

Schaefer: Governor's Mansion open to all

By GOV. WILLIAM DONALD SCHAEFER

It is not everyday that we move all the furniture out of the drawing room at the Governor's Mansion for an Easter egg hunt, but then it is not everyday that a governor has as nice a day as I had last week. Days like that remind me why I really like this job.

My guests for the afternoon were 16 disabled, but very energetic, students from the Maryland School for the Blind, and they had come to the governor's home for an Easter egg hunt followed by

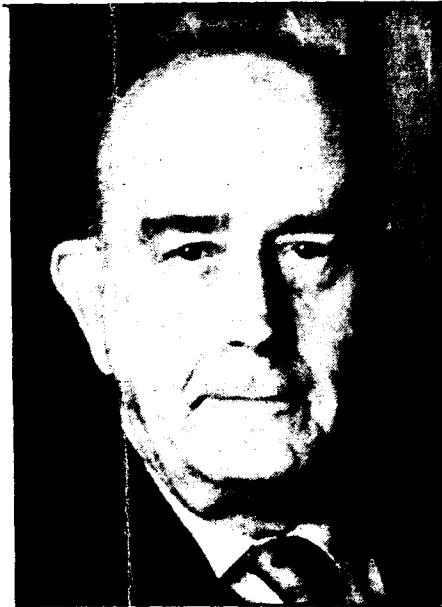
Guest column

pony rides on the front lawn. Soon after they arrived, they were moving through the first floor rooms of the Governor's Mansion in search of colored plastic eggs. These were not ordinary Easter eggs. Each had been specially outfitted with a small beeper to alert the children to their hiding place.

All of this at the Governor's Mansion in Annapolis? Doesn't sound very gubernatorial, does it? On the contrary, events like this — we average about six a week — are just what this administration is all about, and the Governor's Mansion was a perfect setting.

As I travel around the state, people ask me about the Governor's Mansion. They have read press reports about some of the changes we are making at the mansion and they want to know just what Schaefer has in mind for "their" house.

I have some very strong feelings about the wonderful house Maryland provides for its governors. The Governor's Man-



sion in Annapolis is one of Maryland's public treasures, and it should be open and available to all citizens of the state. I want the house to be a symbol of our state, and of the state's responsiveness to, and concern about, its people. I do not want the mansion to be a museum. I do not want it to be a place where only the "rich and famous" feel welcome. I want it to be a house for all the people of Maryland.

I want school children who are studying the history of our state to come through the mansion, to relive the memories of the historic moments and the famous people associated with the building. I want visitors to the state capital from Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore to see just what we are doing in Annapo-

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lis, to remember the generations of Maryland leaders who have met and lived in the mansion.

We have many visitors to Annapolis who are here to do business with the state — delegations from foreign countries who are thinking of possible investments, CEOs from large corporations who are considering moving to or expanding in Maryland, national leaders, dignitaries from other states. We want to show them Maryland at its best, and the Governor's Mansion should do that.

We have given a lot of thought to what we need to do so that the house can accommodate more visitors and become a center of Maryland hospitality. First, we are replacing the museum-quality antique furniture that could not be touched or sat upon with very good reproductions that represent the historic periods of the house, and yet are accessible to our visitors. We are replacing the rugs, now threadbare from years of use and neglect, with newer, more durable replicas. We are doing some painting and some plastering.

Who is paying for all these changes? The mansion's staff, of course, is made up of state employees, along with some dedicated volunteers, but the new furni-

ture and rugs and some sofas and much of the materials are funded almost entirely through private donations. Such private contributions are typical in most states, but until now we had not explored that option fully in Maryland.

The mansion has been especially busy the past two months with many events related to the General Assembly session. We have had a variety of events — from visits by senior citizens to formal dinners for the members of the legislature. Last Christmas, 2,500 Maryland citizens dropped by for a holiday open house to see the mansion. It's been great. Wonderful people, wonderful memories.

So if you come to visit the State House in Annapolis, do not be surprised if you see a group of school children led by a senior citizen governor coming through the front door of the Governor's Mansion. We will all be there reliving Maryland's glorious past and preparing for its future.

I hope you will plan a visit to the Governor's Mansion. The public rooms of the mansion are open for tours on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. by appointment. For information about the tours, call 974-3531.

As always, I want to hear from you. Write me: Gov. William Donald Schaefer, State House, Annapolis, Maryland 21401.

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