin is chairwoman of the Maryland Commission for Women and wife of power broker, builder and developer Jerome Cardin.

The Maryland Commission for Women has initiated such new programs as New Directions for Women and worked with legislators for successful passage of rape and property reform measures. It has become, according to Mrs. Cardin, the state agency for women. National leaders have frequently come to the commission for help in matters concerning women.

"We advocate action, not just research and study," says Mrs. Cardin, explaining that unlike some commissions—which serve only to study or recommend—her commission can develop coalitions and actively lobby for women's rights.

Born in Tel Aviv in 1926, Mrs. Cardin says she was "an organization woman" before joining the commission, working in the community for many years. She also taught reading and English at Southern Junior and Senior High schools. Mrs.

Mrs. Wright, a mother of three, holds a degree in design from the Maryland Institute of Art and used to paint murals in schools, clubs and private buildings in California and Washington. She refused to give her age, but Mrs. Wright is probably in her late 70s and is said to possess a "saintly purpose" and a "holy cause" in her approach to her work. Known for being one of the few people who could put a cork in former Anne Arundel County Executive Joe Alton's mouth, having fought with legions of people (particularly developers) in her struggle to "save a beautiful and historic city from destructive elements," her image around Annapolis is that of a little old lady in tennis shoes who can make the entire bureaucracy shake with fear.



Cardin, whose work in the commission is voluntary, says: "I have seen progress. It's possible to have an impact in the legislature and on the judicial process. We are heard."

Founder and first president of the Jewish Community Center Associates and founder of Women Together, Mrs. Cardin was a 1978 delegate to the National Women's Conference.

### Phyllis B. Brotman

Phyllis B. Brotman, president of Image Dynamics in Baltimore, has nationwide clout. She is one of the few women advertising agency owners in the country to be given the highly-selective membership in the American Association of Advertising Agencies. She is also a member of the National Advertising Review Board—composed of business and advertising executives—which meets a couple times a year to review commercials thought to be unethical, immoral or misleading.



Fans of public television in Maryland have reason to thank Mrs. Brotman. She wrote the bill for public TV, then lobbied in Annapolis to bring it to the state. "It took a full year out of my life to put together that public relations campaign," Mrs. Brotman says about that volunteer campaign in 1966. After her lobbying experience in Annapolis, Mrs. Brotman wrote a booklet entitled "Your Voice in Annapolis" to help non-professional lobbyists who are going to the legislature for the first time. The booklet, which is updated every year, gives the history of the state legislature, explains where things are located in the State House and provides the names and addresses of the legislators.

Image Dynamics, which Mrs. Brotman founded in 1966, handles the advertising and public relations for such local accounts as Holiday Inns of Baltimore and Vermont Federal Savings and Loan. National accounts include United Vintners, Mother Goose Shoes and Chicago's O'Hare Inn, with other clients coming from as far away as California. Mrs. Brotman claims she has never had to pursue the national accounts; Image Dynamics is known by reputation. A division of her company handles political campaigns. . . . National campaigns have included Democrats for Nixon and Rockefeller for President.