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James Clark Jr. 1918-2006

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**BODY:**

James Clark Jr., a former state senator, civic leader and long-time Howard County farmer who was a pioneer in land preservation, died yesterday of cancer at his Ellicott City home. He was 87.

Senator Clark was widely respected as an elder statesman and community leader who friends and colleagues say set an example of civility and integrity in his political dealings and personal life.

He served for 24 years in the state Senate -- including four years as Senate president -- where he was instrumental in the creation of legislation for farmland preservation and Project Open Space. And he was committed to Howard County, helping to start institutions including the Howard County Conservancy, the Howard County Fair, Howard Community College and the Antique Farm Machinery Club.

Senator Clark's 540-acre farm in Ellicott City produced milk for 30 years and continues to have field corn, vegetables, beef cattle and sheep. A farm stand has been attracting customers for 37 years, and the senator turned a portion of the property into a petting farm with his daughter, Martha Anne Clark of Ellicott City.

"He was Howard County," said County Executive James N. Robey. "He was someone everyone at the local level looked up to for advice and guidance."

James Clark Jr. was born on his parents' small farm in Ellicott City a few weeks after the armistice that ended World War I. His father, James Clark Sr., was a Circuit Court judge who traced his roots in Howard County back to 1797. His mother, Alda Hopkins Clark, was a direct descendant of the Ellicotts, who settled the mill town that became Ellicott City.

He attended school in Ellicott City and earned a bachelor's degree in animal husbandry from Iowa State College in 1941.

The summer before graduation, he met Lillian Hawkins on a group outing to Sandy Point State Park, and they married in 1946.

In his memoir, *Jim Clark: Soldier, Farmer, Legislator*, Senator Clark said his wife "fulfilled the role of political

partner flawlessly" by taking care of the children and the farm, attending political events, campaigning and offering "her very sound judgment." She died in 2001.

After graduating from college, he volunteered for the Army, and while training at Luke Field in Arizona was accepted into a newly formed glider corps. He spent 4 1/2 years in the Army Air Forces and served in Europe during World War II.

Senator Clark wrote in his memoirs about flying through enemy fire to transport the 17th Airborne into Germany for the final thrust of the war. He also wrote about one day when he helped carry survivors out of the concentration camp at Dachau and place them on planes to Belgium.

"This was one of the most unforgettable experiences of the war for me," he wrote, "and after more than 50 years I can still see those faces and wasted bodies."

On his return to the United States, Senator Clark entered into an agreement to take over a farm his father owned in Ellicott City, and raised cattle, wheat and corn. In the late 1950s, the farm expanded to include the neighboring Brown farm, and -- protected by an easement through the farmland preservation program -- it remains a landmark on Route 108 today.

He wrote in his memoirs, "As early as I can remember, I was in love with farming. I liked everything about the raising and harvesting of crops and the feeding and care of livestock. This is something that was in my blood, as our family on both sides had been good farmers since before there were any records."

He also wanted to become a legislator from an early age, and in 1958, when he was 39, he was elected to the Maryland House of Delegates. Four years later, he was elected to the state Senate, where he became vice chairman of the finance committee and a member of the Legislative Council and served as Senate president from 1979 to 1983.

"I didn't know a thing about the legislature when I went down there, not a thing," he said in an interview with Howard Community College's television station last year. But, he said "I got some things done that are lasting."

During his time in the legislature, Senator Clark championed civil rights causes and worked to revise the state pension system. He fought for many years at the national level for a balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

He often said he was particularly proud of creating legislation that formed the Maryland Farmland Preservation Foundation and Program Open Space.

"It could be said he is the father of our land preservation programs," said Charles C. Feaga, a Howard County councilman and a chairman for the Maryland office of the federal Farm Service Agency. "I think we would have continued to build without setting land aside for the future of agriculture. ... He worked very hard, and we [farmers] were very proud he actually made a living out of milking cows."

U.S. Rep. Benjamin L. Cardin, who served as speaker of the House of Delegates while Senator Clark was Senate president, said, "He was one of the last real gentlemen of Maryland politics. He was mild-mannered but firm, a person who stood for principle all his life."

Edward Cochran of Clarksville served as a county councilman and then county executive while Senator Clark was in the state legislature. He said, "The biggest characteristic of Jim Clark was the fact he was just likable. Everyone liked Jim Clark, even when they opposed him. That was a great gift that he had."

Mr. Cochran said Senator Clark remained an important political figure even after he left office.

"I don't know of any Democratic candidate for office that didn't talk to Jim Clark before they threw their hat in the

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ring," said Mr. Cochran. "He leaves a void in the body politic in the county."

In 1987, Senator Clark retired from the Senate and returned to full-time farming. "I wanted to come home and get the farm in shape," he said in the Howard Community College interview. "That's what I've been doing. I never expected to be here this long. ... I've left the farm in the best shape it's ever been. When I'm gone, I'm sure it will miss me."

During his lifetime, Senator Clark saw the county change from a rural place with more than 200 dairy farms to a sprawling suburb with more than 269,000 residents.

"Agriculture is just about gone from the county, and what isn't gone has changed," he said in an interview with The Sun last month. "People are doing different things," he said, such as raising niche crops and offering on-farm activities. "They have to [adapt]. They don't have any choice."

Senator Clark's influence is felt far beyond his farm. He was the second president of the Howard County Fair Association in the mid-1940s and a board member until 1965. He was an honorary board member and former president of the Howard County Historical Society and a founding member of the Howard County Antique Farm Machinery Club.

A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. Sept. 2 at St. John Episcopal Church, 9120 Frederick Road, Ellicott City.

Besides his daughter, he is survived by two sons, Mark Tyson Clark of Quincy, Fla., and James Hawkins Clark of Ellicott City; a brother, Joseph Hopkins Clark of Ellicott City; and six grandchildren. Another daughter, Pricilla Phelps Clark, died at age 6.

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**GRAPHIC:** Photo(s)

Sen. James Clark, on his 548-acre farm in 2002, said farming was in his blood. "As early as I can remember, I was in love with farming," he wrote in a memoir.

AMY DAVIS : SUN PHOTOGRAPHER

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