



THE SUN/BARBARA HADDOCK

**HILDA MAE SNOOPS**



THE SUN/WALTER M. McCARDELL JR.

**GOVERNOR SCHAEFER**

# Use of 'first friend' term draws Schaefer protest

By Peter Jensen  
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ANNAPOLIS — You can call her Hilda Mae, or you can call her Mrs. Snoops, or you can call her "the governor's longtime companion," but you don't have to call her his "first friend."

That was the word yesterday from Gov. William Donald Schaefer, who termed the "first friend" description of Maryland's official hostess as a "low blow" by *The Baltimore Sun*.

Mr. Schaefer said he has been generally unhappy with the news media's reporting of Mrs. Snoops' controversial \$1 million-plus renovation of the governor's mansion in Annapolis.

He singled out the "first friend" description as evidence of a newspaper "trying to hit Hilda Mae."

"It's a trademark of *The Sun* to put that in," Mr. Schaefer told reporters yesterday during an impromptu news conference. "This 'first friend' . . . that's sort of an uncalled-for remark. I think that's a low blow."

A spokeswoman for the governor said Mr. Schaefer's press office was

caught off guard by Mr. Schaefer's reaction. The governor has not indicated his disdain for the "first friend" title in the past, said Louise Hayman, Mr. Schaefer's deputy press secretary.

The reaction was particularly surprising since Mrs. Snoops has referred to herself as "first friend" in conversations with state legislators.

Nevertheless, the "first friend" episode indicates how ticklish Maryland's bachelor governor can be about his private life. Mrs. Snoops, a 64-year-old divorcee, former nurse and retired federal employee, has been Mr. Schaefer's companion for years but has remained at arm's length from the press during most of his administration.

As for the ongoing renovations at the mansion, the governor said he now sympathized with the mansion's "prior occupant" (former Gov. Harry R. Hughes) who "allowed the mansion to deteriorate."

"Why subject yourself to being hit so hard" by the press? Mr. Schaefer said. "When you fight the papers you have to expect to get slapped around. But that's me. When it's someone else, that's something else."