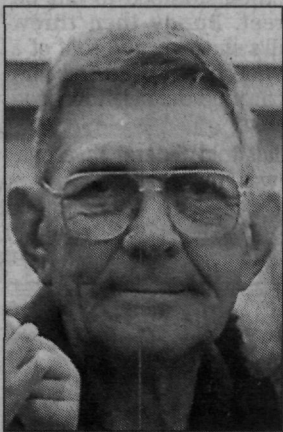


# Hugh Burgess

[Age 78] The Howard County lawyer, who served 16 years in the House of Delegates, was a champion of the environment.



BY JACQUES KELLY  
[SUN REPORTER]

**H**UGH BURGESS, A RETIRED Howard County attorney who advanced environmental causes while serving in the Maryland House of Delegates for 16 years, died of complications from kidney failure April 25 at Ellicott City Health and Rehabilitation Center. He was 78.

Born into an old Howard County family, he was the son of Lionel Burgess, who also served in the Maryland House of Delegates. The younger Mr. Burgess was a 1946 Ellicott City High School graduate who earned a premedicine degree from Western Maryland College (now McDaniel College), where he boxed and played football. He was a 1963 graduate of the University of Baltimore School of Law.

After passing the Maryland Bar in 1964, he established a legal practice on Main Street in Ellicott City. He had also worked as an analytical chemist for Greenspring Dairy, the Baltimore City Health Department and the Doughnut Corporation of America.

“He was very much a product of the county and always did what he thought was best for it,” said friend Martha Clark.

Mr. Burgess tested himself in politics by running for the 5th District congressional seat in the 1964 Democratic primary, but he was soundly defeated. Several months before, he had produced a board game with a political theme called Caucus. “A democracy should know all about how it selects its leaders so that it can compete with those dictatorships that enjoy a natural efficiency advantage,” he told an *Evening Sun* columnist that year. Family members said he paid to have the game manufactured but that sales were small.

His father died while running for a House of Delegates seat in 1966, and the Howard County State Central Democratic Committee selected Mr. Burgess to fill the vacancy on the ticket. He won in the general election — and continued to be re-elected until he lost in 1981.

“He was the quintessential old-time Howard countian,” said Martha Clark, owner of the Elioak Farm. “He was very much a product of the county and always did what he thought was best for it.”

While serving in Annapolis, Mr. Burgess became an early advocate of Chesapeake Bay and tributary cleanup.

“He was a child of the natural world and had a passion for the environment and land conservation long before it was in style,” said his daughter, Sandra Funke of Ellicott City. “He spent a lot of his childhood at [his] grandparents’ farm at Mount Hebron.”

More than 40 years ago Mr. Burgess started a large compost pile behind his home and made it known he accepted donations. He persuaded the management of a local 7-Eleven convenience store to give him its coffee grounds. Neighbors brought their grass clippings. He used the results from the pile to help raise dozens of tomato plants in a backyard garden.

“He was fascinated at how long it would take for a telephone book to break down,” his daughter said. “He would measure its rate of decomposition and take timings. He was a man of many interests, but science and the environment were at the heart of it. He was a fiercely independent thinker.”

He also stopped alongside roads to pick up aluminum cans.

“If he saw something that could be recycled, he’d stop and pick it up,” said a son, Stephan H. Burgess of Ellicott City. “He was one of the early leaders in the recycling movement.”

He was a member of the Ellicott City Kiwanis Club for 51 years and had served as its president.

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. May 9 at First Evangelical Lutheran Church, 3604 Chatham Road in Ellicott City.

In addition to his daughter and son, survivors include his wife of 59 years, the former Doris Royer; another son, Reid E. Burgess of Parkton; two daughters, Deborah West and Holly Burgess, all of Ellicott City; a brother, Lionel Burgess Jr. of Catonsville; seven grandchildren; and a great-granddaughter.