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# 45

# Who Shaped Washington

1965–2010

Edited by Denise Kersten Wills

**W**ashington was a very different place in 1965. The Beltway had just opened, and Metro was only a proposal. Towns such as Reston and Columbia were being built. There was no Verizon Center, and the Redskins had never won a Super Bowl. The changes caused by the 1968 riots, Watergate, and crack cocaine were on the way.

*The Washingtonian* published its first issue that October. In this, our 45th-anniversary issue, we look at how the region has changed, through the lens of the people who made it what it is today. Here are 45 whose contributions—for better or worse—affected where we live and work, where we dine, what we read, which teams we cheer for, what music we listen to, and much more.

## LOOKING BACK

### Diana McLellan: "I treated bureaucrats like movie stars"

"I got to Washington in 1957, and I started the Ear column in the *Washington Star* in 1975. I decided to treat the bureaucrats like movie stars and write in a gee-whiz kind of way. That changed things because it made people feel very self-important.

"There was a lot more low-level whistleblowing at that time. Somebody once said that the Ear was like a sort of raffish ombudsman because it kept people decent. Even the blind items used to make people shape up their act.

"Ford was President when I became a gossip, but then the Carters came and they insulted all the Democrats who were already here and had been longing to have a Democrat in power. The Carters detached themselves from the establishment and did their white-sock Georgia thing. When I read back now, I'm horrified by how snotty I was to the Carters, and yet every single item about them was fed to me by a Democrat because they were all so put out.

"If I had a really big scoop back then, I tended to bury it in the middle of the column because it struck me as more seemly. These days, the gossip columns are so boring and devoid of content or humor that a lot of stuff that would have gone in the Ear column is now in other parts of the paper. The *Post* puts a lot of stuff on the front page these days—they just dig a little deeper."



### Diana McLellan

Diana McLellan didn't invent Washington gossip, but she polished it, perfected it, and got it in print in time for cocktail hour. Her delicious Ear column in the *Washington Star* playfully punctured the pompous and revealed the steamy side of Washington's social set. She relished the ridiculous—exposing gardeners at the Department of Transportation who faithfully tended fake trees in front of the headquarters. After the *Star* folded, Ben Bradlee enticed McLellan to the *Washington Post*, but the paper's lawyers and editors cramped her style. McLellan also worked at *The Washingtonian*.

### Mario Morino

Best known now for his involvement in Venture Philanthropy Partners—which applies venture-capital-like practices to the world of nonprofits—Morino was one of the founders of the area's tech community. Beginning in his basement, Morino Associates grew to become one of the region's technology powerhouses in the 1980s—when it was sold in 1995, it was the largest software sale in history—and his legendary gatherings during the dot-com boom helped knit together the disparate local technology worlds. Now his Morino Institute is helping to build the next generation of "netpreneurs."

### Ronald Reagan

President Reagan is remembered for many things, but the Gipper's chief legacy to Washington was born of the statement in his first inaugural address that "government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem." On that premise, he set about contracting out government work to private companies,

many of them in Washington. As federal spending skyrocketed, the region saw a boom among "Beltway bandits"—thousands upon thousands of companies providing everything from data processing to top-secret intelligence work. "Contracting out" has made Washington relatively recession-proof and one of the world's wealthiest metropolitan areas.

### Brian Lamb

The introduction of cameras into the House and Senate chambers, spearheaded by Lamb as founder of C-SPAN, ushered in an era of accessible governance, bringing the lawmaking process into living rooms and forever altering floor debates. A generation later, he's helping to move 160,000 hours of C-SPAN's archived programming online into searchable databases. The unassuming Lamb offered a valuable tip for



We can thank President Reagan for the boom in Beltway bandits.

today's opinionated TV anchors during a rare interview of his own in 2008: "I don't pretend I have the answers. That's why I'm here asking the questions."

### Rayful Edmond III

Rayful Edmond battled and murdered his way to becoming DC's cocaine king in the 1980s. His reign devastated neighborhoods, led to the addiction of thousands, and helped drive the murder rate to 479 a year. The capital's drug trade was disorganized when Edmond started selling in the Trinidad neighborhood. By 1988, he was buying in bulk from Colombians, and his enforcers were killing the competition. Edmond drove his white Jaguar with gold hubcaps around the 'hood on Thanksgiving, dropping off free turkeys. Busted in 1989, he's serving a mandatory life term.

### Maria S. Gomez

Twenty-two years ago, Gomez set out to provide prenatal care for the Latino women of Washington. Recognizing that a charity needs to go where its beneficiaries are, she opened her bilingual clinic in DC's Adams Morgan. Today that clinic has grown into Mary's Center, a critical piece of the region's health-care system. With an annual budget of \$14 million, it offers medical, social, and vocational services for 10,000 clients a year—many of whom are immigrants.

### John Thompson and Lefty Driesell

Under John Thompson, Georgetown won an NCAA title and became an NBA star factory, producing Allen Iverson and Patrick Ewing, among other top talent. Maryland coach Lefty Driesell started Midnight Madness, now almost a national holiday, and took the Terps from ACC also-rans to perennial contenders. The programs Thompson and Driesell built consistently rank among the best in the nation, and fans show up to cheer. Both teams often play in sold-out arenas, and their fan bases are two of the fiercest outside Tobacco Road.

### Douglas Jemal

Developer Doug Jemal used his cash to buy and preserve community gems all over DC. The Avalon Theatre in the city's Chevy Chase neighborhood was shuttered before he restored it and turned it over to a local nonprofit. He joined with Abe Pollin and Shelton Zuckerman to restore Sixth & I Historic Synagogue in Chinatown. He preserved the old Woodies department-store building downtown, renovated and rented out the storefronts along Seventh Street in Gallery Place, and promoted retail over office buildings across the region,

where he's now among the largest property owners.

### George Michael

He showed Washingtonians there was more than politics and crime in local TV news: He made us see ourselves as a town of hot sports teams and glamorous athletes, especially if they played for the Redskins. Using video highlights on his *Sports Machine* show on Channel 4 from 1980 to 2007, Michael could transform a day of athletic events into a circus, with him playing the role of P.T. Barnum. He portrayed sports as pure entertainment and paved the way for ESPN's success.

### Ian MacKaye

This rocker helped make DC a hot spot for punk music starting in the '80s. MacKaye's Dischord Records helped launch the careers of local bands such as Q and Not U and Jawbox. His own bands, Minor Threat and Fugazi, defined DC hardcore punk for two decades. MacKaye's shows were always cheap and open to all ages. A rarity at the time he started, all-ages shows are now the norm at the 9:30 Club and the Black Cat. MacKaye still does benefits at places such as St. Stephen's church in DC's Columbia Heights and local arts spaces. With his sister Amanda, he's also the force behind the city's popular Fort Reno concert series.

### Cathy Hughes

Working out of a storefront at Fourth and H streets, Northeast, Hughes used tiny WOL-AM to give DC's African-Americans an identity and a voice. In 1986, she led a recall of the *Washington Post*—dumping copies at the paper's headquarters—because of the *Post Magazine's* portrayal of blacks as thugs. The paper agreed to hire more black reporters, and publisher Donald Graham periodically appeared on her show. Hughes, now Radio One's chairperson, went on to buy WKYS-FM and 52 other radio stations nationwide.

### Julie L. Rogers

As Meyer Foundation president, Rogers does more than hand out grant money. A master matchmaker, she creates coalitions of nonprofits with symbiotic missions and has done a lot to nurture emerging talent in the nonprofit sector. As founding chair of Washington Grantmakers, she has fostered cooperation on the funding side, too.



Ian MacKaye helped make DC a hot spot for punk music.

Her pioneering efforts in professionalizing philanthropy have helped nonprofits and funders alike in a time of diminished resources. Thanks to her, many community groups are doing better at doing good.

### Michael Kahn

With Kahn at the helm, Shakespeare Theatre Company is one of the hottest tickets in town. The director is known for dazzling special effects, unconventional casting, and luring actors such as Patrick Stewart, Elizabeth Ashley, and Marsha Mason to Washington. Kahn has set *Love's Labor's Lost* in a hippie commune and cast a guy to play Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*. But the classic words still ring as true as the clashing swords. And the audiences just keep growing.

### José Andrés

Most Washington diners regard the irrepressible Spaniard as the chef/entrepreneur who popularized the concept of "small plates"—tapas from Spain, *antojitos* from Mexico, mezze from Turkey and Lebanon. In the past two decades, Andrés has almost single-handedly redrawn the

lines between fine and casual dining, paving the way for a new kind of restaurant in this city and remaking the scene in his own image: serious but sensual, precise but playful. (For more on Andrés, see page 63.)

### Abe Pollin

DC's Gallery Place was a sketchy part of downtown before Pollin risked \$220 million to build a classy arena for his basketball and hockey teams on Seventh Street in 1997. But while he deserves credit for rescuing the neighborhood, Pollin prided himself more on what he gave away. Raised in Washington, he made his money developing apartments and offices and then gave millions back to Washingtonians through affordable housing, Boys & Girls Clubs, and medical research.

### Alice M. Rivlin

She helped rescue DC from bankruptcy in 1998. The city was \$700 million in debt when Congress took over its finances and President Clinton appointed Rivlin to sort out the mess. She skillfully chaired the Financial

Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority and gave DC credibility with the feds. She had been the first director of the Congressional Budget Office and later director of the Office of Management and Budget. Rivlin now directs the Brookings Institution's Greater Washington Research Project, which studies the region's finances and demographics.

### Ted Lerner

Ted Lerner paid \$450 million to buy the Washington Nationals baseball team in 2006, vowed to keep it in his family and in DC, and has started to invest in young players who could create a successful franchise.

Born, raised, and schooled in Washington, Lerner also gave us our first regional shopping malls. He built a real-estate empire that began in downtown DC, expanded to White Flint and Tysons Corner, and now extends to Dulles Town Center.



Abe Pollin's new arena revitalized DC's downtown.

Contributing to this article were Susan Baer, Ken DeCell, Mary Clare Fleury, Sophie Gilbert, Garrett M. Graff, Shane Harris, Harry Jaffe, Marisa M. Kashino, Todd Kliman, Jason Koehler, John A. Limpert, Leslie Milk, and Mollie Reilly.

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