Charles Antone Horsky

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IN SO MANY ways that so few people may realize, what is good about Washington—hometown and world capital—can be linked to Charles A. Horsky, who died Wednesday at the age of 87. For more than 50 years, Mr. Horsky's civic and legal career helped shape the city, the law, civil rights and the still-unsuccessful quest for genuine home rule in the District.

"I have a terrible time saying no," Mr. Horsky said in an interview with staff writer Jacqueline Trescott, and it was this that led him to serve presidents, the legal establishment and innumerable community organizations with intrepid passion.

Chosen by President Kennedy to be the first presidential adviser on national capital affairs and then retained by President Johnson, Mr. Horsky brought the weight of the White House to the lopsided relationship between congressional chairmen bent on controlling the city and presidentially appointed city commissioners with little power. More comfortable behind the scenes, Mr. Horsky worked the Hill, emphasizing ways in which local problems could be addressed by those people most directly affected.

The political roughnecks who controlled the key House committees were never that impressed by the tweedy lawyer cradling his curved pipe and urging them to ease up on the reins. Still, he worked with other members and President Johnson for a home rule that eventually failed to win passage and led President Johnson to order an appointed "mayor" and council that later were to be changed to elective offices and limited home rule.

All the while, Mr. Horsky suggested, assisted and led major physical improvements in the city, among them the redevelopment of Southwest Washington, the restoration of Union Station, the revival of downtown Pennsylvania Avenue and the creation of the National Building Museum, Amtrak and Conrail, the Kennedy Center and the Metrorail subway system.

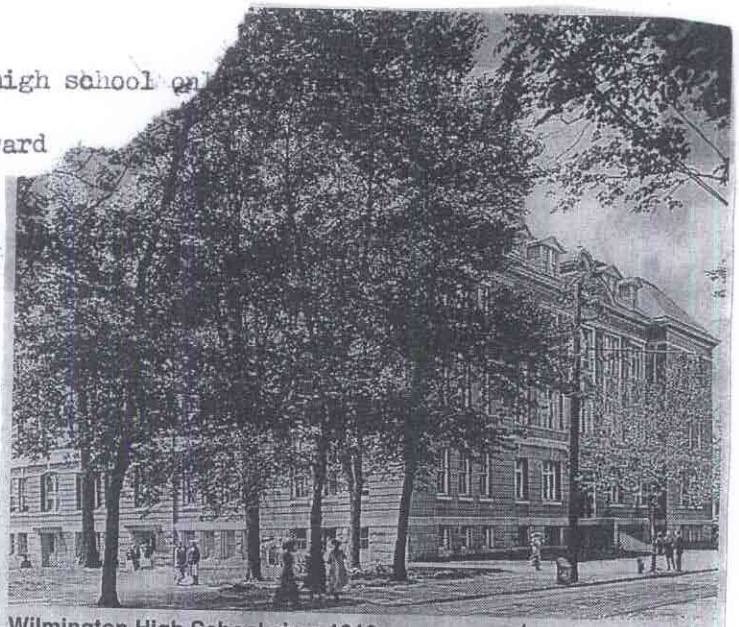
Mr. Horsky also worked for changes in the national and local criminal justice systems, including a legal end to police arrests solely for investigation. As founding president of the Council for Court Excellence, he pressed for the city's one-day/one-trial jury law and increased use of alternative dispute-resolution techniques and other changes in the administration of justice. Civil liberties, philanthropic organizations, housing improvements, public education in the city—a remarkable list all given his serious attention.

Friends described Charlie Horsky as "citizen at large," and he never stopped his quest to strengthen local self-government here. "He was a wonderfully positive thinker," one longtime friend said, "even when things were so depressing." That spirit—and what it delivered—leaves much for everyone to cherish.

Horsky was a force for good in Washington but there was a limit for him and for his firm to what they regarded as good or what they's run any risk on or on what, perhaps, was politicaly not too unsafe for them of not not ~~in~~ to their political liking. He did handle "securtiy" case pro bono for his prestigious firm, Covington, Burling. In those days it was headed by Dean Acheson. Going back to the 1930s.

Gardner Jackson, who had been on the Sacco-Vanzetti committee with Frankfurter and when I was involved with him was legislative representative of Labor's non-Partisan League of the United Mine Workers, was, supposedly, a friend of Acheson's. When the Dies UnAmerican committee tried to frame Jackson and me we went to see Horsky, to whom Pat had been referred by Acheson. He listened to Pat, asked us questions, and said he'd let us know. As we left Acheson got on the elevator and when we left the building he was walking as we did to return to Pat's office. ~~His~~ Acheson's then was on 15NW between Penna Ave and ~~F~~ H St. When we got to Penna. Ave there, parked illegally at the corner, was a not new car, chauffered. Acheson introduced me to Frankfurter, who was waiting fot him. Acheson/Horsky turned us down, would not defend us. Which I suppose is just as good because it meant I did not have that restraint and was able to do what got the grand jury to refuse to charge us and to charge the Dies UnAmerixan agent with two felonies.

This 1872 building is where I went to high school on[ly] only by then it had an annex on the side toward the camer[a] not toward the street. The annex was also of four storeys. There were covered connections above the street level, as I recall, two, so we did not have to go outside in bad weather to get to classes. There were about 3,000 students when I went there and it was the only public high school in Wilmington. I do not kno[w] who the Nabel winner or the Met singers were but the nylon man is my friend Joe Labovsky. He was not an inventor. He was one of the developers. To compare with today, when I was there is had as I now recall in the principal's office only three stenos/typists/clerks. And there were no computers then. All was posted by hand. by hand.It was a good school with, by and large, a good facylty. It was also the first to have an internal public address-communications system. I was president of the radio club I started and I got RCA to design it and they not only did that, they made it and demostrated it and that sold it! Radio amplification had then never been used that way.



Wilmington High School circa 1910.

8/22/97

Guillotine is falling on Wilmington High

The long line of students of "Dear Ol' Hi," which wends its way back to 1872, laments the impending death of the school. The ghosts of the past and the hearts of the living, all of whom contributed so well to the illustrious history of Wilmington High School, are saddened by the proposed phasing out of their school.

This army of approximately 50,000 men and women pursued the fulfillment of their school's motto, "Enter to learn, go forth to serve." And serve they did.

The line includes a Nobel Prize recipient, three Rhodes scholars, seven mayors of Wilmington, directors of public safety, Metropolitan Opera stars, entrepreneurs of major and national companies, inventors, including a co-inventor of nylon, artists, musicians, illustrators and artists of renown, military leaders, professional athletes, illustrators and national oratorical champions, national swimming champions, coaches of all major sports, university professors, college presidents, religious leaders, an Oscar winner, leaders in medicine, science and computers, hospital directors and the list goes on.

A cloud of sadness and doom prevails regarding the planned demise of "Dear Ol' Hi." The guillotine is falling. Currently, there is no traditional ninth grade at Wilmington High School. The execution plan calls for no traditional ninth or 10th grades next year. In two more years, traditional Wilmington High School will not exist.

No more "Red Devils." No more "Cherry and White." No more "Dear Ol' Hi?" How sad it will be to sever the life line of the traditional four-year Wilmington High School, that grand old institution that dates back to the post-Civil War era.

It is hoped by many that this planned phasing out of the traditional Wilmington High School is merely a nightmare and, upon awakening, we will find that our fair city, the first city of the first state, will not be counted as perhaps the only major city in the United States that does not have a four-year traditional school for its teenage residents.

Peter Grandell
Wilmington