



HERBERT BELGRAD

1999 Benjamin L. Cardin Pro Bono Service Award

BY BETTY LYNNE LEARY

When Maryland Gov. Harry Hughes asked Herbert Belgrad '61 to chair the fledgling Maryland Stadium Authority, he assured him that the job wouldn't take much time. That was 1986 and today, Belgrad laughs at the memory of their conversation, recalling that he spent more than 2,000 hours on the project during the first year and never less than 1,000 hours per year for the next nine.

"It was a mammoth project," he says. "It required lots of hands-on time. But I've been fortunate and successful, and it was a way to return something to the community. Everyone has to give back—especially when you have been as fortunate as I have."

An enduring and sincere commitment to his community characterizes this year's Benjamin L. Cardin Pro Bono Service Award recipient. Belgrad built the Stadium Authority from the ground up, hiring an executive director and staff, and starting the long, often arduous, process of developing a twin stadium complex to house Baltimore's professional baseball and football teams.

"No one in the world dreamed we would propose a twin stadium complex because at the time we didn't have a football team," Belgrad explains, adding that he derived the most satisfaction from

working with the Orioles. "We started from scratch with them negotiating the terms of a long-term lease. It was a very complicated and lengthy negotiation, but we sorted through the issues that created the design and construction of what we have today."

In spearheading the Stadium Authority's efforts, Belgrad called upon years of practice as a skilled negotiator and a background in labor law. His pro bono activities also include work with the Maryland Legal Services Corp. and the State Ethics Commission. As Chairman of the board of the Legal Services Corp. for three years, Belgrad worked with many providers of legal services, coordinating their efforts and allocating funding.

"You have a cross-section of multiple organizations and entities all providing a small piece of representation for people who are underrepresented," he says. Working behind the scenes to help others is a common thread that runs through the Baltimore legal community, according to Belgrad.

"There's a cadre of lawyers I've practiced with who are active in community and civic organizations, bar associations and pro bono work," he says. "It's more than an obligation. They enjoy it from a personal point of view, and there's a sense of satisfaction in trying to achieve something and succeeding in doing it."

For Belgrad, his personal satisfaction often comes as he walks the streets of Baltimore on game day, watching the fans head for the ballpark or crowd the sidewalk cafes downtown.

"My term as Chairman was very visible and very controversial," he says, "but I feel the time was worthwhile whenever I see the crowds and see the city revitalized. I was a part of that. When your time is completed and the job is done, you feel tremendous satisfaction knowing your participation and efforts made it a better project."