

THE SUN

In meditation, remembrance

At ThanksGiving Place, bell tower unveiling honors the late J. Joseph Curran Sr.

BY BRENT JONES
[SUN REPORTER]

Religious and political leaders have called for the park at the site of old Memorial Stadium to be used for thanksgiving and meditation. Now, after a ceremony yesterday honoring the patriarch of one of the city's best-known political families, those leaders are adding one more use: remembrance.

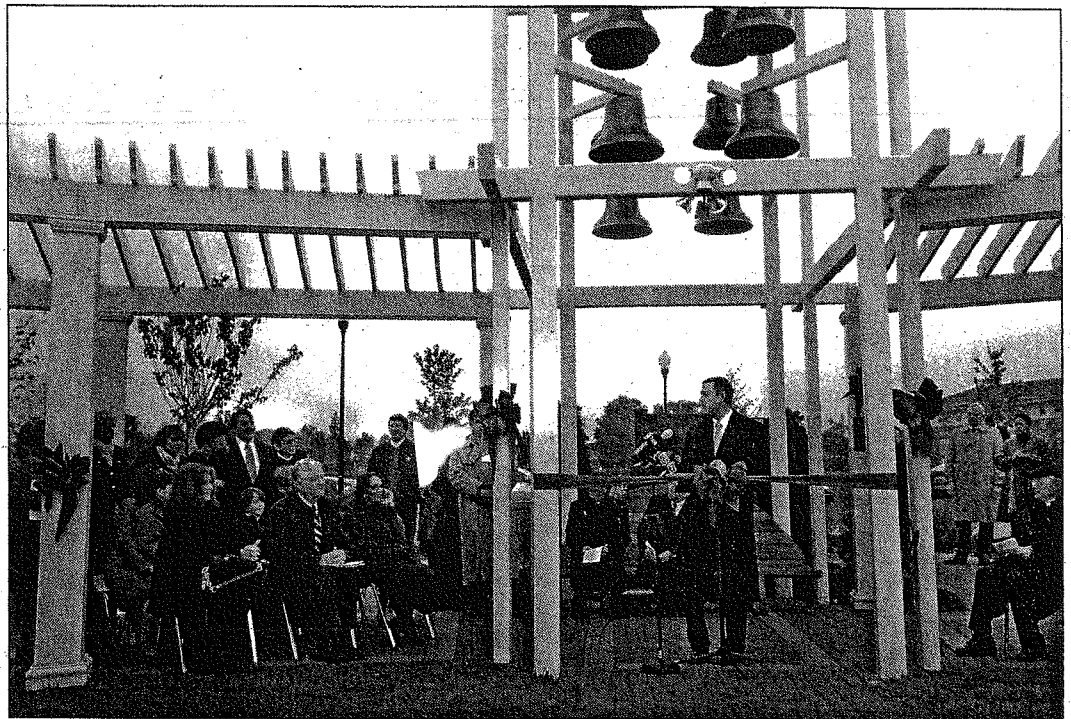
City and state officials unveiled the new Curran Family Bell Tower — dedicated to the late City Councilman J. Joseph Curran Sr., the father of former Maryland Attorney General J. Joseph Curran Jr. and the grandfather of District Judge Catherine Curran O'Malley, wife of Gov. Martin O'Malley.

The bells, located at ThanksGiving Place, were moved from a spot on York Road where they had been for many years as part of a clock tower. Lightning struck the clock tower in the 1990s, and the hands remain stuck at 3 o'clock.

"I'm just hopeful that people years from now have an understanding of who my father was," J. Joseph Curran Jr. said at the ceremony. "Yes, he was a councilman and did a lot of work with Catholic Charities, but he was also a very good person who during the social unrest of the 1950s and '60s was always there on the right side of the issues."

The elder Curran suffered a heart attack during a shooting in 1976 when a gunman entered a temporary City Hall headquarters on South Calvert Street, killed Councilman Dominic M. Leone Sr. and wounded another councilman and an aide to then-Mayor William Donald Schaefer.

Curran died less than a year later.



Gov. Martin O'Malley speaks at a ceremony dedicating a bell tower to J. Joseph Curran Sr. "I don't think Maryland ever produced a more universally admired public servant," he said.

JED KIRSCHBAUM [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

City and state officials yesterday said Curran was known for fighting against discrimination.

"I don't think Maryland ever produced a more universally admired public servant than Joseph Curran Sr.," O'Malley said.

ThanksGiving Place is made up of hanging gardens serving as a gateway from 33rd Street to Stadium Place, the development on the old stadium's site. The bells are the centerpiece of ThanksGiving Place, a 1-acre project that cost nearly \$500,000.

The park features no specific religious imagery. A bench under the curved arbor holds a waterproof journal in which visitors can record their thoughts. The prayer and meditation space in-

side the park is a joint project of the Govans Ecumenical Development Corp. and the Central Maryland Ecumenical Council.

Stadium Place includes the park, a YMCA, a playground, senior-living apartments and an open field.

Memorial Stadium, where generations of Orioles and Colts fans watched games, was demolished in March 2001 to make way for the project.

"My father grew up in this community, lived on 35th Street and went to Eastern High," said Curran, whose brother, Robert, is a city councilman. "It has always been part of his life."

Yesterday's ceremony marked the completion of ThanksGiving

Place. Officials aim to build another apartment complex and have all of Stadium Place completed by 2010.

"We're blessed because we're in a very peaceful place that is being dedicated to a wonderful family," Mayor Sheila Dixon said. "He stimulated and led by example so many other public servants in his family."

Also in attendance at the ceremony were leaders from the Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths, including Cardinal William H. Keeler, Rabbi Steve Schwartz, president of the Baltimore Board of Rabbis, and Earl El-Amin of the Baltimore Islamic Cultural Center.

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