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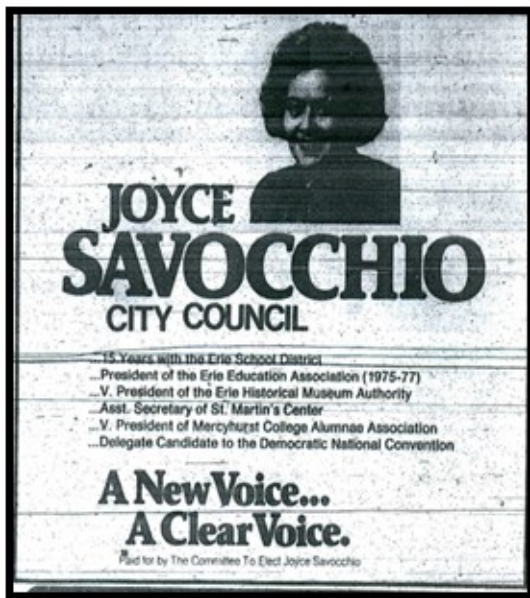
Reading in the Time of Coronavirus

More Barriers Tumbled as Savocchio Became Erie Mayor

By: Dr. Judith Lynch
Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence
November 2020

ELECTED WOMEN

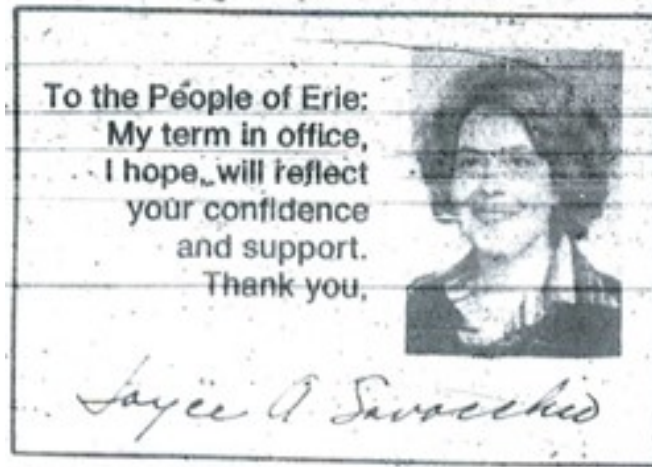
Following is the fifth in a series of articles about women elected leaders from Erie County written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence Judith Lynch. Jefferson Vice President Ben Spегgen will host an online interview with Dr. Lynch at noon each Wednesday in October featuring the leaders.



Vicki Sanfilippo
Erie Daily Times Staff Reporter

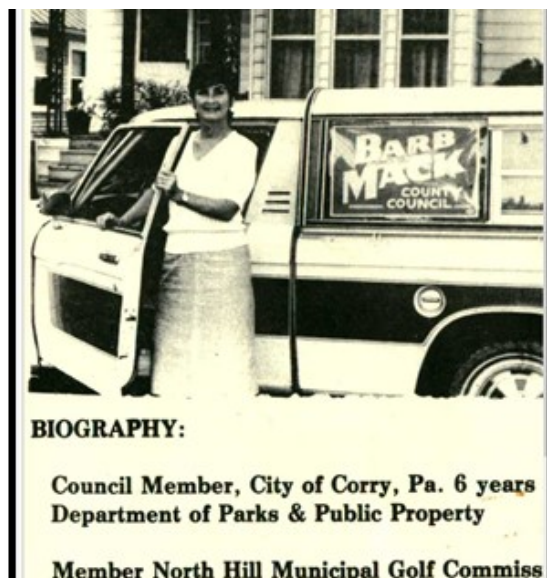
The Erie County Council Sixth District seat is undetermined because of an additional 100 vote error in favor of Mack in Corry's second ward. This would put her over the top by 33 votes. This will not be determined until the official vote count on Friday, sources said.

Source: *Erie Daily Times*, 11/4/81



The year 1981 brought more women to elective office in Erie County. Joyce Savocchio was elected to Erie City Council and served two four-year terms, leaving council at the end of 1989 upon being elected Mayor of Erie. Savocchio was a native Erieite who grew up in Little Italy on Erie's west side. Through her father and teachers, she learned to love politics and history. She came to elected office with a long list of accomplishments and community service. She had been a teacher in the Erie School District for 15 years and was the assistant principal of Strong Vincent High School. Savocchio also served as President of the Erie Education Association from 1976 to 1977. Her civic work included serving as Vice President of the Erie Historical Museum Authority and Vice President of the Mercyhurst College Alumnae Association. She was a supporter of Saint Martin's Center and served as its assistant secretary.

On January 4, 1982, the Erie Daily Times announced that at 10 a.m., four people would take the oath of office for City Council. They were incumbents Robert Glowacki and Walter Crishock and newcomers Gerald Mifsud and Savocchio. Although some writers of Erie's political history have indicated that other women served on City Council, a search of the names of all the former council members who served in the various councils through the history of Erie shows that Savocchio was the first woman to be elected and serve on council.





At the county level, where there had been a history of women as members from the beginning of County Council, another woman was elected, Barbara Pogue Mack. In the second County Council election in 1981, Mack was elected to represent the 6th County Council District that encompassed the Corry area. Although Mack was a Republican, she won the Democratic primary in May 1981 as a write-in candidate. Running as a Democrat in the November election, Mack narrowly beat her Republican opponent, Eric Marshall. Her victory was announced sometime after the official tally of the Tuesday election. At the time of the election, the head of the Voter Registration Office was Tracy Seyfert, who would later run and be elected to County Council. Late Tuesday night of the November 1981 election, a 100-vote error was discovered. When this was corrected, Mack became the clear winner of the 6th District election.

Mack had waged a vigorous door-to-door campaign emphasizing the importance to voters that the district be represented by someone who lived south of Interstate 90.

In the County Council convened in January 1982, Mack and Irving Olds Murphy were the two Republicans members on council.

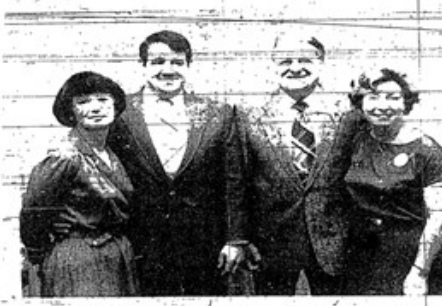
As a result, from the 1981 election, Barbara Mack was the only woman on County Council while Joyce Savocchio was the only woman on City Council.

The 1981 election was also defined and publicly highlighted by the election of Erie Mayor Louis J. Tullio to his fifth term in office and this writer, Judy Lynch, to her first term as County Executive. Both had been endorsed by the Erie Times-News. Lynch's opponents in the democratic primary were WSEE-TV newscaster Jim DeSantis and Tullio's assistant, Joe Robie. Lynch won the primary by more than 1,000 votes. Tullio had a narrower primary win over in his longtime opponent, Erie City Councilman Mario Bagnoni. In the general election, Tullio squared off against Republican Edward Hammer and Judy Lynch confronted Michael Johnson, mayor of Corry and former school administrator. Tullio won in a landslide and Lynch won with a margin of more than 1,500 votes. Lynch attributed her victory to support from family and friends, volunteers, and the number of women who went to the polls and voted.

When Tullio was sworn in January 1982, he became Erie's only five-term mayor. Lynch, serving her first term, would go on to serve four more terms as County Executive. The two community leaders continued and intensified a partnership confronting the traumatic negative changes to the Erie economy, resulting in the worst unemployment in Erie County since the Great Depression.

Lynch already at work, Johnson gracious lose

11-4-81 ERIE CO - OFFICIALS - LYNCH, JUDY



County and city "first families" celebrated victories Tuesday night. At left, Judy Lynch, elected county executive, stands next to her husband, Terry. At right, Mayor Louis J. Tullio who won a fifth term, with his wife, Grace.

For County Executive: Lynch

Two worthwhile candidates are seeking election as Erie County's next Executive in Tuesday's general election.

Judy Lynch, who has been a member of County Council since the beginning of the council-executive form of government here, is now seeking reelection to the county's top post.

Mrs. Lynch has served a term as council president during her council career, and has twice been elected to the council as the representative of the 1st District (Millcreek Township).

She was a member of the Erie

Tullio Merits Another Term

On the basis of his sixteen years outstanding service as Erie's mayor, Louis J. Tullio deserves to be re-elected on November 3rd to a record-breaking fifth term.

Actually, no real alternative has been presented for the general election - which is another story, and reflects poorly on the two-party situation in the state's third largest city. The absence of a real-party fight has led to a write-in campaign by an opponent defeated in the primary, but, again, this is unlikely to be significant.

Even if properly challenged, however, Tullio would be a formidable candidate, of that, there's no question.

His record in changing Erie's direction has been outstanding. And that's fortunate for the community because a standpat attitude at City Hall would have been disastrous.

Under Tullio's leadership, Erie has fought back from repeated blows, literally rebuilding central city. Despite the loss of a major portion of the retail function to the big Millcreek Mall (a national trend which could not, realistically, have been prevented here), downtown Erie still has a chance with the Civic Center and the Erie Insurance Exchange expansion projects to rise to a new level of vitality and activity.

County Government Commission which drafted the current county charter and has been chairperson of the council's Personnel Committee, member of its Finance Committee and liaison between the council and the Erie County Geriatric Center within the past year. An educator by training, she is a teacher at Villa Maria High School.

Michael "Mickey" Johnson has been mayor of Perry since 1978, where he has gained experience as a small-community administrator as well as running what appears to be a quality governmental operation.

He is also an educator by training

and has served as a school administrator.

Both candidates have some good ideas, but we believe Mrs. Lynch would be the best person to have in the county executive's job.

Her years of experience in county government have made her thoroughly familiar with the county operation. She knows the current problems areas within county government and would be in better position to set about eliminating them than someone coming new upon government as it operates on the county level in Erie County.

Additionally, her long involvement with county council should lead to closer relations between the council and the executive office than have been enjoyed in the past. Mr. Johnson also strongly advocates more cooperation, negotiation and compromise between executive and council, a course we recommend.

We would expect her, of course, to work closely with county council throughout her term, at the same time providing the leadership both council and the rest of the county operation will need to successfully meet the challenge of the 1980s.

We urge Erie County voters to give Mrs. Lynch's candidacy the utmost consideration when they go to the polls next Tuesday.

first elected in 1965, the mayor and his administration have secured over \$110 million in federal and state grants. What happens in the future, with declining federal dollars and increasing local financial pressures remains to be seen. All indications are that the city faces a major fiscal crisis. But it is certainly true that an experienced hand is needed to direct the ship in such stormy seas.

A particular high point of the 16-year Tullio era was the All-America City designation in 1972.

To achieve these heights again, Erie will have to solve some outstanding problems - problems we would like the Tullio administration to address early in its fifth term.

Most prominent of these problems is the police department, which has been tarred in recent months by a series of unfortunate episodes. A lighter rein on the department and its personnel is obviously necessary, and changes within the department's internal structure seem essential. In the end, the credit or blame rests with the mayor, like it or not, he is responsible.

The need for administrative changes, it seems to us, extend beyond the police department. Many City-Hall insiders feel Tullio is only

years, Mrs. Lynch is much better fitted, we believe, to move into the Executive's job.

While Mr. Johnson has some good ideas for revamping county government to better serve the people of the county, we believe some of his plans would cost more than the county can possibly afford considering the growing financial burden facing it in coming months. We do urge him, however, to remain active in political affairs at the county level.

Today, we are giving Mrs. Lynch our unqualified endorsement for election as the next Erie County Executive.

We urge Erie County voters to give Mrs. Lynch's candidacy the utmost consideration when they go to the polls next Tuesday.

Times - News

2-H Erie, Pa., Times-News, Sunday, November 1, 1981

Our Endorsements

Supreme Court Retention Robert N.C. Na, Jr.	County Executive Judy Lynch	Erie City Council Walker J. Crabock Robert Glowacki
Supreme Court James T. McDermott Robert E. Coville	Sheriff Robert Michel	Joyce A. Savocchro Gerald Mitsud
Superior Court James E. Howley Richard DiSalvo Donald E. Wisand	Clerk of Records David B. Wiley	City Controller Chris Maras
Commonwealth Court Madalyn Paladino	County Council, 1st Joseph Giles	Erie Schools John Petrus John C. Hawkins
Common Pleas Retention Fryd E. Anthony	County Council, 4th Gary Bukowski	Leonard E. LoCascio Tom Casey
Common Pleas Jose S. Julianette	Council Council, 6th Eric M. Marshall	Millcreek Schools Richard M. Zarock Vere Montgomery Joseph Maloney

In 1983, another woman joined the list of women elected officials of Erie County. The Home Rule Charter had staggered the County Council elections so that in any local election only three or

four council members could possibly be replaced in a single election. This system guaranteed some continuity between elections. In 1983, County Council Districts 1, 3, 5, and 7 were up for election. In the 1st District, Bob Walkow who had been appointed when Lynch won the County Executive race, won his first election. Fiore Leone also won and continued his seat in the 3rd District. Paul Foust was elected to replace retiring William O. Hill in the 5th District.

TRACY SEYFERT PA REPRESENTATIVE

In 1996, Seyfert decided to become one of the first women from Erie County to run for a seat in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. Seyfert won the State Representative seat by a slim 5 percent margin. She ran for reelection in 1998 and won by "a whopping 73 percent of the vote" (Schmedien, *History of Women in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives 1923-2005*).



"Tomorrow's hopes are realized through today's decision."

Tracy Seyfert County Council

Good Government is efficient government. We work hard for what we get. *Tracy Seyfert* knows our tax money should not be wasted and that County government must live within "our" means.

Good Representation requires commitment, concern and competence. You can be assured *Tracy Seyfert* will faithfully represent your best interest. And isn't that what you really want on County Council.

Good Judgment comes from old fashion common sense and know-how. *Tracy*

Seyfert has worked as a department head in County government under two administrations. Experience has its advantages!

PERSONAL — Tracy, one of seven children, was raised on a farm. After graduating from public high school, she continued her studies and is currently working on her Ph.D. Tracy has been a resident of this area for fifteen years. She has two children, Correna (20) and Craig (16). Tracy has been active in government and community affairs and has demonstrated leadership on many important issues. Recently, Tracy produced and hosted a cable television series on public policy issues.

CONTINUING EXCELLENCE FOR WEST COUNTY
— TRACY SEYFERT

In the 7th District, Irving Olds Murphy, who had led the Home Rule Study Commission, decided not to run for reelection and therefore the seat had no current contender. The 7th District encompassed the western part of Erie County. This was Tracy Seyfert's home base and she decided to run for the County Council seat. Seyfert was Director of Voter Registration and very familiar with county government and the issues it was confronting. Seyfert defeated Democrat James Vanstone by an almost two-to-one margin to

capture the 7th District seat. In this election, however, Corry's 3rd Ward, Albion Borough, and McKean Township voting machines reportedly jammed during the on-site counting process in Corry and Albion. Nevertheless, the problems were fixed in time to announce the winners at midnight, one of whom was Seyfert. On January 2, 1984, Seyfert was sworn in as the duly elected Council person from the 7th District. That night, the Seyfert family held a victory party at the Best Western Motel at I-90 and Sterrettania Road (Erie Daily Times 11/9/1983).

Judy Lynch
The decade in review

The '80s were the 'Lynch years' fo



Morning News photo
Erie County Executive Judy Lynch led the county out of financial deficit during the 1980s.

By BILL MCKINNEY
Morning News staff reporter

Erie County government facilities, programs and manpower increased during the 1980s in the face of dramatic federal cutbacks in human services spending under the Republican administration of Ronald Reagan.

The 1980s, by and large, were "the Lynch years" and, overall, County Executive Judy Lynch must be given high marks for being a successful administrator, often in the face of uncontrollable obstacles.

With federal cutbacks, much of Lynch's success has to be attributed to the state's willingness to cover most cuts and even to increase spending here for human services.

But Lynch, Erie County Council and some county administrators deserve credit as well. Expansion occurred while local taxes increased only 4.5 mills for the period because they were able to attract state money.

And large amounts of state money flowed into some programs only because they were judged top flight creations. One example is the county's Mental Health-Mental Retardation program, rated the best in Pennsylvania.

Besides the drying up of federal human services funding and, later, the elimination of federal revenue sharing and the more recent elimination of Personal Property Taxes, county officials had to overcome a county deficit.

A year before her term as County Executive was to expire, Lynch announced her reelection bid at a press conference in November 1985 in County Council chambers with friends and supporters in attendance. Lynch stressed her fiscal record of retiring the \$2.7 million debt that she had inherited and the fact that the State Department of Human Services had ranked the county's Mental Health-Mental Retardation program as the best in Pennsylvania.



The Democratic primary was particularly grueling as Lynch's opponents were Robert Cooney, the chairman of the Democratic Party, and Jerry Lynch (not related to Lynch), an ironworker and relatively unknown in party politics. According to figures compiled at the Erie County Courthouse, Lynch won handily. She garnered 24,153 votes to Cooney's 9,628 votes and Jerry Lynch's 3,671 votes.

Her Republican opponent in the general election of 1985 was George Winston, a partner in George Winston & Co., a local plumbing and heating firm. On election night in November, Lynch established an early lead that continued throughout the evening count. With the announcement of her victory, Lynch pledged her commitment to serve the people of Erie County to the best of her ability.

In the County Council elections, Mack won as a Republican. In winning, Mack said, "I'm just very happy to represent a district that feels forgotten, and I'm happy to again be in a position to be a strong voice for them." (*Morning News*, 11/6/85).

Winners		
County offices		
Executive Judith M. Lynch	Sheriff Robert N. Michel	Clerk of records David B. Wiley
Council		
2nd Dist. Joe Giles	4th Dist. Gary Bukowski	6th Dist. Barbara Mack
Judges		
Michael T. Joyce	Shad Connelly	George Levin
City of Erie		
Mayor Louis J. Tullio		Erie controller Philip S. English
Council Joyce A. Savocchio Robert Brabender		Gerald Mifsud Walter Crishock
School board Eva Tucker Jr. John C. Harkins		Brenda Pundt Claire Wyglendowski

WINNERS OF NOVEMBER ELECTION 1985
Erie Daily Times, November 6, 1985

In 1985, Savocchio won her second term on Erie City Council, serving from 1982 to 1990. Unlike district representation in the county, City Council members run at-large in Erie. In the 1981 May Democratic primary election, Savocchio, Crishock, Glowacki, and Mifsud won the four City Council seats that were up for election. Losing that election were Larry Meredith and Bernard Harkins. All of the winning candidates, except Crishock, won write-in GOP nominations and thus appeared in the general election in November on both Democratic and Republican tickets. In the November 1981 election, Savocchio was the second highest vote-getter after Glowacki. In the May 1985 primary of her second-term election, Savocchio led the field of candidates with a vote of 12,873. She was followed by Mifsud and Crishock. Glowacki had resigned and Ted Dombrowski was appointed to fill his unexpired term. Bob Brabender became the fourth member of City Council elected that November.

Election winners in today's Morning News

County Council winners See Page 1B

City Council winners Page 1B

MORNING NEWS

Volume 25, Number 97 PH 456-8531 Wednesday, May 22, 1985 205 W. 12th St., Erie, Pa. 48 Pages 25 Cents

In that election of November 1985, Savocchio again led the field. The

November 6 election day was cold and rainy and Savocchio praised those who came out to vote. The Morning News of Wednesday, Nov. 6 quotes Savocchio as saying "I'm really grateful to the people who came out and voted on such a day." In all, Savocchio served two terms on City Council, eight years in which she showed the ability of a woman to hold an important political position. She demonstrated her growing knowledge of city government, her capability of handling the issues confronting the city, and her responsible leadership.



In the book *Erie, Pennsylvania Mayors*, author William P. Garvey wrote: Savocchio always believed that her City Council experience was invaluable to her role as Mayor, especially in terms of understanding how to address the city's challenges as a legislator. She learned how to work with a variety of colleagues, helping her years later to better understand them and their roles, particularly during budget time (Garvey, *Erie Pennsylvania Mayors*, p. 372).

The 1980s had been a hallmark for women elected officials. Lynch had taken office in 1982 as the second County Executive. Savocchio had gained the seat on City Council in the same election. In that same election, Mack had been elected to County Council. In 1984, Seyfert joined the roster of women elected officials when she was sworn in as a member of County Council. Despite this obvious gain in acceptance of women as elected officials, the closing year of the decade, 1989, would be heralded by the Erie Daily Times as the "year of the women."

Sources: Erie Daily Times, Erie Times News,

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Judy Lynch, Ph.D., is a Scholar in Residence at the Jefferson Educational Society. She was named the Jefferson's Decadean Scholar in 2018. She continues to serve on the Jefferson's Board of Trustees and was its first chairwoman. From 2004 to 2017, she served as Associate Professor of Political Science and History at Mercyhurst University. From 2002 to 2004, Dr. Lynch taught at Allegheny College and was part of the Civic Engagement Institute. Prior, she worked as an analyst for the CIA and served for 20 years as Erie County Executive. She received her Doctorate With Distinction in Political Science in 2001 from the University of Pittsburgh and her M.A. in Social Studies from Gannon University. Her undergraduate degree, a B.A.



In Case You Missed It

[Leadership Part Four: Integrity: the Heart of Leadership](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence, Dr. Andrew Roth.

[Bay Rat Athletics: Right Field Out](#) written by prolific author, historian, and Jefferson presenter, Dr. David Frew.

[Foreign policy: The point is not just to compromise, but to appreciate others Part Two](#) written by founder of Brock Institute for Mega Issues, Rev. Charles Brock.

[Major Reforms Led to New County Government](#) written by Jefferson Scholar-in-Residence, Dr. Judith Lynch.

