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## Newsmakers

### **BUFFALO'S QUIET LEADER**

By Nicole Wint '94

After serving the 33rd Congressional District of New York in the House of Representatives for 18 years, Hon. Henry Nowak, a member of the Class of 1961, has retired from the public arena. Many in Western New York will miss his clout in Washington. Known as a quiet leader, Nowak is widely thought to be one of the areas's least political — and most respected — officials. Now back home in Buffalo, he has joined the boards of Marine Midland Bank and Children's Hospital.

During his entire Congressional career, he served as a member of the Committee on Public Works and Transportation, and was also a member of the Committee on Science, Space and Technology. He worked tirelessly to match local needs with available federal aid, bringing approximately \$1 billion dollars in discretionary federal funding for infrastructure improvements, research and other projects to Buffalo and Erie County.

Leaving Congress was not an easy decision for Nowak, but his reasons were selfless. He believed that retiring when he did would serve the best interests of the community. Because of the impending turnover in the House membership at the close of the fall, 1992 election, he knew that Buffalo's next representative would be

behind in the seniority race if he put off his retirement. This new representative would have had to wait a decade or more before becoming eligible for subcommittee chairmanship.

Born in 1935 to Joseph and Helen Nowak, he grew up poor in the Black Rock section of Buffalo. His father, an immigrant from Warsaw, Poland, worked in a radiator factory, and his

ing as a customs inspector, he used basketball as his ticket to Canisius College.

At Canisius, he demonstrated tremendous leadership ability when, as captain, his team went to the NCAA Quarter Finals three times from 1955-1957. He scored more points in his senior year than any basketball player before him. Judging from his success as a congressman, it appears that his drive to succeed on the basketball court remained with him throughout his political career.

Nowak's political career began when he ran for County controller in 1965 and won by 10,000 votes. In 1975, he ran for Congress as a Democratic candidate and won when his predecessor in Congress, Thaddeus J. Dulski, resigned after the primary deadline. Since then, he was re-elected eight times to the 33rd Congressional District of New York which includes most of the City of Buffalo, the city of Lackawanna, and the towns of Cheektowaga, Grand Island and Lancaster.

During his years in Congress, his main concern was always his home town. As a child, he spent much time along the Buffalo waterway, fishing whenever time and weather allowed. His steadfast pursuit of funding to improve the environment stemmed from his knowledge of the old Buffalo, when people could enjoy clean water.

His goals always included bringing more federal money to Buffalo: whether it was for roads and bridges, or for what he viewed as the city's greatest



*Hon. Henry Nowak*

mother, a Buffalo native, worked at the local gas company as a typist. His mother had high aspirations for young Henry and urged him to go to college, while his father pushed him to pursue basketball. After attending trade school and work-

resource — its waterfront. As chairman of the House Public Works Water Resources Sub-committee, he succeeded in persuading the Federal government to reduce toxic sediments in the polluted Buffalo and Cuyahoga rivers. In addition, he successfully compelled the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help anti-pollution efforts in the Great Lakes.

The funding Nowak brought to various projects in Buffalo and Erie County did not come easy. On one occasion in 1981, Drew H. Lewis, President Ronald Reagan's new transportation secretary, convened a meeting of Buffalo community leaders and informed them that the city's proposed \$42 million downtown pedestrian mall would have to be eliminated because of new restrictions on federal aid to transit projects. Despite this announcement, Nowak refused to accept defeat, and proceeded to get the money from Congress.

His reputation for fairness and honor leaves a trail of admiration from his colleagues and staff. Not only was his tenure as congressman free of the controversies that touched practically every member of the House, he was sparing in the amount of speaking fees he accepted from lobbyists. During the years, he raised little money for his campaign efforts because his excellent reputation as a congressman required no extra fund raising efforts. Also, he managed to maintain one of the lowest turnover rates in Congress — one of his key aids remained with him for 27 years, including 17 years in Congress.

This year, he is being honored by many organizations. He has received the National Award from the General Pulaski dinner where Marilyn Quayle was the keynote speaker. This award was given to him for his years of service to Polonia. He has also been honored by the Buffalo Columbus Hospital Foundation, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and the University at Buffalo Alumni Association, among others.

His children are following in their famous father's footsteps: daughter

Diane, an attorney with the Buffalo law firm Hodgson, Russ, Andrews, Woods & Goodyear, is a 1991 graduate of the Law School and his son Henry is a 1993 graduate.

## **McGuire Leaving Bankruptcy Court**

For almost 25 years, Judge Beryl E. McGuire has seen the sad stories and the horror stories of Buffalo's fickle business community paraded before him at U.S. Bankruptcy Court.

He has seen an explosion in local bankruptcies, and he has seen things that disturbed him - financial sharks fighting over the scraps of troubled business, deadbeats taking advantage of bankruptcy to cheat creditors, and foolish spenders who went broke after binges with the credit card.

But as he announced his plans to retire last February, McGuire said he still believes in the bankruptcy system as a way of helping people out of financial jams.

"It's still the only way that the average individual who finds himself under an impossible burden of debt can ever get out of it," McGuire said. "Some people think that those who file bankruptcy are nothing but a bunch of frauds and cheats. We've seen some, but in my experience the large majority of filers are people with legitimate financial problems.

"We once did a survey of people who were filing. Forty percent of them said their problems were caused by medical bills that they weren't insured for."

McGuire's term doesn't run out until 2000, but the 57-year-old judge said he is taking early retirement so he and his wife, Prudence, can move to Florida, where they have family.

McGuire said he may do some teaching and has applied to the court system for part-time work as a visiting bankruptcy judge, in hopes of getting

temporary assignments around the country. "There is a need for additional judges, on a temporary basis, in many areas of the country. I have several friends who are doing that now. I figure that, if I can retire at this age, and have all these options, I should do it," McGuire said.

McGuire will not be leaving the \$119,000-a-year job until the end of September. After that, he will receive about 65 percent of his pay as a pension.

Chief District Judge Michael A. Telesca said a merit selection panel will soon begin screening applicants to replace McGuire. The replacement, based on the panel's recommendation, will be appointed by the Second Circuit Court of Appeals.

The coveted job opening, a 14-year appointment, is expected to attract a lot of interest in Buffalo's legal community.

Although his work in Buffalo seldom puts him in the public spotlight, McGuire is considered an outspoken advocate for the bankruptcy courts. In 1980, he was chosen to testify before a congressional subcommittee looking into bankruptcy reforms.

Americans filed for bankruptcy in record numbers last year, and McGuire blames consumers' inability to handle credit cards, for much of the problem. He also said lending institutions that push unsolicited credit cards and applications are contributing to the mess.

"Certainly you have people who fall into careless spending habits with credit cards," he said. "But it sure doesn't help when you have these companies going out and shoving credit cards down their throats. I think it's a very bad practice."

A native of Oakfield in Genesee County, McGuire has been an attorney since 1959. He served as a confidential law clerk to the late U.S. District Judge John O. Henderson before becoming a bankruptcy referee - later called a bankruptcy judge - in April 1968. ■

*By Dan Herbeck, reprinted from  
The Buffalo News*