

MIETRO

A Personality All His Own Schaefer's Style Defines His Legacy in Md. Politics

By Richard Tapscott and Fern Shen
Washington Post Staff Writers

Herewith the gubernatorial last will and testament of Maryland Democrat William Donald Schaefer, effective at noon tomorrow when he leaves office:

To historians, Schaefer leaves the formidable task of explaining how a chief executive could get away with wearing viking helmets and Indian war bonnets, writing letters calling citizens stupid and ugly, and dropping his drawers in a private meeting with legislative leaders to illustrate his "exposure" on a key political issue.

To his successor, fellow Democrat Parris N. Glendening, Schaefer leaves behind a General Assembly considerably more submissive than the one he had confronted eight years ago. More often than many legislators would like to recall, Schaefer simply ran over them to get his way.

To Free State citizens, Schaefer leaves a cleaner, healthier Chesapeake Bay, wider roads to the Atlantic beaches, higher performance standards for public schools and health and welfare systems already on the road to reform.

He also leaves Marylanders an ailing state economy, thanks in part to a spending binge that

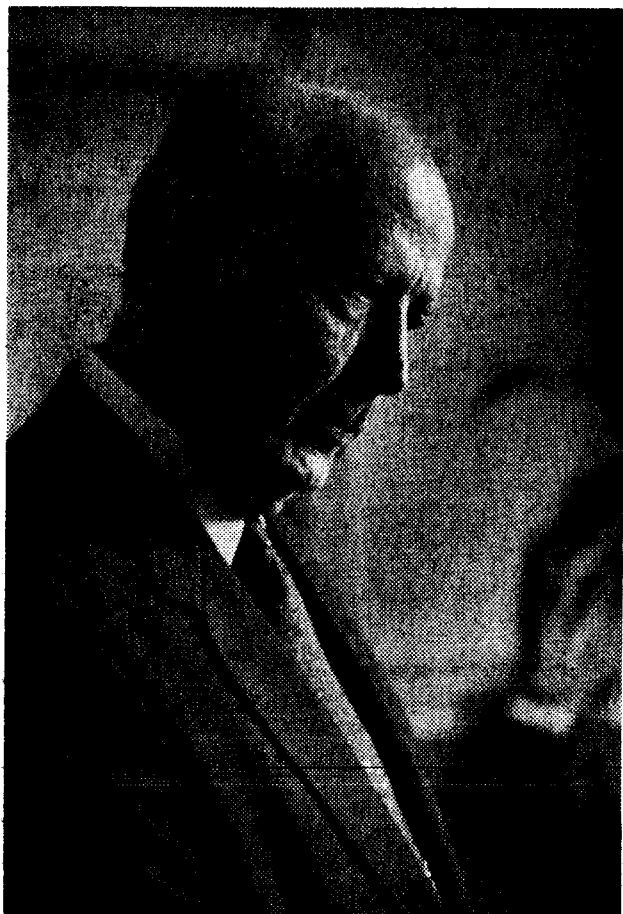
pushed tax rates skyward and discouraged new businesses and jobs. Schaefer built commitments into the state budget that could shackle the next generation of state leaders.

To his beloved Baltimore, the former mayor leaves most of all Oriole Park at Camden Yards, arguably the best new downtown baseball stadium in the world. To caricaturists, he leaves the memories of his made-to-order image—the body shaped like a bowling pin, the rolling gait like a ship captain walking the deck and the immense head, shiny and bald on top, cradled in a nest of jowls.

Finally, this lifelong bachelor and only child—whose four-decade political career was his whole life—leaves the Governor's Mansion for the last time tomorrow unsure just how one does that—particularly one who hasn't been behind the wheel of an automobile in 23 years. "I think they drive you over to your house. Or call a cab," he said. "That's what I'll have to do. Call a cab."

In some respects, scholars could divide the last half-century of Maryland governors along the same lines as a current rental car advertisement—William Donald Schaefer and Not Exactly. "Make everything an adventure. I

See SCHAEFER, B4, Col. 2



BY KEITH JENKINS—THE WASHINGTON POST

William Donald Schaefer ends a political career in Maryland that lasted 40 years with the end of his term as governor.



"Make everything an adventure.
I learned that from Mayor
[Richard J.] Daley of Chicago."

— GOV. WILLIAM DONALD SCHAEFER

40 YEARS OF PUBLIC LIFE

WILLIAM DONALD SCHAEFER

His politics and style, 1955-1988

1955 NOV. 8: Schaefer, a real estate lawyer who grew up in a West Baltimore row house, wins election to the Baltimore City Council.



Schaefer in the mid-1950s.

1971 DEC. 7: Schaefer becomes mayor of Baltimore.



1981 JULY 15: To promote the city aquarium, Schaefer dons a swimsuit and leaps into the seal pool while clutching a rubber ducky.

1986 NOV. 4: Promising to do for the state what he did for Baltimore, Schaefer is elected governor, winning an unprecedented 82 percent of the vote.

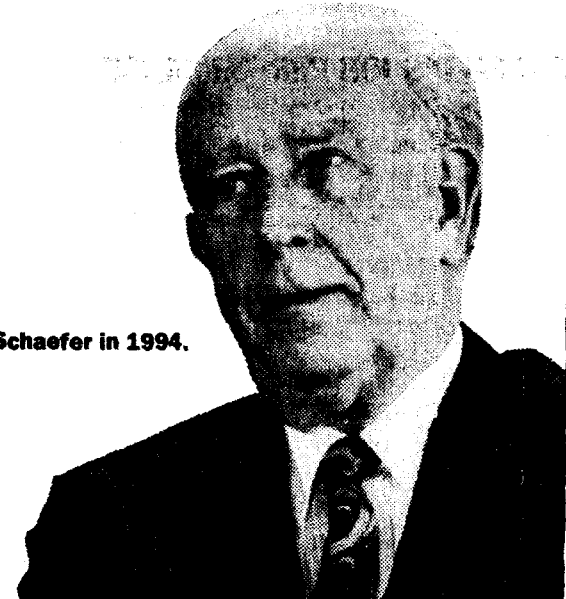
1987 MARCH 27: To ease congestion for Ocean City-bound traffic, Schaefer announces the Reach the Beach program of highway improvements.

APRIL 13: General Assembly approves Schaefer proposal to build a \$201 million stadium in downtown Baltimore for the

Orioles baseball team and contingency plan for an adjacent football stadium at Camden Yards. Lawmakers and Schaefer also enact a gasoline tax increase that will provide \$1 billion over five years for transportation projects.

1988 JAN. 15: Wearing a pair of gag "goofy glasses" during a speech to the House and Senate, Schaefer proposes a \$290 million trolley system for Baltimore, a \$50 million reorganization of higher education and a \$20 million math-science high school. He ultimately wins all but the high school.

NOV. 8: With Schaefer leading the effort, gun-control advocates win a referendum that upholds the state's ban on cheap handguns, called Saturday night specials.



Schaefer in 1994.



Schaefer bade farewell in January 1987 to the people of Baltimore, whom he had served as mayor.



Schaefer wearing a soundproof headset in 1992.



Baltimore Symphony Orchestra conductor David Zinman tested Schaefer's musical ability during the orchestra's 1987 visit to London.

Blind Spots Place Schaefer This Side of Greatness

SCHAEFER, From B1

learned that from Mayor [Richard J.] Daley of Chicago," Schaefer explained recently. As governor, Schaefer lived by that creed.

An activist leader, the "Do It Now" governor ruled by intimidation, threat and often sheer force of will. He entertained with behavior that was, by turns, obnoxious, appalling and lovable.

Schaefer had his political blind spots. The largess he showered on Baltimore while he often slighted the increasingly populous Washington suburbs heightened bickering among the state's two dozen jurisdictions. November's voter surge that nearly elected Republican Ellen R. Sauerbrey governor was in part a re-

sounding rejection of the House of Big Government that Schaefer built.

And he could be ornery and mean. Often, if the legislature would not give him exactly what he wanted, he'd take nothing at all. When cut, he bled. "I don't have elephant skin. I have very, very tender skin," he said. He fired off impolitic letters to some of his critics, and after a majority of Eastern Shore voters opposed his 1990 reelection bid, he compared the region to an outhouse. Stunned that voters in half the state's counties supported his little-known opponent, he lashed out with a bizarre tirade of words and actions that accelerated his nose dive in public opinion polls.

By the end of his eight years as governor, Schaefer's inability to compromise or tolerate criticism undermined his ability to lead Maryland where he wanted it to go. His energy and willpower produced enough triumphs to make him a good governor, according to some legislators and observers, but his wildly erratic temperament barred him from the ranks of the great ones.

"As an administrator, he was outstanding," said George H. Callcott, professor emeritus of history at the University of Maryland. "Sooner or later he won almost everything he wanted from the General Assembly. Where he failed was in public relations. He failed to give the people of the state a vision, an aspiration, and failed to win an enthusiastic following."

Baltimore's Clown Prince

Schaefer the governor began where Schaefer the mayor ended. As mayor of Maryland's largest city for 15 years, he had developed a national reputation as a cantankerous, curmudgeonly, stunt-loving, urban miracle worker. It was a shtick that evolved along with the shiny new reputation of Baltimore.

Pre-Schaefer Baltimore, according to the creation myth, was a nondescript, grimy Eastern Seaboard town suffering from white flight and an evaporating industrial base. After Schaefer, it was a quirky urban

jewel, attracting millions of tourists to a gentrified waterfront. Critics said the downtown renaissance was a chimera, conjured to hide the city's continued plunge into poverty and economic stagnation.

Sponsoring turtle derbies, a "Baltimore Is Best" boosterism campaign, neighborhood fairs, Pink Positive Day and similar stunts, Schaefer behaved like a big kid arranging the pieces of a toy metropolis. He never met a funny hat he didn't like; he donned the costumes of every era.

"One thing I learned, make the city fun," he said, recalling how he handled a water main break by having city workers erect a sign: "New Fountain in Your Neighborhood."

Underneath his chronic clowning, tyrannical rages

and flair for theatrics, Schaefer may have been insecure about his working-class roots and his intelligence. He considered himself "not a bright student by far," he said in a recent interview. "I was one of the best mayors in the country, not by brilliance . . . but by hard work."

The man who took the governor's oath of office in Annapolis that cold January day in 1987 was like few of his predecessors. Schaefer, who presented himself as a baloney-sandwich Regular Guy, grew up in a small row house in West Baltimore, never married, lived with his mother until she died and vacationed alone in his Ocean City trailer. He spoke in stream-of-consciousness assemblages of clichés and sentence fragments. He never felt compelled to put subjects anywhere near verbs.

Elected governor at 65, Schaefer in many ways was an anomaly for his time, his party and his state. His eight years in Annapolis were an era when younger governors dominated America's statehouses. Few came from large cities, fewer still had been big-city mayors. With the exception of New York's Mario Cuomo, the standouts among Democrats were mostly moderates: Bruce Babbitt in Arizona, Richard W. Riley in South Carolina, L. Douglas Wilder and Gerald L. Baliles in Virginia—Bill Clinton in Arkansas. While other Democratic governors aspired to higher office, Schaefer acted as though he aspired to lower office, feeding rumors that he would run for mayor of Baltimore again.

Politically, Maryland's new governor conformed to no easy mold or label and would not change during his eight years in office. He endorsed Republican George Bush for reelection as president in 1992 rather than back Clinton.

In terms of public policy, Schaefer would not change either. He would be guided by his party's traditional tax-and-spend creed, with no apologies.

Even in Maryland, Schaefer seemed out of step. Unlike his immediate predecessors, Harry R. Hughes

(a former Senate majority leader) and Marvin Mandel (a former speaker of the House of Delegates), Schaefer had never served in the state legislature. He was unschooled—and refused all lessons—in the give-and-take that was the heartbeat of Annapolis. He had no real ties to the state Democratic Party he nominally headed. Nor did he want any.

Initially, Schaefer rolled over the General Assembly much as he had the Baltimore City Council. Legislators were shellshocked, after eight years in which Hughes largely had ceded the initiative to the lawmakers. Not Schaefer. He sent them a long list of proposals—topped by twin sports stadiums in Baltimore—and demanded passage halfway through his first 90-day session. "The first year we were here, we got 31

out of 32" legislative proposals, Schaefer proudly recalled. His first session contrasts sharply with the cautious approach planned by Glendening, who has signaled he will make only modest proposals this year.

For a time Schaefer worked magic, even as he failed to consult legislators. He whined, pitched tantrums, made threats, used obscenities. As he did in the city, he scrupulously kept track of those who failed to support him—and made them pay for it in ways both large and small.

"For years after I voted against him on the tax thing, whenever I would see him in the halls, he would shake his head and say, 'You don't support me, you don't support me,'" recalled Del. Marsha G. Perry (D-Anne Arundel). When the time came for him to sign the bills approved in the legislature, she recalled, "he would always veto my version and sign the [identical] Senate version. It was just a symbolic dig."

His second year in office, Schaefer the Showman summoned bewildered legislators to his office five minutes before his surprise announcement of a \$290 million Baltimore trolley proposal. A model train had been set up, a few county executives were dutifully sporting old-time engineer's hats and the media were assembled, but the legislators balked. Schaefer flew into a rage and, according to one observer, dropped his pants to make the point that he was vulnerable. The light-rail system ultimately was built, although it was over budget and has been plagued by low ridership.

Almost overnight, the balance of power shifted to the governor's office. When lawmakers cut his office budget, he declared "war" on the General Assembly and forbade his staff to talk to legislators.

In Annapolis, as in Baltimore, he terrorized his staff. He announced that all his Cabinet secretaries would trade jobs as a learning experience, and he presided over their meetings as if it were a class of kin-

See SCHAEFER, B5, Col. 1



UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL

Schaefer donned one of his trademark funny hats, this time a 17th-century militia helmet, as he joined longtime companion Hilda Mae Snoops and Lt. Gov. Melvin A. Steinberg in Annapolis for Maryland Day in March 1987.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Baltimore's mayor posed at the National Aquarium in 1981 after an aquarium construction deadline was missed.

Schaefer Leaves Legacy of Triumphs and Problems

SCHAEFER, From B4

dergartners—Cabinet members had to raise their hands for permission to go to the bathroom.

Signs of Trouble Ahead

Even in the early flush years in Annapolis, with the wind of a booming state economy at his back, Schaefer's personality traits foreshadowed trouble. His highhanded approach to legislators, his sly favoritism to Baltimore, his insistence on quick results—they often irritated and occasionally backfired. The kooky character behind the Inner Harbor renaissance in Baltimore found that his politics of personality (which led Esquire magazine to name him the "best mayor in

America") did not play so well in Annapolis.

When he advertised for a director to head a residential math-science high school, legislators fumed. What math-science high school? Schaefer hadn't even asked them for the money to build the \$20 million facility yet. When he did, they said no.

"The things that I lost [were] because I didn't know how to handle the legislature," Schaefer recalled. "For instance, the math and science school. That wasn't anybody's fault but mine. I learned then that you can have the best idea in the world, but if you can't sell it right . . ."

State Sen. Paula C. Hollinger, a Baltimore Democrat, saw two distinct sides to Schaefer: "He's like the nursery rhyme about the little girl with the curl in the middle of her forehead: When he was good, he was very, very good, and when he was bad, he was horrid."

Under Schaefer, state spending grew by more than 8 percent annually—at a time when personal income was growing closer to 5 percent. Maryland reaped windfalls from federal tax reform and growing federal defense budgets, but Schaefer paid scant attention to suggestions that he cut taxes or squirrel away money for the future. He still believes that long-range planning is pointless: "I never planned beyond a year," he said recently. "What can we do in a year?"

As a national recession loomed on the horizon, just beyond anyone's view, Schaefer decided to push a massive plan to restructure Maryland's tax system in January 1991. It was designed to shift the burden from property taxes and permanently direct more state revenue to Baltimore and a few poor, small counties. His handling of the \$800 million tax plan became Schaefer's biggest legislative failure, and it was emblematic of many themes of his tenure as governor: his perceived Baltimore bias, his voracious spending appetite, his inflexibility and, ultimately, his shortsightedness.

Lt. Gov. Melvin A. Steinberg (D), who had successfully shepherded many of Schaefer's bills through the General Assembly, cautioned the all-or-nothing gover-

nor to go slow. Aware that wealthier counties such as Montgomery would see the tax plan as a raid, Steinberg advised him to spread out the measure over two or three years. Ignoring him, Schaefer demanded that the 1991 legislature enact the entire package. Lawmakers promptly rejected it.

That refusal to compromise cost Schaefer dearly. The following year, when the recession hit in full force, Schaefer and legislators had little choice but to approve spending cuts and tax increases—but they did not change the spending formulas to give preferences to Baltimore and other poor areas, as Schaefer wanted.

"He is a great salesman and a great motivator, and he could have gone down as one of the greatest governors in Maryland history," said Steinberg, who spent

most of their second term in Schaefer's crowded doghouse. "But he thought the person was more important than the institution, and he rules by vindictiveness and intimidation."

As the recession deepened, Schaefer's response demonstrated the strength of his commitment to big government. Rather than slice spending once and turn his attention to other areas, he made a series of painful, piecemeal cuts. In neighboring Virginia, Wilder slashed spending earlier and more deeply, helping his state move on.

Looking back, Schaefer said he is proud of how he steered Maryland through tough economic times. "The last four years were the toughest years, but more fun years," he said, "because there was a tremendous challenge to bring the city and the state out of the recession without destroying the state. . . . Yeah, it was grim. But . . . I knew I could do it. I just knew I could do it."

Taking no blame for his fall from public grace (polls put his approval rating at a low of 16 percent in early 1993), Schaefer attributed his major losses as governor to unremittingly unfriendly media. The press "made me look foolish . . . destroyed my image and made me seem like I was sort of a jerk and a nitwit, a sort of person who did silly things," he said.

Although he championed the liberal Democratic tax-and-spend credo, Schaefer had a long-running love affair with the business community, especially in Baltimore, where he was a friend to many contractors and developers who profited handsomely from his public works projects. "Too close to business? You can't be too close to business," Schaefer said flatly. He pointed with pride to his many international trade missions, to Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Asia and the Middle East, as an example of his administration's success in strengthening Maryland's economy. The state had "no economic development or a very weak economic development" and "no international trade" when he took office, he said.

Yet Maryland's economy remains wobbly as Schae-

fer departs. And at least partly because of Schaefer's policies, Glendening may find it more difficult to balance the state budget for years to come. Because of the spending patterns Schaefer established, state government is on a track to grow faster than tax revenue—and higher taxes are hardly an option in the current political climate favoring smaller government.

Maryland suffered more than most states during the recession of 1991-92. It lost thousands of jobs in the Washington and Baltimore suburbs. The number of Fortune 500 companies has shrunk in Maryland to less than half what it was when Schaefer took office, while Virginia's doubled during the same period. Maryland business leaders argue that high combined state and local income taxes, which Schaefer raised

or zealously protected, are a major impediment to luring new business investment to the state.

Robert O.C. Worcester, president of Maryland Business for Responsive Government, said that Maryland's private sector shrunk during Schaefer's tenure while government continued to expand.

"Under Schaefer, Maryland developed a cleverly layered set of taxes and regulations, the effect of which on business is toxic," Worcester said. "Take Maryland's personal income taxes. They say to decision-makers when they're considering Maryland, compared to other states, that our state doesn't mind being uncompetitive. It's a serious disincentive to them locating in Maryland."

Incomplete Past; Future Possibilities

Among his few regrets, Schaefer said, is the fact that he never had children or a family, except for his longtime companion, Hilda Mae Snoops, a 70-year-old former nurse who worked as an administrator at a federal health agency and lived with him at the Governor's Mansion in the second term. "Hilda Mae is my family I guess, in a way. Not in a way—she is my family," he said recently.

Schaefer and Snoops bought twin town houses side-by-side in northern Anne Arundel County, where they apparently plan to live upon his retirement. His business friends have endowed a chair for him at the University of Maryland-College Park, where he plans to do some writing and perhaps regular radio appearances.

And if he continues to have more than a dabbling hand in Maryland politics, no one will be surprised. In his final weeks on the job, Schaefer has been feverishly making last-minute appointments, hearing final pleas for assistance, even publishing a symbolic state budget to let the world know, one last time, what William Donald Schaefer thinks is important:

"I would help everybody, from the time they were born to the time they were buried," he said. "I honest to God thought that was my duty."

40 YEARS OF PUBLIC LIFE

WILLIAM DONALD SCHAEFER

His politics and style, 1990-1995

1990

JUNE 20: Seeking to restrain rising health care costs, Schaefer orders a "managed care" system under which Medicaid recipients—mostly poor people—must go to an assigned physician.



NOV. 6: Running against a little-known Republican, Schaefer wins reelection with 59 percent of the vote but loses 12 counties, including much of the Eastern Shore.

1991

JAN. 18: Entering the House of Delegates chamber to give his annual State of the State speech, Schaefer asks an offhand question of an old pal and Eastern Shore lawmaker: "How's that [expletive] of an Eastern Shore?" The governor also seeks an \$800 million tax overhaul, which is later rejected by the legislature.

NOV. 26: To encourage "responsible behavior" by welfare recipients, Schaefer orders that some benefits be cut unless children are in school and get preventive health care.

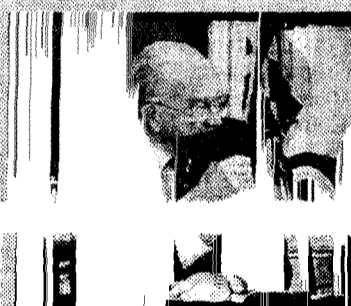
1992

APRIL: At the depth of the recession, Schaefer pushes through \$800 million in increased state and local taxes to avoid deeper cuts.

OCT. 29: Democrat Schaefer flies to St. Louis to endorse Republican George Bush for reelection as president.

1993

MARCH 15: Underscoring his proposal to ban some assault weapons, Schaefer picks up a menacing-looking but unloaded gun during a State House news conference and aims it at an



reporter.

APRIL 26:

Expanding on the Maryland School Performance Program, in which schools are ranked and graded, Schaefer supports state takeover of failing schools.

1994

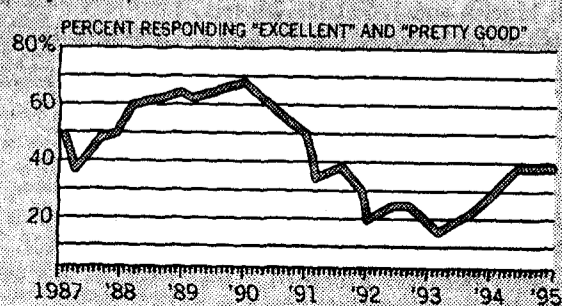
MARCH 31: After three years of frustration, Schaefer wins legislative approval for a ban on selected models of military-style assault weapons.

APRIL 11: As Schaefer's last session of the General Assembly adjourns, legislators reject his key proposals by refusing to increase cigarette taxes, further limit welfare payments, regulate gambling and speed up death penalty appeals.

SCHAEFER'S JOB PERFORMANCE

Results of polls conducted by Mason-Dixon Political/Media Research Inc. Margin of error for each is 3.5%; at least 800 registered voters statewide were polled.

Q: How would you rate the performance of William Donald Schaefer as governor: Excellent, pretty good, only fair or poor?



SOURCE: Mason-Dixon Political/Media Research Inc.