

Baltimore Corruption

Posted by Stan Moore on January 15, 2009

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On the morning after she stared down her criminal indictment, and insisted she'd done nothing wrong, Mayor Sheila Dixon went back to business as usual. She arrived at the Upton Boxing Center, in the 1900 block of Pennsylvania Avenue, and put on boxing gloves. She threw a few snappy shadow punches. The shadow must have had a face like the state prosecutor of Maryland.

The trip to the boxing center was part of the mayor's Fit Baltimore program. By Friday evening, just hours after her indictment, Dixon's office already had put out a statement about the Fit program, blithely declaring, "Baltimore City is poised to soar to new heights. There will be challenges. In fact, there already has been. But with perseverance and faith, we will weather this storm."

The allusion was clear, though the mayor didn't know the half of it. On Saturday, as Dixon and others put on gloves and worked out, the boxing ring began to move. The mayor noticed it but kept on shadow boxing. Then the metal stanchions supporting the ring collapsed.

[...]

There was a time, roughly 30 years ago, when the Baltimore area seemed to lead the league in political corruption: Spiro Agnew, moving from Baltimore County to Annapolis and then to Washington, never broke stride when it came to taking money under the table. Baltimore County Executive Dale Anderson went off to prison, and so did Anne Arundel County's Joseph Alton.

Anderson never got over his troubles. From the moment a federal jury found him guilty of 32 counts of extorting kickbacks from developers, of tax evasion and conspiracy, he barely contained his rage.

"I'm not guilty," he said as he marched out of the old Calvert Street federal courthouse, "and I'm not gonna let these bastards destroy me. I'm gonna beat them back to their goddamned socks."

He never did. He went to prison, came out, got elected to the state legislature for a term, then lost a bid for re-election.