



legendary ladies

10 WOMEN WHO CHANGED THE FACE OF MARYLAND

BY JENNIFER KEATS CURTIS

Last year, with help from the Maryland Women's Heritage Center (MWHC) and an outstanding nominating committee, *Maryland Life* started a new tradition by identifying "10 Women Who Changed the Face of Maryland."

This year, 10 more women were selected by an impressive array of female committee members who scrutinized Marylanders past and present and then came together to whittle the list down to the final number.

Although not every woman chosen was born in the Free State, each honoree embodies a strong element of "Maryland." And while their accomplishments are individual and unique, these legendary ladies all share dedication and drive, boundless energy, persistence, and sheer will.

HERE ARE THEIR STORIES.

legendary

BARBARA MIKULSKI (1936-)



GROWING UP IN HER ETHNIC NEIGHBORHOOD in East Baltimore, Barbara Mikulski often watched her father open the doors to his grocery store early so that local steelworkers could buy their lunches before the morning shift.

"It was here that I first learned the values of hard work and neighbor helping neighbor," she says.

"I became determined to make a difference in my community, so I began my career as a social worker. When the neighborhoods I was working in were threatened by the proposed construction of a 16-lane highway, I organized members of those communities and, together, we saved some of Baltimore's most vital neighborhoods.

"That experience helped me decide to run for office. I knew I would rather be opening doors for others on the inside than knocking on doors from the outside."

Mikulski says, growing up, she never dreamed of becoming a U.S. senator.

"I've always enjoyed studying history, but I never thought of myself as historic," she says. But historic she is: Mikulski is considered a trailblazer.

After her first election, a successful run for Baltimore City Council in 1971, she ran for the U.S. Congress and won, ultimately representing Maryland's 3rd District for a decade. In 1986, she successfully ran for the U.S. Senate; she was reelected in 1992, 1998, 2004, and 2010.

During this time, Mikulski achieved other notable firsts, including being the first female Democrat to serve in both houses of congress; the first woman elected to statewide office in Maryland; and the first female senate Democrat elected to a leadership position and to serve on the Senate Appropriations Committee and chair an appropriations subcommittee.

She recently became the longest-serving female senator in U.S. history and will be inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame this fall.

"It's not about how long I serve, but how well I serve," says Mikulski.

"Service, for me, is about being connected to my constituents, meeting their day-to-day needs and the long-range needs of the nation."

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"Barbara Mikulski is a political icon," says Carmen Votaw, an international leader in the field of civil rights.

"She has propelled herself from her grocery-store parents to a prominent role in 'herstory,' and she just keeps getting better as she goes along."

Adds Votaw, "She is a consensus builder, a great orator, and she is so energizing and interesting to watch.

"I admire her as a leader in women's health, pay equity, bay conservation, and among the neighborhoods of East Baltimore. She is a champion for veterans and first responders and an absolutely magnificent supporter of volunteerism and national service, as well as an enabler of innovation in science, technology, and space. To boot, she is a great supporter of the Girl Scouts of the USA.

"In short, she is an all-around person to honor, emulate, and bask in her glory. Could I wax more ecstatic?" ✨