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FEATURE | Politics

Election Nights of the Living Dead

Do Deceased Baltimoreans Still Vote Among Us?



By Van Smith

The New York Times reported in its May 18 business section that Johns Hopkins University computer-science students crunching databases on deaths and voter registrations in Baltimore City had turned up "1,500 dead people listed as active registered voters. Fifty of those dead people somehow voted in the last election."

PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER MYERS

HERE LIES: The late Willie H. Baker is listed as having cast a ballot in the 1994 general election; (below) the headstone of Ruth Schevker who ostensibly voted in the 1994 primary election; both remain on the active voter rolls.

the dead to cast ballots. But the problem when looking into alleged cases of dead people voting—or the beauty of it, if you're a perpetrator—is that while the superficial circumstances suggest fraud, proving it is tough. Of all the many colorful stories of rigged elections, few rise above the level of just that: stories.

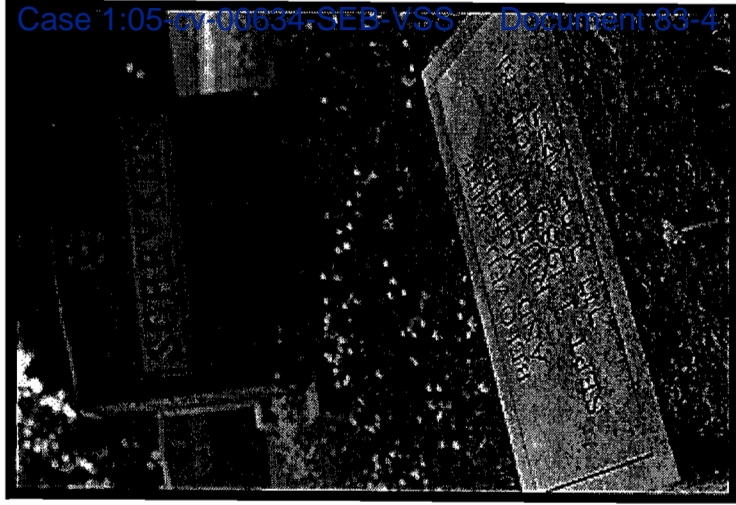
The facts are often not what they seem. Indeed, the Times got it wrong. Michael Peck, the Hopkins student who ran the dead-voter data as part of an assignment this spring for a class he took under Aviel Rubin, a professor whose research interests include voting, says there were not 50 dead voters but 63, and they didn't all vote in last year's elections but in contests spanning from 2004 back to the late 1980s. Nonetheless, could these undergraduates have come across something long suspected, though rarely verified? Have there really been election nights in Baltimore City when the dead rose to vote again?

It's hard to say for sure either way. Perhaps the voters really were dead, and stand-ins actually cast fraudulent votes in their stead. But maybe the information about the deaths was wrong, and the voters in fact were alive at the time they voted. Maybe they were dead, but recording mistakes were made—be it in entering data in the Maryland State Board of Elections computers, or in following paperwork procedures at the polling places. Judges at the polls check off names on the precinct voting list of people who voted, and each voter signs a card saying he

Somehow voted. Meaning someone voted, but they weren't the people the Hopkins students identified—because they were dead. There is no accepted term for this phenomenon, though a word like "ghost," "cemetery," "graveyard," or "phantom" usually winds up in front of the word "voting," suggesting impostors standing in for

Case: 05-cv-00634-SEB-VSS Document 83-4 Filed 11/26/05 Page 2 of 11

or she voted, but little is done to confirm the identity of the person doing the voting. As state elections administrator Linda Lamone tells *City Paper*, there's plenty of room for human error and fraud. But, as with the existence of life after death, proof remains elusive.



Case 1:05-cv-00634-SEP-VSS Document 83-4 Filed 06/16/06 Page 3 of 3

The Hopkins students' discovery feeds a longstanding political cliché—nefarious political machines using headstones as fodder for fraud. Faking votes in this fashion seems like a lot of trouble, but when done in conjunction with other forms of vote fraud—misusing absentee or military ballots, or, at the end of election day, casting in the names of registered voters who didn't show up at the polls—such ill-gotten votes could add up to an upset. As seen in Florida's 2000 presidential election and the current gubernatorial battle in Washington state, a small number of votes can, in a close race, change the course of history. In state or city legislative races, graveyard votes, if they really happen, could easily become the margin of victory and defeat.

Of course, the value of ghost voting has been confirmed by its repeated appearance in Baltimore City history. One theory surrounding Edgar Allen Poe's death in 1849 is that he'd been forced by ward-heeling thugs to cast repeated fraudulent votes, an experience that conspired with his poor health to hasten his ignoble passing days later. He had, after all, been found wearing someone else's clothes and very much the worse for wear on Election Day, after several days' absence, at Ryans Fourth Ward Polls, a bar and polling place. While, if true, this is more a case of voting someone to death than a dead person voting, the theory exemplifies old Baltimore's political history as a corrupt burg inclined to rig elections. Since then, we have mythologized the dark, blunt intrigue of behind-the-scenes politicking—myths that, like Hopkins' dead voters, sometimes spring to life, only to expire under scrutiny like a lifting fog.

Suspensions of graveyard voting engineered by mid-20th-century Baltimore political boss James E. "Jack" Pollack arose during the racially charged 1954 elections, when a Republican African-American, Harry A. Cole, was elected to the Maryland Senate. A grand jury investigated, but only one criminal case—against a Pollack-installed election judge who forged voters' signatures to cast fraudulent ballots—was made, while four other judges (also Pollack functionaries) were fired for noncriminal election violations. Similar Pollack-related allegations arose in

1970, when Parren Mitchell was first elected to the U.S. House of Representatives by a slim margin, but phantom votes were never proven.

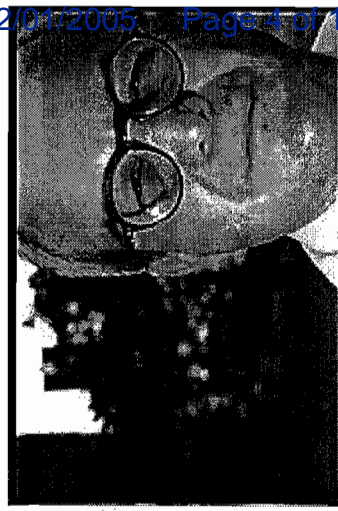
For many modern Baltimoreans, the specter of dead voters will forever be tied to the Nov. 8, 1994, gubernatorial election, when Republican Ellen Sauerbrey lost to Democrat Parris Glendening by 5,993 votes. A hasty, much-watched legal battle ensued over the close outcome. Sauerbrey's theory that her loss was due in part to Baltimore City vote fraud, including possibly hundreds of dead voters, was discredited in a courtroom in January 1995, when a judge dismissed her case.

If the new Hopkins data had been available to Sauerbrey's lawyers more than a decade ago, they would have known that four Baltimore City voters in the 1994 general election—Clarence M. Claiborne (1927-1993), Willie H. Baker (1942-1988), Charles A. Price (1923-1985), and Robert L. Topping (1921-1987)—were dead when votes were recorded as having been cast in their names. Those four voters are still on the active rolls, and they're still as dead as they were 11 years ago. They are the only four dead voters in the 1994 race who remain on the 2005 rolls, but many names are purged regularly from the list after voters die, so there may have been more than four graveyard voters in the Sauerbrey race who have since been removed.

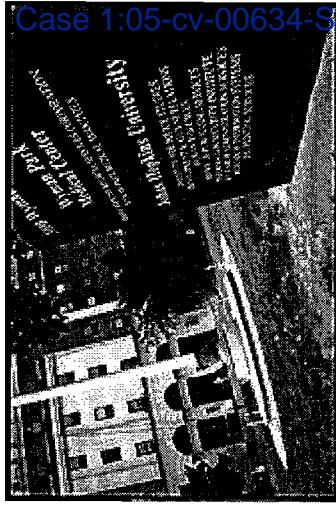
Even if their numbers were 10 or 100 times greater than the four found on the Hopkins list, though, dead voters wouldn't have made much difference in the 1994 gubernatorial election, when some 6,000 votes were at issue out of more than 1.4 million cast statewide. Sauerbrey's list of allegedly dead voters was pared down considerably over the course of the short-lived legal battle to a few dozen. Some turned out to be alive—a couple of them even said they'd voted for Sauerbrey. FBI investigators never sustained a single allegation of phantom voting.



RESTLESS: The residence listed for active voter Louise Yachimowicz, who died in 1988 and last voted in 1992



Howard Freedlander, son of deceased voter Leah Freedlander



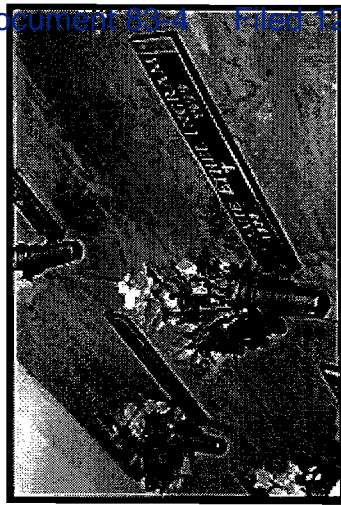
CAMPUS HIJINKS: The building housing the Johns Hopkins University Information Security Institute, where a group of undergraduate students working on an assignment for a class uncovered mortal inconsistencies in the city's active voter list

The Hopkins data suffers similarly from scrutiny. On May 25, Peck, a quiet, neat, dark-haired young man whose natural environment seems to be the glow and hum of computers, gave *City Paper* a printout of 62 of the 63 names (one was inadvertently left out). "It is what it is," he remarked about the data quality as he handed over the printout in the offices of Hopkins' Information Security Institute, on Wyman Park Drive. "I can't vouch for its accuracy."

Seven people on the Hopkins list were quickly found to be among the living. Although Social Security information recorded them as deceased, records of local court proceedings show otherwise—or, in one instance, a wife explained over the phone that "my husband is still very much alive." In 17 other cases, the only confirmation that the person died, and when, came from Social Security—and its death information is unreliable, as several cases already show. Another dozen people have death certificates on file at the Maryland Archives in Annapolis, but, due to restricted hours for public searches, *City Paper* was unable to view them to confirm dates of death before publication.

Ultimately, *City Paper's* research concentrated on what was left of the Hopkins list: 26 currently registered voters whose deaths, and dates of death, were confirmed through additional sources: medical-examiner records, obituaries, legal records of wills and estates, or surviving family members. Each of the 26 is recorded as having voted since death at least once, in elections dating back to 1991. Each remains on the active voter registration list for Baltimore City, even though many of them died in the 1980s.

Though their deaths are confirmed, the votes cast by most of these 26 dead voters remain uncertain, because the needed election records are no longer available. Called voter authority cards (VACs), each has a voter's name and other information on it, and each voter signs one at the polling place on election day.



MARKERS: The final resting place of Marnie Ethel Ingram, who passed away in 1999 but is listed as having voted in the 2003 primary; (below) the address where the late Francis G. Spain (1923-1989) is still registered to vote--he voted in the 1992 general election

Baltimore City, even though many of them died in the 1980s.

Case 1:05-cv-00634-SEB-VSS

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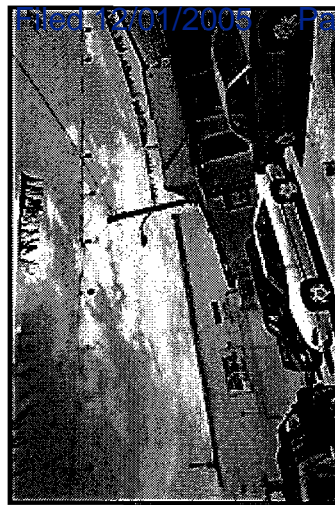
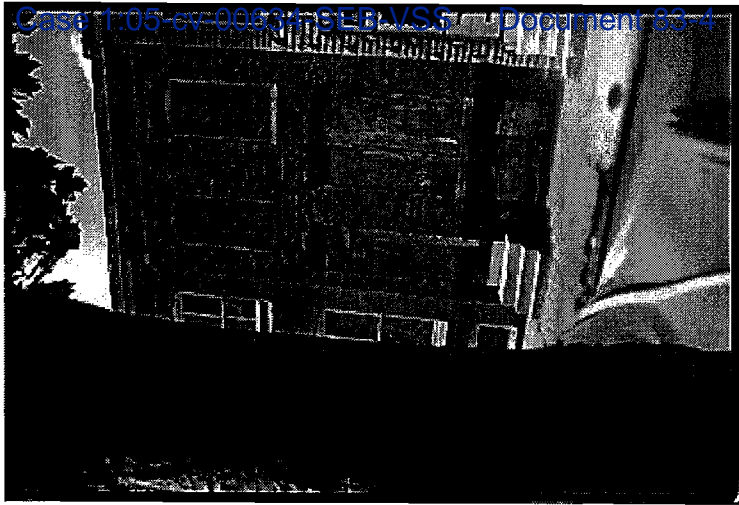
Filed 12/1/2005

Page 5 of 33

Since a corpse can't sign, a signature on a dead voter's VAC would suggest the corresponding vote was fraudulent, although it's also possible that a dead voter's VAC was mistakenly handed by an election judge to a living voter to sign, and the voter in question didn't make sure the card bore the correct name. This could happen, for instance, if the living voter's polling place is the same as a similarly named dead voter—John Doe Jr. is alive and going to the polls, and John Doe Sr. is deceased but still registered to vote at the same polling place. No signature on a dead voter's VAC, on the other hand, suggests that the vote was mistakenly recorded as cast when, in fact, the dead voter just didn't vote. This could happen if, for example, a dead voter's VAC was stuck behind a living voter's VAC, and after the living voter signed the top one, both were recorded as having voted.

VACs are retained for 22 months after an election, so they're available only for voters in the 2003 primary and the 2004 primary and general. Out of the 26 confirmed dead voters, three participated in these elections. *City Paper* provided Lamone with information on those three voters. She discovered that two of the VACs in question were unsigned; the other was signed, but name's-the-same factors come into play. The other 22 simply can't be checked: While their apparent postmortem votes are suspicious—as is their continued presence on the active voters list—neither error nor fraud can be ruled out as the cause.

The 1991 re-elections of Mayor Kurt Schmoke, City Council President Mary Pat Clarke, and city Comptroller Jacqueline McLean were challenged unsuccessfully in the first election after city redistricting based on the 1990 U.S. Census figures. Harold B. Jones (1937-1988) of Wilson Park, southeast of the intersection of York Road and Cold Spring Lane, is recorded as having voted in this election, although he died three years previous, five years after the property where he's still registered to vote is owned by Evelyn Jones,

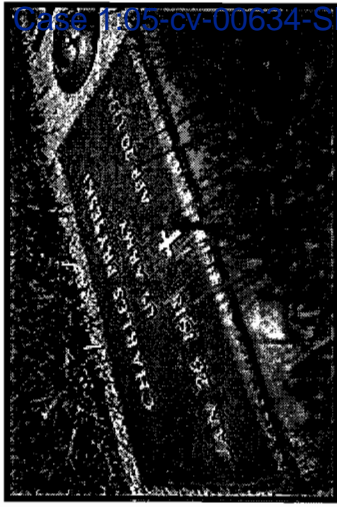


THE LAST DRIVE: The current voting address of Louis C. Tuite (1921-1995); (below) the grave marker of Charles Pryseski, who is listed as having voted in the 1995 primary

he'd first registered as a city voter. The property where he's still registered to vote is owned by Evelyn Jones,

Case 1:05-cv-00531-91B-VSS Document 63-4 Filed 12/01/2005 Page 6 of 13

who in a recent phone conversation described Harold as "a friend," confirmed his death date, and, after hearing about his postmortem vote, said simply that "that was a long time ago."



In 1992, Bill Clinton defeated incumbent George Bush for the White House in an exciting race. On the east side, Louise K. Yachimowicz (1928-1990) of Homeland was recorded as voting after her deaths. She last voted alive in the 1988 general, then died a year and a half later.

On the west side, Frances G. Spain (1923-1989) of Pennrose apparently cast a postmortem ballot in 1992, and remains on the active voter rolls. Spain's alley rowhouse is still in the family name, but it's boarded up with weathered plywood—it looks as if it's been abandoned as long as Spain's been dead, since 1989.

Glendening won the seven-way 1994 Democratic gubernatorial primary. Clarence Mitchell IV, then the newest member of a longtime West Baltimore political dynasty, broke into the 44th District by defeating incumbent state Del. John Jeffries, a labor leader. All but one of the currently registered dead voters who appear to have cast ballots in this election hailed from the west side. The exception is Adolphus E. Williams (1927-1993), a Latrobe Homes public-housing resident until his death in June 1993.

Two of the deceased who voted were from the Carroll-South Hilton neighborhood: Mattie M. Winder (1902-1990) and Robert L. Topping (1921-1980). Winder's house, a two-story rowhouse on a quiet one-block-long street, now belongs to someone else. Topping's, on a one-block street facing woods set back from a mowed field, is occupied by his widow.

"Ain't nobody been using his name [to vote], I don't care what the records say," she explains indignantly. "Oh, my husband voted, but he hasn't voted in 16 years"—the amount of time that's passed since Topping's death.

Ruth Schevker (1908-1989) voted from the Har Sinai Building on Park Heights Avenue, in the Glen neighborhood northwest of Pimlico Race Course. Her obituary lists a son, Jerome Schevker, who once had a phone in his name in the same building, but the number now goes to different residence in another neighborhood. Election records show the primary was the last election she cast a vote in, and that she remains on the active voter list.

By the time the '94 general election came around, the only game in town was the Glendening-Saubrey race, and

the post-election conflict first reared its head when Sauerbrey refused to concede, vowing to challenge every vote cast. Those votes would include—if the threat had carried any weight—four city voters who are still on the registration list, but were already dead by the 1994 general: Topping, Price, Claiborne, and Baker. Topping, of Carroll-South Hilton, was joined by two other west-siders: Clairborne of Edmondson Village and Baker of Sandtown-Winchester, where he was registered to vote from an apartment in a North Avenue building near Monroe Street. Claiborne's property is still in his family, but Baker's widow now lives near Sinai Hospital, and was reached by phone.

"He couldn't have voted" in the 1994 election because "he's buried at Arbutus Memorial Park since he died in 1988," Occie Baker explains, adding that he's "surprising" he had a voting record at all. Although she knew he was registered, she says, "I've never known my husband to vote."

"He does have a son" with the same name, she points out, which indicates that his postmortem vote may have been a case of a name's-the-same error.

A man named Charles A. Price is still the owner of record of the Northeast Baltimore home in Cedmont where a man named Charles A Price, with a birth date in 1923, is registered to vote. A man named Charles W. Price, with the same 1923 birth date and the same Cedmont address, is named in a death certificate dated Oct. 9, 1985. Given all of this fog in the records, any confusion by election officials as to which Charles Price—middle initial "A," or middle initial "W"—voted in the 1994 general is entirely understandable.

In the 1995 Democratic primary, City Council President Clarke challenged Schmoke for mayor, and lost after a grueling race. Councilman Lawrence Bell of West Baltimore's 4th District won a hard-fought battle to take over Clarke's job; Keiffer Mitchell, of the west-side Mitchell family dynasty, won Bell's old seat in the 4th. And Joan Pratt came out of the blue to defeat Julian "Jack" Lapides, a former longtime state senator, in an open-seat race for city comptroller. The only other action at the council's district races was in Northeast Baltimore's 3rd District, where Joan Carter Conway won a closely watched contest.

In Northeast Baltimore, Price of Cedmont and a fellow named Charles Prysieski (1918-1994) of Loch Raven are the currently registered dead voters who cast ballots. According to his obituary, "Charlie Pry," as he was known familiarly, came to Baltimore from Ohio, en route to New York for a singing career, but he took jobs that kept him in Mobtown. Thirty-five years at Sun Life Insurance Co. were followed by 11 years as a salesman for Jos. A. Bank Clothiers. He also worked part-time until 1984 at the Mount Pleasant Golf Course. The house where he's still registered to vote is in his wife's name, Eleanor Prysieski.

President Clinton defeated Sen. Robert Dole in the 1996 general election, while nothing but yawners filled out the rest of the federal ballot. Derral C. Faulkner (1959-1991) of St. Joseph's, a currently registered dead voter, is on record as having pulled levers—through his father, reached by phone at the address of record, exclaimed, “That’s incorrect!” for the obvious reason that his son was already dead at the time.

Elizabeth Hofferbert (1917-1989) made the books as voting from her two-story rowhouse in Loch Raven, just west of Herring Run. And in Baltimore Highlands, just north of Highlandtown, Jozef A. Czerwinski (1916-1993) is still counted as currently registered, and his last ballot was cast in the '96 general, from a unit in a senior-citizen housing facility on Grundy Street. A woman smoking a cigarette at the entrance on a recent afternoon explained that a woman with the same last name lives in the same unit today, but her husband never lived there, as he passed away before the facility opened in the mid-1990s.

Glendening faced three challengers in the '98 Democratic primary, including Harford County Executive Eileen Rehrmann, who, despite Schموke's endorsement, got only about 7,500 votes out of Baltimore City, compared to Glendening's 50,000. A suddenly open state comptroller's seat, after the death of Louis Goldstein, caused a mildly heated race dominated by William Donald Schaefer. In Baltimore City, his greatest challenge came from city Comptroller Pratt, who garnered nearly the same amount of city votes as Schaefer. The 44th District was a rematch, as John Jeffries and Clarence Mitchell IV duked it out to replace ousted state Sen. Larry Young. Another contentious state Senate race took place in the 41st, where longtime incumbent Sen. Clarence Blount was challenged by Frank Boston, a former delegate.

In Falstaff, in Northwest Baltimore, Benjamin Dease (1919-1995) voted. Benjamin Dease Jr., with a different date of birth, was removed from the voter registration list on July 26, 2002, because he'd passed away, elections records show, but the previously deceased Benjamin Dease still remains on the rolls. He last voted in 1998, three years after his death. His house long ago was sold to others.

So was the house that Leah S. Freedlander (1916-1989) lived in when she last voted alive in the 1988 general election. Today, the new owner was surprised to learn that Freedlander was recorded as having voted from that address, which is in a neighborhood called the Orchards, next to Bryn Mawr School, in 1998. But the new owner was able to provide some clues as to how to find Freedlander's surviving family members. One of them, son Howard Freedlander, is the deputy state treasurer for external affairs who serves as Treasurer Nancy Kopp's liaison to the state Board of Public Works.

“She was very active in Baltimore City politics,” Howard Freedlander explains. He says his mother served as campaign manager for one of Schaefer's mayoral re-election campaigns, and as a “mentor” specializing in precinct politics for U.S. Sen. Barbara Mikulski and former state senators Rosalie Abrams and Barbara Hoffman.

“So this certainly hits home. As the daughter of immigrants, she cherished the opportunity to vote, and there is all sorts of irony in the idea—which I personally find bothersome—that the misuse or fraudulent use of her name occurred in an election.”

Freedlander’s mother was a longtime Mount Washington resident, and had recently moved to the Orchards when she passed away. Thus, Howard Freedlander points out, while election judges in Mount Washington would have instantly recognized if someone tried to stand in and vote in her name, the judges at her new polling place likely wouldn’t know the difference between her and any other female approximating her age. Or, she may have been recorded as voting in the 1998 primary, when in fact it was the 1988 primary, due to a typing error, he guesses.

In the Northeast Baltimore neighborhood of Perring Loch, Sammie Ford (1936-1995) also voted in the 1998 primary. His widow, Cora Ford, who owns the property that remains as his active voting address, says on the phone that “he shouldn’t have been voting” because he’d already passed away, but his son Sammie Ford Jr. is alive and still votes. Thus, this too could be a case of a name’s-the-same record-keeping error.

The 1998 gubernatorial general election was a repeat of 1994, Republican Sauterbrey vs. Democrat Glendening. It was no contest, especially in Baltimore City. The Republicans’ results in the city’s federal races for Senate and Congress, and in the state legislative races, were no better.

Dease again is recorded as having cast a vote after his death—and, again, it may have been his eponymous and now-deceased son who actually voted. Mary H. Pittman (1919-1994) of Northeast Baltimore’s Lauraville neighborhood joined him; attempts to reach Michele M. Pittman, who acquired the property from Mary Pittman in 2001, were unsuccessful, because the phone number there was disconnected. Mary Pittman, who is currently registered at that address, first registered as a city voter in September 1992.

In the 2000 Democratic primary, presidential hopeful Al Gore handily defeated Bill Bradley, and U.S. Sen. Paul Sarbanes took 83 percent in a three-way race. The city’s congressional delegation went unchallenged. The congressional districts also held elections for delegates to the Democratic National Convention, but hardly anyone pays attention to those races.

Nonetheless, Louis C. Tuite (1921-1995) of Highlandtown apparently cast a ballot from his voting address at a car-repair lot on Grundy Street. He’s the only voter on record with that name. The property has been owned since 1999 by a corporate entity named Louis C. Tuite Inc., which incorporated in 1967 and remains an active business. During a recent visit to the garage, a woman there who was involved with the business said she was related to Louis Tuite, who died in 1995. As to why he’s counted as voting in the 2000 primary, “Got me,” she said sharply. “I don’t know nobody down here that’s that into politics.”

In the 2000 general, Gore received nearly six times as many votes as George W. Bush in Baltimore City—about the same margin as Sarbanes defeated Republican Paul Rappaport. Sammie Ford—the possible name's-the-same case from the 1998 primary election—was joined by two other currently registered deceased voters, Virginia A. Dunn (1938-1989) of Central Park Heights and Kenneth W. Gartrell (1923-1994) of Lauraville, in apparently casting ballots. Dunn's voting address is now co-owned by Clifton D. Dunn Jr., property records show, but the phone there has been disconnected; a phone message left at a different address for Clifton Dunn wasn't returned. Gartrell would be a possible name's-the-same dead voter, except Kenneth W. Gartrell Jr. votes in a different city precinct, in Belair-Edison. Property records show that Gartrell Jr. sold his father's Lauraville property in 2003.

In 2002, a retired grocery clerk from Silver Spring, Raymond Fustero, got a whopping 14 percent of the vote in the Baltimore City gubernatorial Democratic primary against then-Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, who was assumed to be the prohibitive favorite. The newly redistricted 2nd Congressional District reached into Baltimore City, where then-Baltimore County Executive Dutch Ruppersberger, the winner, had to fend off a competitive bid by investment banker Oz Bengur. Redistricting spawned several other interesting legislative races. Lisa Gladden defeated Barbara Hoffman in a rough-and-tumble race for state Senate in the 41st District, in West/Northwest Baltimore, where the brouhaha to fill the three delegate seats was also dramatic. Southeast Baltimore's 46th District hosted a hot delegate's race. Lo and behold, two currently registered dead voters who cast ballots were from the 41st and the 46th.

Louis Tirabassi (1960-2001) died at Grand View Hospital in Bucks County, Pa., after nearly two decades of racking up criminal charges in Baltimore City for theft, assault, battery, drugs, guns, and soliciting prostitution. About 14 months later, he apparently voted from his East Pratt Street voting address in Highlandtown, in the 46th District. Thomas R. Hamlett (1934-1997), whose West Forest Park voting address is now in Alice E. Hamlett's name, managed to vote in the 41st Legislative District

Then U.S. Rep. Ehrlich beat Townsend in the '02 gubernatorial general, despite getting only 40,000 votes to Townsend's 120,000 in Baltimore City. This was also the election in which voters passed Question P, which restructured the City Council from six three-member districts to 14 single-member districts. A ballot was cast by Gartrell, who last ghost-voted in the 2000 general.

In the 2003 Democratic mayoral primary, Mayor Martin O'Malley defeated school principal Andrey Bundley, City Council President Sheila Dixon kept some tough competition at bay, and, for the most part, the City Council restructuring failed to upset the status quo since incumbents won in nearly every new district. Mamie E. Ingram (1922-1999), the only currently registered dead voter to participate, voted in the 6th City Council District, where

incumbent Stephanie Rawlings-Blake fended off Charese Williams. Ingram, who owned several properties that she willed to her two sons and a grandson, was at that time resting at the Chapel Mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery.

In the 2004 Democratic primary, the city's Dems had no trouble picking U.S. Sen. John Kerry, out of a large field, as their man to try to stop Bush II from serving more than one term in the White House. There were virtually no challenges in any of the other federal races, which included the ever-ignored contests to select delegates for the national convention.

Frank N. Murphy (1916-1991) of Shipley Hill was the only dead voter from the Hopkins list in the primary election, apparently casting a ballot from a two-story brick rowhouse on West Baltimore Street just east of the Gwynns Falls. It looks occupied, and "Frank N. Murphy and WF" are listed as the owners. But the phone is busy seemingly all the time, and a note left there did not prompt a response. Murphy's been a city voter since 1949. There is no record of the last time he voted alive.

After her Aug. 8, 2004, passing, the body of Ivory M. Henderson (1934-2004) of Cylburn was laid out for viewing at West Baltimore's Morningstar Baptist Church. That November, when Bush beat Kerry, though, she's counted as having cast a ballot. She last voted alive in the 2002 general.

This recap of Baltimore election nights of the living dead proves little but hints at much. At the very least, the presence of such long-dead voters in the current rolls, and the fact that they have cast postmortem votes suggests that the elections bureaucracy makes mistakes. That's not surprising, given the vast intricacies of its task. Lamone, who *City Paper* provided with the list of 26 names, says that the housekeeping problems, if any exist, will be tended to, and expects newer systems to improve the way the voter list is updated.

But if 26 dead voters are on the active rolls and have cast postmortem votes, how many others that have been purged from the list may have done the same? Without a full-scale analysis of the city's full complement of voters, past and present, there's no way to even hazard a guess, and then you'd have to prove that clerical errors weren't to blame in each instance. In the meantime, purging dead voters from the list is a delicate matter. "You have to be very careful not to remove somebody mistakenly" from the voter rolls, Lamone says.

Howard Freedlander, the son of Leah Freedlander, says the experience of learning that his mother's name may have been misused to vote has taught him an uncomfortable lesson about local political culture. "When I talked to friends about what happened, and they sympathized with my plight, I found it very interesting that they showed

no surprise," he says. "That speaks to a degree and depth of cynicism that I just didn't know existed here."

But local political consultant and historian Arthur Murphy doesn't see himself as a cynic, just a realist. "Voting dead people is not new," he says matter-of-factly, and goes on to boast that, as a young man, he once bet an elections official he could "rig the outcome of an election. Whatever loophole I found"—and he declined to explain it—"he closed it immediately." Still, Murphy says of the Hopkins students' discovery, "I'm freaked out that that has happened."

The students may have been a little freaked out, too. After handing *City Paper* the nearly complete list of dead voters, Michael Peck took off for New Jersey, then, in a later telephone conversation, explained that he'd be hard to reach because he took a job with the Army. Then he didn't return phone calls. Attempts to get answers to some remaining questions about the students' data-gathering techniques in a follow-up interview with their professor, Aviel Rubin, prompted a request for an e-mail detailing the questions. The response from Rubin, dated June 3: "I'm sending this to Mike and to a few of his teammates on the project, with the hopes that at least one of them will see this and will be able to get back to you." None of them did.

Why the sudden reticence? Well, it could be the frenzy of finding a summer job, but it also could be stage fright. If so, their nervousness is understandable.

Lamone, when *City Paper* first contacted her about the Hopkins students' project, said that "you better verify where they got the data. It's a crime to use the list for something other than election purposes. You can look at it, but you can't take a list unless it's for election purposes." *City Paper* explained in response that the paper's research, at least, is being done for election purposes—to help restore public faith in a voter list whose credibility has reasonably been assailed. Perhaps the Hopkins students could use the same argument.

Sauerbrey, who's remembered as "Ellen Sourgrapes" because of her losing lawsuit, did the same thing—and Lamone acknowledges that. "Mrs. Sauerbrey went through a very painful experience," Lamone says. "But it certainly helped improve elections administration in Maryland," because her case was "the genesis for reforms that are, and have been, implemented."

As for how the Hopkins students' contributions will be received and reacted to by elections officials and legislators, time will tell. But perhaps someday soon, Baltimore's dead voters will finally rest easy.

Cas 1063-0063-FF VS Document 834 Filed 2/06/2006 Page 3 of 13