

Wanda Nuse dies at age 77

Brunswick's second councilwoman and political 'king-maker'

by Julie Maynard

Wanda Nuse may not have thought of herself as a trail blazer. She was quick to point out that Nellie Roby was the first woman elected to the Brunswick City council in 1960. But Nuse, who died on Saturday, was elected twice—in 1980 during the final four years of Jess Orndorff's time as mayor, and then again in 1995. This made her both the second and the fourth woman to serve on the council.

Nuse followed every City elec-

tion with great interest, serving numerous times as an election judge, and she lived long enough to see her home town elect a council split evenly between three women and three men.

Wanda Nuse and politics went hand in hand in Brunswick. Nellie Roby "raised me," she said in an interview in 1980. "She was really close and like a member of my family." Her brother, Lee Merriman, had been chief of police in town for many years.

Nuse herself had a reputation for being the power behind the throne—or, as a *Baltimore Sun* article once put it: "Brunswick's closest thing to a political kingmaker." Many people believed that you had to get her blessing in order to win office here, and through our own



Wanda Nuse in 1995.

office windows we've seen some of those candidates and elected officials walking past our newspaper office, making their pilgrimages to her front porch.

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Wanda Nuse

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Nuse wasn't always comfortable with such talk, but that didn't stop it. People enjoyed telling how you could find out who would win a City election by driving by the Nuse home to see which candidates' signs stood in the bit of grass between her porch and West Potomac.

Wanda Nuse took a keen interest in her town, and people enjoyed the idea that she was keeping a kind of watch over things. They liked to talk about who'd been seen sitting on the porch with Wanda and her husband, Thomas. They knew she kept one ear on her police scanner and, living right across the street from the fire hall and half a block from the ambulance hall, she didn't miss much.

Somehow, this was a comforting thought. If you were new to Brunswick in the last twenty years or so, chances are it wasn't long until someone happily told you about Wanda Nuse.

On the night of the recent fire company banquet, two Frederick County



Wanda Nuse, in a CITIZEN file photo taken during her first run for office in 1980.

officials shared a ride to Brunswick and stopped by the Nuse house before going to the fire hall, looking to pay their respects. They knew that was how things should be done—but they didn't know Mrs. Nuse was no longer there, having moved to a nursing home.

Wanda Nuse died Saturday at Northampton Manor in Frederick. The town where she spent all her life will miss her.

(Wanda Nuse's obituary appears on page 8.)

In her own words

In her first run for office in 1980, Wanda Nuse told THE CITIZEN that "Most of life is common sense. And it helps to really know your community if you want to help it."

"I like people," she added. "I will be available to talk to them all. As a housewife, I will understand many of their problems. But I will speak up for what I think and believe. I have my own mind about things... I will not just 'go along' with the others."

When she "came out of retirement" in 1995, it was to run for a seat that opened when the third Brunswick councilwoman—Sandy Palasciano—resigned just past the halfway point of a two-year term. It was the sixth resignation from the Council since 1993.

"Everybody was asking me to run," she told THE CITIZEN. She wasn't sure she'd run again for the full four-year seat. "I'll have to see," she said. "At least I won't quit. The only way that I'll go out of the Council is if they carry me out—which I hope they don't!" she added with a laugh.

"I knew when I went on the council before," she said in 1995, "that I couldn't get everything done I wanted, especially during the first year. I ran into obstructions all four years, but I didn't throw up my hands and quit. Now it seems if something doesn't go your way, you just up and quit."

"People aren't thinking clearly enough when they decide to run. They have to have the interest of the town at heart—to do something for the town."

Nuse was concerned about the drug problem in Brunswick in 1995 but said she also wanted to work for "downtown housing livability standards and property appearances," so people "can have decent, safe places to live."

Nuse wasn't sure about growth. "I like Brunswick's small town atmosphere, and I don't want to lose that," she said. At the same time she hoped to see Brunswick "get a big business that would hire people. This town was built as a railroad community. It was a big thing. As a child I remember on Saturday nights, this Potomac Street was packed. Until we get something like a big business, I don't know what you are going to do about the downtown. When you know what things used to be like, it's a shame."

"All I can promise everyone is that I'll try," she concluded. "I'll just do the best I can."