

Martin Curran Sr., 64, 'Dean of City Council,' loyal to constituents

4-16-99

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Martin E. "Mike" Curran Sr., a retired brewery worker who spent 18 years in the City Council representing Northeast Baltimore, died yesterday afternoon at Good Samaritan Hospital. He was 64.

Mr. Curran died of complications from a heart attack suffered Wednesday morning while driving on Old Harford Road. The car struck a house.

He was a member of a Northeast Baltimore political dynasty that has been at home in City Hall for years. His 3rd District seat is now held by his brother Robert Curran. Their father, the late J. Joseph Curran Sr., was elected to the seat in 1953.

His brother, J. Joseph Curran Jr., is Maryland attorney general.

Mr. Curran, who often wore a white rose in his lapel, was known as a man of his word but of few words on the council floor, and as a gruff but kind politician who took care of his constituents.

The former Carling-National Brewery employee was elected to a 3rd District seat in 1977, representing the Hamilton and Gardenville areas, and served until 1995. When he left, he was the longest serving councilman, earning the honorary title of "Dean of the City Council."

"He was the premier constituent service man on the City Council," said former 3rd District Councilman Joseph T. "Jody" Landers, who served with him.

"When we had trouble getting things done, he could make it happen. Mike was always the guy behind the scenes, who was busy organizing bull roasts and tending to the machinery of the Curran organization," said Mr. Landers. "He didn't see himself as one of those who gave lots of speeches on the floor of the council. However, when the time came to get votes, he was a good ally to have."

Mr. Curran's verve for constituent service got him into a bit of trouble with Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke.

When a snowstorm hit, Mr. Curran would jump into the cab of a yellow Department of Public Works snowplow and direct the driver to hit the "good spots, hot spots and snowy hills" on and off Harford and Belair roads, the heart of his district.

But Mr. Schmoke forced an end to the practice, saying the public could see it as potentially unfair.

"The passing of Mike Curran represents a real loss to this city," Mr. Schmoke said. "He was a fine public servant and an energetic participant in the political process. His work in campaigns made him something of a legend among Democratic Party officials at the state and local levels. His enthusiasm for the city and for politics will be greatly missed."

"He was a good councilman and

a good campaigner, a good man in the community. This guy, when he believed in something, he really went after it. Right or wrong, he went after it," said state Comptroller William Donald Schaefer.

"He had a very good heart. He would make a lot of loud noises about things. But he was a team player. We came to love those loud noises," said former Council President Mary Pat Clarke, who served with him and his father.

She recalled that Mr. Curran was a strong advocate of broadcasting council meetings on the city's cable television station. Before he joined the council, the meetings had not been aired.

"He was very proud of that," Mrs. Clarke said.

Born in Baltimore, Mr. Curran attended parochial schools and was a 1955 graduate of Baltimore City College. He served in the Marines until 1958 and joined National Brewery — later Carling-National — afterward.

He was a City Council clerk from 1967 to 1977, when his father died and he was chosen to succeed him.

In recent years, Mr. Curran served as chief executive officer of the United Third District Democratic Organization and volunteered at the St. Vincent de Paul Society. He was also a member of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick and a former member of the Northwood Baseball Little League.

He was a communicant of St. Dominic Roman Catholic Church, Harford Road and Gibbons Avenue, and a member of the Knights of Columbus.

Plans for funeral services were incomplete yesterday.

In addition to his brothers, Mr. Curran is survived by his wife of three years, the former Ellen M. Givans; a son, Martin E. "Mike" Curran Jr. of Baltimore; two daughters, Virginia Curran Seward of the Putty Hill section of Baltimore County and Michele Curran Tadeo of Baltimore; and six grandchildren.

A sister, Sister Margaret Curran, S.S.N.D., died in 1993.

Sun staff writers Ivan Penn and Amy Oakes contributed to this article.