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Fairfax Supervisor, Activist John P. Shacochis Dies at 88

By Patricia Sullivan

Washington Post Staff Writer

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John P. Shacochis, 88, a former member of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors who upon completion of his term gave the job the equivalent of a public flogging, died of a stroke Feb. 21 at a Boston nursing home. He had been a McLean resident for more than 50 years.

Mr. Shacochis was elected as a Republican to represent the Dranesville District on the county board in 1976 by eight votes in a hard-fought campaign over development. He served until 1980. The job, which legally was a part-time position, demanded 60 to 80 hours a week of work, Mr. Shacochis said at the time, and it became a hothouse during the area's growth boom.

He did not run for reelection, announcing his decision through sobs at a public meeting as he quoted Edmund Burke and Pericles. He later expanded on his remarks in an op-ed article in The Washington Post.

"The public input process has degenerated into confrontation politics, and if the public official doesn't succumb to the pressure, it provides the perfect setting for making allegations that he is in the pay of the developers, he favors the rich and ignores the poor, he has no compassion, exercises no logic and in general lacks culture, taste and good sense," he wrote.

"All I'm doing is sitting here gratifying a lot of citizens who have complaints," he told a reporter. "I'm getting too old to spend all my time doing that. I've got grandchildren who hardly know me."

Mr. Shacochis was born in West Pittston, Pa., and graduated from Scranton University. He attended the University of Virginia and George Washington University.

He worked in the Social Security Administration until he was drafted into the Navy during World War II, serving in New York. After the war, he was employed by the Veterans Administration in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., then moved in 1953 to the Washington area to lead the Navy Department's Bureau of Naval Personnel. He retired as a management engineer in 1973.

His public life had already begun, however, in the 1950s, when he organized a



John Shacochis was elected to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in 1976. He retired in 1973.

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movement to open elementary schools for youth activities. He was president of civic associations in Pimmit Hills, Lewinsville and McLean and led the effort to acquire the 39-acre Hamel tract on Chain Bridge Road for a community recreation area, which is now known as Lewinsville Park.

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A critic of the Board of Supervisors from 1959 to 1963, he led an attempt to incorporate Lewinsville as a protest.

His most notable accomplishments as a county supervisor were his efforts to extend Interstate 66 to Dulles International Airport and to complete the Metrorail system. But he also focused on the Great Pinball Machine Question, when most of the 65 7-Eleven convenience stores in Fairfax installed game machines, which Mr. Shacochis said were used by players "making book" on the machines, and there was a "a ruckus every Saturday night."

"The problem is becoming more and more severe," he said, suggesting that the county legal staff explore whether the stores should provide public restrooms since they were providing public entertainment. The stores immediately removed the machines that had prompted the most complaints.

Mr. Shacochis served on the Metro board and was vice chairman of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. He was a board member of George Mason University; Fairfax Hospital; the Navy, Marine and Coast Guard Residents Foundation (Vinson Hall); the Arleigh Burke Pavilion; the Fairfax Symphony Orchestra; and the Salvation Army.

Survivors include his wife of 63 years, Helen Shacochis of McLean; four children, John Shacochis Jr. of Haddon Township, N.J., Thomas Shacochis of Newport News, Va., Robert Shacochis of Tallahassee and Barbara Ann Jones of Wellesley, Mass.; eight grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

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