

BALTIMORE'S FAVORITE

By TODD WRIGHT

He's Thomas D'Alesandro, a jovial, hard-working immigrant's son who promised the ladies he'd collect their garbage—and did. He may be Maryland's next governor

UP UNTIL the eighth day of last May, Thomas D'Alesandro, Jr., was just another mayor in Baltimore's long line of chief executives. It was true he had been a good mayor; perhaps almost as good as his re-election campaign material promised he would be, but politically even his most enthusiastic backers didn't see anything more in Tommy's future than another term as mayor of the Free State's first city.

When they counted the votes, things were different. That he had been re-elected wasn't too big a surprise, but the record majority he piled up against two opponents was something else.

In almost the same breath that said "Congratulations, Mr. Mayor," Democratic party leaders

were adding, "You'll be the next governor." Those should have been heady words for the son of an Italian immigrant who had labored in Baltimore City's rock quarries to support Tommy and his 12 brothers and sisters. But not to Mayor Tommy. On the contrary, they were somewhat disappointing.

His goal had been a return to Washington, where he had served five terms as a member of the House. Only this time his sights were set on the Senate. And while D'Alesandro hasn't agreed to the mounting demands, it can be said here that he has made up his mind that the detour to Annapolis, the state capital, will have to be made. Nor is there any speck of doubt in his own mind

that he can be elected the next governor of Maryland in 1954.

Four years ago any mention of Tommy D'Alesandro in the governor's mansion would have been met with hoots of derision. There were many, particularly in the country-club set, who were a bit shocked that this product of Baltimore's "Little Italy" should aspire to be their mayor.

His highly unorthodox campaigning did nothing to change their attitude.

"Let me collect your garbage, I'll do it right," he shouted to the women of Baltimore at every opportunity. Though they had long been unhappy over the smelly open garbage trucks that spilled refuse over the city's pock-marked streets, such



His Honor and family at home in Baltimore's "Little Italy." On the couch with him are his wife Nancy, Franklin Roosevelt and Nancy. Nicholas is standing, Joseph in the chair and Thomas on the floor.

Another son, Hector, was away when picture was made. Aware of the problems of youth, the mayor, long before the country became awake to the juvenile narcotic problem, set up a group to investigate it

Collier's for December 29, 1951

SON

entreaties for their votes were just too undignified, many felt, for a mayoralty candidate.

Some of the city's most exclusive residential districts are encompassed in eight precincts of the 27th Ward. In these eight precincts Tommy polled only 68 votes and lost the large and populous ward.

But four years wrought considerable change.

At the height of the last campaign, the Roland Park Women's Club invited the mayor to speak at their swank clubhouse, along with the two other candidates. Roland Park is the home of the oldest and richest families of the city. It is in the heart of the eight precincts of the 27th.

Ladies Warn Mayor to Be Punctual

The committee from the club warned the mayor he would have to be there by 11:00 A.M. or he wouldn't be allowed to speak. They knew Tommy's habit of being late, with or without adequate excuses. D'Alesandro explained that would be impossible—every minute of the particular morning was filled with conferences on city business in his office.

The ladies were adamant though. The 11:00 A.M. deadline stood.

Along about eleven thirty that morning the mayor suddenly decided he might need those 68 votes again. Adjourning a meeting and grabbing an aid, he sped out to Roland Park. His two opponents had finished and just left when he arrived at the portals of the club and the chairwoman was about to summarize the candidates' platforms. The mayor got some stern looks, but after all he was the mayor, and the ladies graciously invited him to go ahead with his speech.

He apologized for being late and then added: "After all, girls, I had to collect your garbage today."

When the laughter finally subsided, D'Alesandro promised he would make up for his tardiness by cutting his speech short.

"If you think I've been a good mayor, then vote for me. If you don't think I have, then you ought to get rid of me. And thanks again for letting me come." That was all.

He carried each of the eight precincts and polled 1,668 votes against his previous 68.

But D'Alesandro had hurdled higher barriers than that society outpost to become the first Catholic mayor in the 162 years of Baltimore's history.

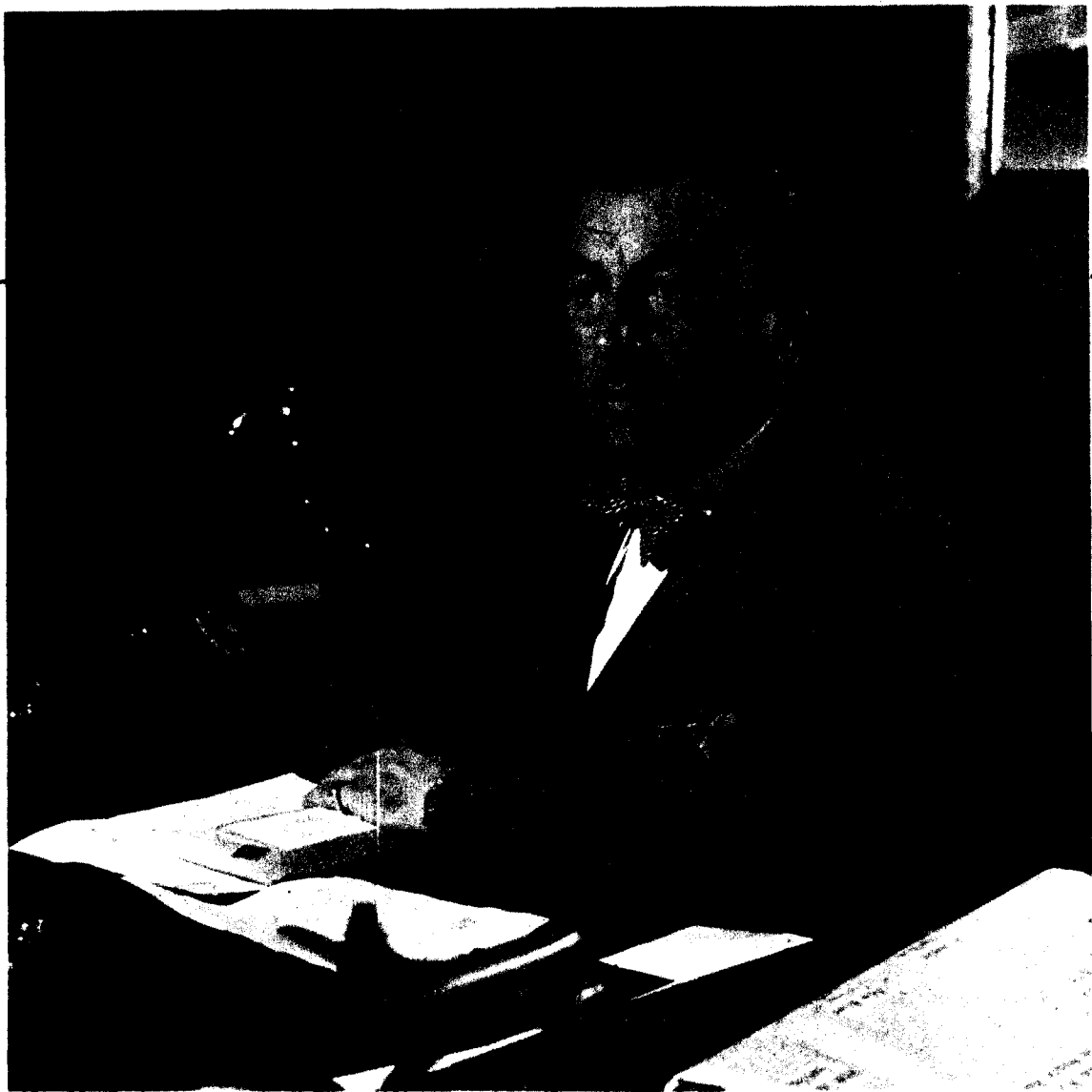
His father, Tommy, Sr., only it was Tomaso then, had stepped off the rusty Italian steamer Foulta onto the docks of New York City on a morning in June, 1889, for his first look at the new country in which he hoped to make his fortune.

It looked good, much better than the small farm outside Naples where he and four brothers and sisters had worked so hard and so long for so little; and a lot better than the restaurant in Naples where he had slaved as a cook to earn the \$27 steamer passage to America.

But the streets weren't paved with the expected gold. Unable to obtain anything but temporary jobs as a day laborer, he began asking about other cities, and was told that good jobs were to be had in the thriving port of Baltimore, which was then bursting at the seams with 434,000 residents.

The good Baltimore jobs weren't for uneducated immigrants, and the best Tomaso was able to find was a job with the city as a laborer in its rock quarries. He had to get up at five o'clock in the morning, spend an hour getting to the quarry across town, work 10 hard hours breaking rock and then spend another hour getting home—all for \$1.30 a day.

But Tomaso didn't complain. He saved his money, became an American citizen, and soon married pretty Mary Antonetta Foppiano, a dark-



At 48, D'Alesandro gives America's sixth largest city a youthfully vigorous government. In four years, he has repaved 625 miles of streets, is now improving city's shabby docks

eyed, black-haired widow with three children. For \$15 a month, they rented a nine-room house on President Street in Baltimore's Little Italy. There was good Italian food when Tomaso came home from work at night. The house was usually warm in winter, because owners of a nearby lumber yard generously ignored scavengers. There was a day off: Sunday. Tomaso and "Aunt Annie," as neighbors soon began calling his wife, raised a family. By 1903, there were 13 children. Tomaso Americanized his name to Thomas.

He and his wife Annie did the best they could for the children, but life was hard. Papa D'Alesandro came home nightly almost stupefied with weariness. His wife saw that the children had clothes and shoes, attended St. Leo's Parochial School and Mass. Except for that, the kids were pretty much on their own.

Papa Is Questioned by the Police

Young Tommy was thirteen when the police called on his father. "I no 'fraid of police," the eighty-three-year-old and retired senior D'Alesandro remembers now. "I no do nothin' bad. I say, 'What you want, police?'" The officers told him that his son Tommy was a good boy but was much too young to be working in a neighborhood box factory. "I tella da police I no know Tommy he worka da box factory," Papa D'Alesandro recalls. "I worka alla day long in da quarry. He go over and get job. I no know. I tella da police, 'Soon now school again, and he go back.'"

Tommy, Jr., it developed, already had quite enough box-factory work to suit him, and after one more year of school he came home one night to announce that he was the new office boy for the insurance firm of Poor & Alexander at a salary of \$8 a week, little less than his father earned for a week of 10 backbreaking hours of daily labor cracking stone in city quarries. Tommy switched to night school for the rest of his sketchy education. Off hours, he hung around Democratic headquarters of Baltimore's Third Ward of the Third Precinct, Little Italy's voting headquarters, a

block or so from the D'Alesandro home. Soon he was ringing doorbells at election time, helping to get out the vote. Precinct bosses began to notice the alert and energetic young newcomer.

In this traditionally American manner was launched one of the promising careers of the present era in Maryland politics. Today, Tommy D'Alesandro—still youthful-looking at forty-eight—presides over America's sixth largest city.

His Honor the Mayor has a rather short, stocky figure, with a ruddy, triangular face, a small mustache, neat iron-gray hair and blue-gray eyes. Friends say he once looked much like Ramon Navarro, the actor, and there is still some resemblance. Good living has given him the beginning of a double chin. He has a moderate paunch, admirably concealed by faultless double-breasted tailoring, which also makes his 190 pounds of weight appear implausible. There is just a trace of the Roman in his strong, well-cut nose.

Tommy rarely seems vain, but apparently believes the dignity of his office demands more physical stature than he possesses. Hence, he wears "elevator" shoes, which give him added height and, incidentally, a sort of mincing walk. Wearing these, he stands just above five feet seven inches, and at a glance appears taller. The mayor chain-smokes cigarettes, sometimes a pipe or a cigar. He takes an occasional drink of straight rye whisky. At parties, he usually takes one, or at most two, then switches to soft drinks. Unlike most Italians, he cares little for wine.

In his 48 years he has earned a store of political knowledge—all of it the hard way. He has served two terms in the state legislature, a term as city councilman and nearly five terms as a congressman. He has moved so fast and in such a straight path, mostly up, that he has been compelled to resign an uncompleted term of office every time he has been elected to a new job. He was serving his fifth Congressional term when he was first elected mayor of Baltimore.

That was a hurdle even his best friends said was too high for the redoubtable Tommy. And when he decided to buck the (Continued on page 68)



GILBERT DARLING

What got me interested in his soul was a letter from Sally, who was madly in love with me

The Soul of Joe Forsythe

By B. M. ATKINSON, JR.

I STILL say the twenty bucks had nothing to do with it. It was strictly for the sake of Brother Joe Forsythe's soul. Of course, where sophomores and their souls are concerned you have to take drastic steps, and that's what I did. It was just unfortunate that he took it the way he did.

What got me interested in Brother Forsythe's soul was a letter from his fifteen-year-old sister, Sally, who was madly in love with me and every other brother in the chapter who'd ever gone home with Brother Forsythe for a week end.

The letter started out: *Dearest Wretch: When I am the sweetheart of Sigma Chi, SAE, Deke, KA, etc., you Chi Phi stinkers will rue the day you didn't invite me up for those crummy spring dances.*

It wound up: *Even though you don't have the decency to rescue a maiden fair from the vile clutches of a bunch of high-school creeps maybe you will at least stoop to helping one of your own filthy kind. My idiot brother Joe wrote Mother that unless she sent him twenty dollars before the dances he was going to destroy himself. Father told her that he was going to destroy them both if she did, so she didn't. That sounds like high tragedy but it's really a panic.*

Joe has twenty dollars right in his room at school but he doesn't know it. You know what a great churchwoman Mother is. Well, she sent Joe a Bible back in the fall and told him to be sure and read it. In the Bible at the place where it says the Lord will provide, she tucked a nice, crisp twenty-dollar bill. Every time she writes him she asks if he is reading the Bible. Every time he writes her she says he is learning whole chapters by heart. She knows it's a lie because he has never mentioned the twenty dollars and if Joe ever found twenty dollars you could hear him mentioning it all over the county.

So, if it's not asking too much of you, kind sir, please get him to read his Bible. Just hint at it because I promised Mother that I would never tell him about it. Good night, Stinker.

*Your Handmaiden,
Sally.*

Well, when I read that, I closed my door and had a long heart-to-heart talk with myself. "Pete," I said, "the fact that you desperately need twenty dollars to go with that poor lonely ten of yours has nothing whatsoever to do with the decision you're about to make, does it?"

"Perish the thought!" I said.

"You are going to buy that Bible from him just to teach him a lesson, aren't you? Any boy who will lie to his mother about reading the holy book deserves just what he gets, doesn't he? You're doing it for the good of his soul, aren't you?"

"Yes! Yes! Yes!"

"Besides," I said, "it will teach him some respect for his elders. A sophomore should not win all the brothers' money playing poker and then spend it all wining and dining the brothers' girls, should he?"

"Horrors, no!" I replied. "Go buy that Bible immediately. Make all the world your debtor."

WELL, I went into his room and there he was stretched out on his bed. That's another one of his failings. He studies one hour a night and he's got the highest grades in the lodge.

"Brother Forsythe," I said, "you don't happen to have a Bible, do you?"

"Why, certainly I've got a Bible!" he said. "What do you think I am?"

"I know what you are, Brother Forsythe," I said. "That's the reason I want to buy it from you. Your way of life calls more for a voodoo manual."

He sat up and stared at me. "You want to buy my Bible?" he gasped. "You, Godless John Upshaw, want to buy a—?"

"All right!" I told him. "I'm on a spot. My uncle, the Reverend Philip Upshaw, is in town and he just called and said he was coming out to see me. He gave me a Bible last Christmas. I sold it and I've got to have another one because I know he will be looking for the—"

"Oh, you wretch!" he said. "Your uncle gives you a nice Bible and you sell it. How low, how degraded, how mercenary can a—? How much money you got?"

"Don't talk that way, Brother Forsythe," I said. "You can buy a fine Bible any place for a buck, so—"

"A buck!" he screamed. He reached up on the top of his bureau, got this oblong cardboard box down, blew the dust off, opened it up, and pulled out this brand-new Bible. It had never been opened.

"Brother Upshaw," he said, "my dear-old mother sent me this Bible. There's a million dollars' worth of love and hope and sentiment behind this book. However, as we are brothers in the bond, pledged to one another even unto death, I'm gonna let you have it for only five bucks."

"Five bucks!" I gasped.

"Brother Upshaw," he said, "this is a horrible thing I do. I must have funds enough to drown my shame in the proper fashion."

"You're a loathsome leech on the body fraternal, Brother Forsythe," I said bitterly, "but here. Take it." I fished one of the two fives out of my wallet and handed it to him.

He snatched the Bible back. "Just what the hell is this? It just ain't right you paying me five bucks for my Bible when you could borrow one around the house someplace for—" He started to thumb through it. I grabbed it from him.

"There's my Uncle Philip," I gasped. "Just heard him come in downstairs. I've got to have this."

"Ten bucks," he snarled. "It's some kind of low, dirty trick but you're going to pay for it."

"Damn you, Brother Forsythe," I said, "you'll regret this!" I gave him my other five and dashed down the hall. "Coming, Uncle Philip." . . .

A half hour later I was down in the library, thumbing through the Bible for the fifty-third time. There just wasn't any nice crisp twenty-dollar bill in it. I gave it one more shake and headed upstairs for his room. He wasn't there, but this letter of his was lying on his table.

Dear Sally, it said, Please send more Bibles. Just hooked Brother Upshaw. That makes seven dear brothers this week. A funny thing but not one of them has said anything to me or to anybody else about it. I wonder why? Write Ed and Roger next. Enclosed is twenty bucks. Ten is for you. Put the other ten in the collection plate Sunday. The Lord's work must go forward.

Joe.

P.S. Yes, I've already written Mary Jane that although I love her above all the creatures of this earth I can't have her up for the spring dances as I have to take my dear little sister. It is hard for me to believe that such a straightforward, up-standing young man as myself could have a blackmailing sister who would threaten to expose him to his father.

THE END

Collier's SHORT SHORT