

APPROVED
47-1988

Rockville, Maryland
December 1, 1988

The Board of Education of Montgomery County met in special session at the Carver Educational Services Center, Rockville, Maryland, on Thursday, December 1, 1988, at 8 p.m.

ROLL CALL Present: Mrs. Sharon DiFonzo, President
 in the Chair
 Dr. James E. Cronin
 Mr. Blair G. Ewing
 Mr. Bruce A. Goldensohn
 Mrs. Catherine E. Hobbs
 Mr. Chan Park
 Mrs. Marilyn J. Praisner
 Mrs. Vicki Rafel
 Dr. Robert E. Shoenberg

Absent: None

Others Present: Dr. Harry Pitt, Superintendent of Schools
 Dr. Paul L. Vance, Deputy Superintendent
 Mr. Thomas S. Fess, Parliamentarian

Re: SWEARING-IN OF NEW MEMBERS

Delores Wischnowski, clerk of the Montgomery County Circuit Court administered the oath of office to Mrs. DiFonzo, Mr. Ewing, and Mrs. Hobbs.

Re: STATEMENT BY MRS. HOBBS

Mrs. Hobbs made the following statement:

"Tonight is a very special occasion for all of us, and this speech to this audience is more difficult for me than speaking at a candidate's forum.

"There have been many exciting events in my personal life--
 like winning a freckle contest at Glen Echo amusement park (I
 feel just as nervous tonight as I did then)
 or being chose 'Miss Fire Prevention' by the Silver Spring
 Volunteer Fire Department, (I feel just as awkward tonight as I
 did then)
 or winning a champion blue ribbon at the Montgomery County Fair
 (and I feel just as thrilled tonight as I did then).

"There have been several rewarding accomplishments in my career--
 like earning the professional secretary's certification after two
 years of extensive study (and I am just as proud tonight as I was
 then).

"There have been many opportunities to serve my neighbors, school,
community, and church.

"But all of these special occasions combined together cannot touch the amazement, joy, thankfulness, and love that I feel tonight.

"Amazement that I have achieved this elected position as a member of the Board of Education.

"Joy that my efforts and the efforts of those who supported me have been rewarded.

"Thankfulness and love to my family, friends, neighbors, and the voters who have made this a reality.

"I have many people to thank for their support, advice, and faith in my abilities. First I must express my gratitude to my wonderful family--my husband, Dave; our son, David; and our daughter, MaryBeth. I want to thank my parents--Wade and Elizabeth Sheriff; my sisters--Nanci, Vicki, and Pam; my brothers-in-law--John and Donnie; my nieces--Courtney who attends Olney Elementary School, Kasy, Kari, and Megan; and my nephews--Scott and Kevin--all from Mt. Airy. I want to thank the entire 'Hobbs' family. It is impossible to name each person, but I would like to acknowledge my nephews, Jerry and Chris who attend Paint Branch High School and their parents Joan and Steve Hobbs, my nephews Steve and Brian and their parents Charlotte and Buster Kirk, and my nieces Carolyn and Christy and their parents Tommy and Pat Hobbs. Also Donnie and Ruth Hobbs, my mother-in-law Mary Hobbs and my father-in-law Donald Hobbs, Sr.

"Next on a very long list is my campaign treasurer, Marilyn Elisberg, and her husband, Bennett. This campaign treasurer filed official forms, offered advice, campaigned, proofread questionnaires, attended social functions, and was ready, willing and able to handle any challenge.

"Others who helped me include my minister, Dan Stone, and the members and children of Ashton United Methodist Church.

"I can truthfully say that the person who started me in this direction, even though he and I never anticipated the outcome--is Dr. Tom Warren. Tom was the person who listened to my concerns and answered questions and gave me advice. Thank you, Tom.

"My service to the students, parents, school staff, and county residents encompasses a wide range of projects, goals and objectives. I have been honest about my priorities. My personal experience will guide me. Accomplishments may be small, but I hope they are many.

"The ultimate goal in education should be for each and every student to reach his or her potential. The minimal goal should be for each and every student to receive an adequate education. Social, economic and ethnic backgrounds, sex and race, physical and mental capabilities should not affect this ultimate goal.

"But no one works alone.

"I follow in the path of two well-respected women--Peggy Slye and Vicki Rafel. It is encouraging to know that we each bring different personalities, different perspectives, different roles.

"I was a candidate...now I am one of eight members of the Montgomery County Board of Education. Bruce, Marilyn, Jim, Sharon, Blair, Bob and Chan, I hope you will accept me with patience, remembering your days as a 'new' member of the Board. I look forward to working with each of you.

"I look forward to working with Dr. Pitt, his executive staff, and the many employees in the school system. I look forward to working with the members of the County Council and the county executive.

"In the last three weeks I have had a first hand glimpse of the problems and decisions we face in the future. The late nights and demands on my family and personal life are crystal clear to me. I accept the demands as well as the challenges. My father has taught his daughters that any job worth doing is worth doing right. My sincere thanks to each of you here this evening and to all the voters who have expressed their confidence in me.

"Thank you."

Re: STATEMENT BY MR. EWING

Mr. Ewing made the following statement:

"I am delighted to be here tonight. It was a long hard election battle. I was my own and only enemy. While 6,000 people voted for blank and a few wrote in some names, 175,000 voters punched me out, so to speak. I am humbled by that, and proud to serve again.

"I want to congratulate those elected at the same time, Sharon DiFonzo and Cathy Hobbs. I look forward to working with you--and debating issues with you, and with the other, continuing members of the Board. I wish Vicki Rafel well, and want to pay her tribute as a valuable colleague over the past eight months, one who has made important contributions.

"As the senior Board member now, in age and in service, it would be fitting, I suppose, if I were to mellow. Age, says the poet, mellows the spirit. Not mine, however. I am impatient. And as the senior Board member, I would like to offer some reflections on the Board and its work, the future and what we ought to be doing. What it means, in my view, to be a Board member. My view of what it means to be a Board member is that Board members ought to seek their inspiration from the public that elects them and ought to have in mind tasks that the school system needs to accomplish because in some areas it has not met all the needs of the children it serves. Board members ought to be constructive critics, taking seriously the view that the best friends big bureaucracies serving the public interest can have are the critics who know they can do better. I am not a mere

cheerleader, though I am glad of every success. I am not, as four superintendents know, a believer in the proposition that it is the duty of Board members to support superintendents, no matter what.

"Let me reflect with you on some of the problems of the Board, and then on what might be done about those, and in the process, share with you some thoughts about some urgent unfinished business. As the Board begins its new term, it could look to Alexander Pope's familiar phrase: Hope springs eternal in the human breast. We all hope for a better future. Pope finished the couplet, however, less hopefully. Man never is, but always to be, blest.

"One reason I am still on the Board is that I keep hoping for the blessings of improvements, and while we get a few, they seem to me to come awfully slowly. I plan to keep on pushing and pressing for improvement, for reform, mindful of course of that old story about Reform from England. A British parliamentarian, being pressed for support of parliamentary reform in 1932, said: "Reform! My God man, things are bad enough as they are!"

"Why do we move so slowly, apart from normal human procrastination, intense caution, differences of view, opposition from without and shortage of resources (as if those were not enough to explain it)? It is in some measure because of how the Board approaches its tasks. Although plans are needed, and need to be based on deep analysis, the Board does not seriously plan and does not debate serious issues, except on the rarest of occasions. An example: in 12 years, the Board has had only one extended discussion of what students should know on graduation. The Board attends meetings. It gets briefings. It responds to the superintendent's proposals, usually with happy, easy assent. It worries about its processes. It participates in hearings, celebrations, recognitions, receptions, breakfasts, luncheons, openings, closings, dinners, conferences, workshops and parties and balls. It presides, but it scarcely takes time or has time to govern. If it were to govern seriously, it would have to act, take initiative, propose new directions and force some changes in traditional ways of doing business. It would have to take time to do these things. If it either lacks or has no time for those sorts of things, then the inertia common to all large organizations takes over and virtually nothing happens, except that the organization goes on and on and the status quo is happily and peacefully maintained. We are very lucky, by the way, that the status quo is not bad, but is in fact very good.

"Still, times change--indeed, have changed and are changing faster and faster. The student body is changing in its composition and its needs. The parents change as a group, e.g., more working mothers, less time for school involvement. The teachers are changing. Business as usual is likely to mean that we are merely minding the store, and not responding to the challenges the changed environment poses with the energy, intellect, creativity needed.

"The Board continues to be deluged with more and more paper, but most of it does not deal with ideas about what to do. The Board is

bombarded with messages, communications of all kinds, but lacks a good way of adding those up, sorting them out, making good sense of them. The Board has goals, adopted nearly 20 years ago, and priorities, set more than five years ago, but virtually no strategies worthy of the name designed to transform these into effective actions. The Board adopts budgets, but does not track budget implementation and has no systematic mechanism for demanding and getting accountability to it for what is done. Nor does it have good measures of the results it wants. It is hardly able to tell what results it wants. The Board asks for improvements in one year, but is not able to persuade the executive and Council to fund them, and so the next year, asks for fewer improvements and then takes pride in getting money for the little that it asked. The hard job of developing truly persuasive arguments for worthwhile improvements has not been done.

"Having said all this, what is to be done? I urge three things be done: 1) I urge the Board to ask for what it thinks the school system needs to be fully effective in its budgets, both capital and operating. 2) I urge the Board to plan for the future of the educational program in the same time frame as for the capital budget--at least for six years in advance, and more importantly, to plan comprehensively for the future needs of students. 3) I urge the Board to use its research and evaluation capability for developing in-depth understanding of what is working well and what is not in the educational program, and why, and to use the knowledge gained to build better programs with more persuasive justification.

"Since it is too late this year to do all this, but is still possible to build a good budget for next fall, I have the following immediate suggestions for next fall, for the budget and for the future.

"1. Class Size Reduction. A reduction of three students per class on the average in elementary school ought to be proposed. It might cost \$6 to \$8 million. It would be worth every penny. This is related to both the general need to reduce class size so all children get more attention, and to the urgent importance of early childhood education.

"2. Early Childhood Education. The multiple, and at present uncoordinated programs for young children, need to be brought together into a comprehensive approach. And these programs need to be expanded, both those which are designed to meet the needs of the handicapped who are preschoolers, and those designed for young children, including Head Start, Chapter 1, and other efforts, such as all-day kindergarten which have beneficial effects, demonstrated by research, on the academic and social development of young children. Such an effort would benefit all children and would be of enormous help to minority students, especially when coupled with class size reductions.

"3. Expansion of Counseling. Counseling needs expansion, especially but not only in elementary schools. All elementary schools should have at least one full-time counselor. Elementary schools are not what they were when we and County Council members went there.

"4. Foreign Language Expansion. For reasons that have to do with strengthening English language skills, as well as increasing understanding of other cultures and equipping students with urgently needed language skills, we ought to expand foreign language teaching, especially to elementary schools, as rapidly as possible.

"5. Determination of What Students Need to Know. We have focused attention on what courses students need to take to graduate, what skills students ought to have to cope with knowledge gathering and life, but we don't want to come to grips, it seems, with the need to say that some things are important to learn and then to say what those are. That urgently needs doing. That surely includes teaching moral values.

"6. Determining How to Measure Learning and Skills. We do this at present as a system almost exclusively through standardized tests. We have unfortunately started teaching to tests, to the detriment of good education. We must find and use better measures, not in place of standardized tests, but in addition to them. This is urgent.

"7. Demanding Better Textbooks. Textbooks get worse and worse. We could join with other school systems and demand change. It would have an effect. But we have to know what we want and what we don't want. We need to figure that out, then take action.

"8. Improve Minority Achievement. We are presently taking a scattershot approach to this, in my view. We are making some advances, but the cost in time, good will, and frustration may be very high. There are better ways to approach minority achievement. Jim Robinson and others have laid those out. I won't repeat them here. The present approach is taking too long, making too little change, too slowly.

"9. Address the Needs of Students New to this Society. Many more students need help of the kind of which ESOL is a part. They need help adjusting to American life and American schools. We need to give that help in fuller measure. This may be part of a need for schools to play a much larger role in the lives of students.

"10. Meeting the Needs of the Emotionally Disturbed. We need to develop a much more systematic approach to dealing with the emotionally disturbed, not only those who are seriously disturbed, but those with emerging problems. That needs central direction and support, and coordinating, and that is not there now.

"11. Implement the Commission on Excellence Recommendations More Rapidly. We are moving, but it is so slow. The keys are: teacher salaries, and here we need another 3-year contract with at least another 25% increase over a three-year period, 2) school-based management, which has the prospect of transforming teaching into a real profession and teachers into real professionals, and not tradespeople or clerks, and 3) teacher evaluation, including peer involvement. We must get on with these, and more rapidly. All of it

will require working with teachers as fellow professionals, not merely as people who work in the schools.

"12. Improve Efficiency and Productivity Throughout. If the watchword is quality and if we expect every student and every teacher to achieve at high levels of quality, we will improve productivity, without question. We need to enlist every employee in this effort, and in the effort to suggest ways to do things cheaper as well as better. We have started down this road, and must stay on it. We ought to call in an outside consultant to help us develop ideas about streamlining the large bureaucracy. That is always worthwhile.

"13. Facilities Funding. We need to go on record as demanding that \$200 million (at least) of the \$400 plus million state surplus be used for school construction, starting with reimbursement to this county for schools built or planned already.

"14. Effective Schools. We need to develop a set of indicators for the schools and for the system as a whole that tell us how well we are doing and how well kids are doing and where we are failing and where they are failing. And we need to act on what we find.

"This is an incomplete list of needs. It only hits the highlights.

"Will all of this cost more money? Yes. How much? I don't know. I would like to know. The question of importance is: Is it worth it? The answer is yes.

"I ask that we get on with these tasks. If they are not finished by 1992, I may have to run again. The superintendent is on notice.

Re: STATEMENT BY MRS. DiFONZO

Mrs. DiFonzo made the following statement:

"To my family: The good news is: I won and will get a raise. The bad news: It'll be four more years before the house gets cleaned.

"But it's not my fault. Blame Bob and Wanda, Candy, Charles, Betsy, Karen, Rita, Sandie, Brodie and Brigitta and all those hundreds of others who sent money, pounded signs, worked the polls, the telephones and their friends. And above all, blame those thousands upon thousands who chose to vote for me. You guys blame them; I'll thank them.

"During the past four years 105,701 people have told me they voted for me in 1984. I got 105,700 votes that year. Someone is lying.

"But that is the beauty of the American system. You never really know who voted for you or why. Nor will you ever really know who didn't vote for you and why. And the truth be known, you'll never know. I have had people say they voted for me because I had an ethnic last name, because I was a woman, because I looked like their daughter, because they went to the same university I did.

"They have told me they voted for me because I go out into the schools, because I told them that what they did mattered to kids even though their jobs never had them interacting with youngsters; because I made myself available, because I worked hard, did my homework, believed in this system and the people who make it go. They have told me they voted for me because they believe I care. And I know a lot of people voted for me because they just plain out-and-out recognized my name. And I am honest and pragmatic enough to admit that out front.

"But most significant of all, are those perfect strangers who have come to me or called me and said, "I voted for you because you made a difference for my child." And that, my friends is the nicest compliment any parent can bestow on a member of the Board of Education in Montgomery County.

"The past four years have been interesting ones. As a Board, we have made significant progress in improving teacher salaries. We adopted an AIDS policy, a weighted grading policy. We have expanded elementary counseling services into each of our schools and reduced the average pupil to teacher ratio. We have opened a dozen new schools, completely replaced two others, renovated, modernized and built additions on still others. We have opened schools, closed schools, reopened closed schools and in one instance reopened a school we ourselves had just closed. And, frankly, there is no end in sight.

"In four years this school system has grown from 91,704 students in 1984 to just under 100,000 today.

"And each of those kids presents us as a Board, as a system and as a community with a special challenge--a challenge to expand on that child's strengths, shore him up where he is weak, determine and address his special needs whatever they may be. And this, believe me, is no job for the faint hearted.

"Here in MCPS, our youngsters speak more than seventy different languages and dialects, they hail from scores of native lands. They bring to us their history, their culture, their values, their goals, their dreams, their ambitions. They bring us their war traumas, their fears, their insecurities. But above all they bring us their desire to achieve, to succeed, to fit in.

"In the years ahead the decisions and challenges facing this Board will not wane. Growth will continue. There will be more needs that must be met. More children to be fed and transported and educated.

"There will be more employees demanding higher salaries and better fringes. More people demanding more services. And at the same time still others saying we're spending too much or we're not spending it in the right way. Everyone has their critics and second-guessers. The Board of Education has hundreds of thousands of them.

"From a personal point of view the last four years have been interesting, too. I have had experiences I'm not sure I could have had any other way. During my first term was the closest I have ever come to being literally crushed by a swarming, shoving mass of humanity. Never before had I ever had to go anywhere under police escort. Never before had I ever been spirited through back doors under armed guard.

"There have been many, many times that my husband and I have gone three and four days without ever seeing one another except to look over and see the lump under the covers on the other side of the bed. I hope he assumed the lump was me. I certainly assumed the lump I saw was him. I'm gone before he gets home in the evenings, he's gone before I know I'm alive in the mornings, he's asleep when I get home at night.

"He has become proficient with the microwave and adept at the clothes washer. But I still don't like the way he folds towels and underwear.

"During the past four years I have been in more than 100 of our schools, several more than once. I visited our warehouses and computer room. Our special education folks have been very gracious in allowing me to tag along when they visit our students in residential out-of-state schools.

"I have read to dozens of classes, attended bicentennial activities, musical presentations, staff meetings. And I've been to the County Council more than my fair share of the time.

"I had a letter some time back from a young lady at one of the up-county elementary schools who, among other things, wanted to know if I was a member of the Board of Education because I couldn't find a real job or was I doing it for the money. For the first three years I was on the Board, I earned the princely sum of \$7,200. Mostly it went for fast food, make-up and panty hose. And somehow I can't think but that the hours for a 'real job' would be a big improvement over those of a Board member.

"I cannot count (nor do I wish to) the number of reporters and others who have asked flat out, 'Why on earth do you want this job?'

"Well, If you have to ask the question, you cannot possibly understand the answer. Being a member of the Montgomery County Board of Education is, quite frankly, the most demanding, aggravating, thankless, challenging and rewarding experience I have ever had in my life. I do it because I truly believe, that eight people working together for the common good can make a positive difference in some child's life. And that thought provides me with a great deal of peace, joy and satisfaction.

"I believe in the future. And I know our children are our hopes for tomorrow. Together we can move this system forward, our children forward. We can help them all touch tomorrow.

"I want to thank the other members of the Board for all their help and support over the years. For their kindnesses, patience and understanding two years ago when things were a little rocky for me and my family.

"Allow me to get yearbook-y for a moment. I enjoyed the sodality and still miss it. I will forever remember Bob's broccoli futures and the Einstein painting. I will cherish the look on everyone's face the evening the women on the Board lit up cigars. And I doubt very much that I will ever again experience the thrill of seeing Blair in a cub scout neckerchief. Of course, Bruce and his turtle soup have already gone down in the annals of MCPS lore.

"There are many, many others and I thank you all for them and for allowing me to be a part of your life and for each of you to be a part of mine.

"I would also like to thank my husband and my children for their patience, for their forbearance, for their willingness to do their own laundry, but for being there, for supporting me when I was down, for scraping me off the ceiling when I was up and for trying to keep me on some kind of an even keel.

"I would like to thank the Board staff, and I have sat on that side of the table for many years while people sat here and did just what I am doing tonight, and they ran down the litany of folks in the Board Office, and they told them how great they are. The reality is as corny as it sounds to you, we up here know how really, really good, really patient, really caring, and really professional they are. They bend over backwards to make us look good, or at least keep us from looking as bad as we should. I want to thank them for that.

"I would also like to thank Dr. Pitt and Dr. Vance and the MCPS staff. They are a superb group of professionals who care deeply about what they are doing, who believe in the system, who believe in the youngsters that we are educating. We have an excellent school system here in Montgomery County, and I believe that together looking forward, joining forces, we can improve it, that it can become even better. Thank you very much."

Re: REMARKS BY BOARD MEMBERS

Board members congratulated Mrs. DiFonzo, Mr. Ewing, and Mrs. Hobbs on their election. They thanked Mrs. Rafel for her service on the Board.

RESOLUTION NO. 611-88 Re: COMMENDATION OF MRS. VICKI RAFEL

On recommendation of the superintendent and on motion of Dr. Cronin seconded by Mrs. Praisner, the following resolution was adopted unanimously:

WHEREAS, Mrs. Vicki Rafel was appointed by the Board on March 16,

1988, to the Board of Education to complete the term of Mrs. Mary Margaret Slye; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Vicki Rafel is retiring from the Montgomery County Board of Education after serving for over eight months; and

WHEREAS, Because of her background of PTA leadership and knowledge of the Montgomery County Public Schools, Mrs. Rafel was able to assume a full membership role on the Board immediately after her appointment; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Rafel sought to advance educational opportunities for all students and to involve parents in the education of their children; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Rafel gave of her time to attend countless school system functions and activities; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, That this Board, on behalf of the superintendent, staff, parents, and students, express its deepest gratitude and appreciation to Mrs. Vicki Rafel for her outstanding leadership and devoted service to the Montgomery County Public Schools; and be it further

RESOLVED, That this resolution be included in the minutes of this meeting and that a copy be presented to Mrs. Vicki Rafel.

Re: PRESENTATIONS TO MRS. RAFEL

On behalf of the staff of the Montgomery County Public Schools, Dr. Pitt welcomed Mrs. Hobbs to the Board and congratulated Mrs. DiFonzo and Mr. Ewing on their reelection to the Board. He and Mrs. DiFonzo presented Mrs. Rafel with a collage and certificate of appreciation for her service on the Board.

As president of the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, Mrs. Praisner read the following resolution adopted by MABE:

WHEREAS, Service on a Board of Education requires uncommon dedication and commitment; and

WHEREAS, A unique bond of brotherhood and fellowship exists among school Board members in the state and in the nation; and

WHEREAS, Vicki Rafel has served as a distinguished member of the Board of Education of Montgomery County; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the members of the Maryland Association of Boards of Education extend to their colleague their thanks and appreciation for outstanding service to education.

Re: STATEMENT BY MRS. RAFEL

Mrs. Rafel made the following statement:

"Thank you. This is really Cathy's and Blair's and Sharon's evening. I congratulate them and share the sentiments expressed by their now fellow Board members. I really hope you have a good next session, and I will be around to cheer you on. But I do appreciate the chance to say a few things now.

"First of all, Cathy, I didn't rightly know about it, but one of the wonderful things about this group is if you don't raise your hand quickly you then have to say, 'is there anything left to say' after all eight of them have made their comments. And sometimes there really isn't, and don't feel bad about it if you don't have anything to say.

"I've had a wonderful time for the past eight and a half months as a member of the Montgomery County Board of Education. It has been an extraordinary experience. When I was sworn in, I promised that I would participate as fully as possible in the activities that were expected of a Board member. My reasons for this promise were threefold. First, I figured the best contribution I could make to the Board would be active involvement in all facets of the life of the Board. Second, full participation would allow me to understand the dynamics of the unique institution that this Board constitutes. I had seen it from the public side. Now I would see it from the inside. Third, I am such a compulsive person that I throw myself wholeheartedly into whatever endeavor I am involved in.

"I won't tell you how many Board meetings there have been, how many Board-related functions like County Council Education Committee meetings, or how many ceremonial events. The number, length, quality do not tell the whole story. I will say that out of curiosity I saved all of the papers I read as a Board member. They make a stack more than 10 feet tall if you could get them to stay together in my basement, and I have promised my husband I will take them to dump.

"I started out with a rather thorough working knowledge of the school system as my friends have said, and the county, and the special interests, and the people in the system. I also had the advantage of knowing my fellow Board members in various degrees from my previous incarnations. It was a good thing I had these two edges since I was expected to go right to work. And the two major challenges I faced were shifting my perspective from 'they' to 'we' and understanding the working dynamic of a relatively small group of intensely committed people who had been working together for a long time. Fortunately for me, my fellow Board members were very gracious and supportive in letting me carve out my own niche. Essentially the message was you don't have time to feel your way, get to work, listen and trust your own instincts.

"I didn't expect to design any major creative policies during my term. I don't take much credit for the interesting things the Board has done during this time. Although I can say that I have contributed to the way that we have done them. The catalogue of activities is fascinating, at least to me -- the operating budget season, graduations, the new prekindergarten to twelfth grade policy,

watching the progress of implementation of the Commission on Excellence proposals, the new schools and the significant impact of growing enrollment, paying attention to the implementation of Priority 2 efforts, and the CIP/facilities process and many others.

"I am glad I was here to be part of it. The world's perception of the Board of Education has always seemed to me like the tale of the blind man and the elephant. Depending on where you touch it, you define it. To some, the Board is the source of the excellence that they expect of this system. To others, it is the source of the burdens and problems that they have in their local schools. To others, it is a bunch of politicians who do the convenient thing, and to still others, it is the public body that tries to meet the varied needs of an enormous student population without ever quite being able to catch up. The truth is probably some combination of these perceptions.

"I am going to spend some time digesting my recent experiences in terms of those perceptions, but don't worry I am not going to write a book.

"As I leave the Board, I do want to share some of my own ideas about it. Sometimes we become so involved in our concern about not quite being able to solve all the problems by the world by tomorrow morning that we become defensive or frustrated. That is an important facet of the group dynamic I was looking at. It is a natural result of the very committed, determined individuals who are members of this Board as well as the superintendent and staff of this system. By its very nature, the Board must focus on problem issues and really has little time to relish the fact that children in this system are getting better educations than they used to or than they would in other school systems. We are always looking for ways to make things work better. So we don't have much time to savor the things that are working well.

"This Board and this system face major challenges in the coming years as we all know. I am confident that the challenges will continue to be met effectively by this Board of Education. In my earlier years as a Board watcher having lived in the county for 26 years now, several Board members represented my idea of role models. Elizabeth Spencer, Verna Fletcher, Roscoe Nix, Tom Israel, Lucy Keker, and Lucy Maurer. I expect that in a few years, people will point to some members of the current Board as their role models who served the children and education well. I am glad to have served with them however briefly.

"I guess it is customary for outgoing Board members to make individual thanks to the incoming and ongoing Board members. However, my Irish-Jewish sentimental nature makes that a very risky proposition. I will simply say that I will remember each of you with pleasure and great fondness. To Dr. Pitt and Dr. Vance and the senior staff, I am grateful that I had this opportunity to work with you. Before I joined the Board, I knew that the strength of MCPS rests on the extremely high quality of the people in the system from

the top to the bottom. And you have only confirmed that.

"I wish I had time to thank each of the many people who have made my tenure so interesting whether we agreed or not and who were willing to answer my questions and help me understand the issues. Teachers, principals, staff in the schools and offices I visited were open and responsive to my questions. Thanks should also be said to the students who talked to me and the parents and community people who told me what they thought. They represent another strength of this Board.

"Finally, as Sharon said, most special thanks must be said to the Board staff--Tom, Mary Lou, Melissa, Lillian, Nancy, and Ann whose support and friendship made my time as a Board member even more special. As I said when I started, serving on the Board has been a wonderful opportunity. I wouldn't have missed it for anything. But I don't need to get maudlin. I am not moving to the South Pacific. I will still be around and interested in children and education and the Board. For each of the eight Board members, I have a small token of my esteem that I have actually given in the past to some of my PTA friends, and I hope you will wear them as symbols of the children and the diversity that we have in Montgomery County.

"Thank you, and thank you all for giving me a chance to speak tonight."

Re: ADJOURNMENT

The president adjourned the meeting at 9:15 p.m.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

HP:mlw