Bull Roast a Rousing Success

It was a party to remember! On July 20th, about 275 present and former District Court judges, staffers, and friends gathered together to enjoy an evening of camaraderie and nostalgia at the District Court’s 30th Anniversary Gala, a festive Bull Roast held at Michael’s Eighth Avenue in Glen Burnie.

“Everyone has their own memories of the District Court, and everybody is a dignitary, because everyone has made a significant contribution in their own way, whether it was 30 years ago, or yesterday,” District Court Chief Judge Martha F. Rasin said to the assembled crowd in her opening remarks. She noted that when she goes to other states, and “sees what they are up against without a statewide court structure like Maryland has,” she is reminded how special the District Court is.

Chief Judge Robert M. Bell also lauded the District Court in his remarks, citing the outstanding job done over the past 30 years in making the Court accessible and responsive to the consumer. He praised the late former Chief Judge Robert Sweeney for making the District Court a “court of respect,” as well as Chief Judge Rasin, “who has continued the tradition” for the past five years.

The event’s guest list included many luminaries who played a part in the District Court’s inception, including former Maryland Governor Marvin Mandel, who signed the constitutional amendment that brought the District Court into existence 30 years ago.

And the celebration continues...

Additional festivities for the District Court’s glorious 30th anniversary celebration are scheduled through October 2001. A day at Oriole Park took place in August. Still to come are a golf tournament on September 15 (contact Judge Stephen Clagett, 410-535-2091) and a scenic railroad trip through Western Maryland on October 6 (contact Kathy Peeler, 410-260-1226).
Conference to be Created

During the Maryland Association of the Judges of the Orphans’ Courts Spring Seminar held May 15 in Annapolis, State Court Administrator Frank Broccolina offered a groundbreaking proposal — to create a Conference of Orphans’ Court Judges, similar to that of the Circuit Courts, statewide. This Conference, to be staffed by the AOC, would function as a governing body and foster coordination and uniformity among these courts throughout Maryland. The Association unanimously adopted a resolution for the creation of the Conference.

New Officers

Another highlight of the Conference was the election of new officers, as follows:

President         Judge Herbert Reisig
Vice President     Judge Robert Morris
Treasurer          Judge Timothy May
Secretary          Judge Karen Friedman
Director           Judge Donald James. Directors whose terms have not expired are
                   Judges Calvin Travers and Melissa Bright.

— Judge Albert Northrop contributed to this article

Chief Judge Bell Honored for Access to Justice

On June 26, Court of Appeals Chief Judge Robert M. Bell received the Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland’s (PBRC) Access to Justice Award — the organization’s highest honor — in recognition of his dedicated advocacy on behalf of equal justice for all Maryland citizens. Judge Bell was honored during the PBRC’s Access to Justice Tribute at the Center Club in Baltimore. In its ten-year history, PBRC has only honored one other recipient with this award — Congressman Benjamin Cardin in 1996.

“Judge Bell has been such a strong advocate for equal access to justice from his work as a student at Dunbar through his outreach while at Piper and Marbury, through their legal clinics,” said PBRC Executive Director Sharon Goldsmith. “He’s also been supportive of legislation locating new sources of funding, actually several million dollars, for legal services for the poor.”
Service Awards

The 2001 Service Awards brought a flurry of recognition and celebration for dedicated Judicial staffers. Picnics, parties, dinners and special ceremonies honored the hard-working and dedicated employees of Maryland’s courthouses and judicial agencies. Kudos to all!

For a list of staffers receiving awards for time-in-service, check out the Employee Extra.

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Memo to Anniversary Committee:

Thanks

Thank you to the District Court’s 30th Anniversary Bull Roast Committee Members: Hon. James Vaughn (Dist. 10); Barbara Allison (Chief Judge’s Chambers); Kathy Peeler (DC Headquarters); Hon. Kathleen Sweeney (Dist. 1); Mary Kinnamon (Dist. 2); Grace Achuff (Dist. 3); Hon. Stephen L. Claggett (Dist. 4); Becky Quinlan (Dist. 4); Pat Loveless (Dist. 5); Jeff Ward (Dist. 5); Dixie Scholtes (Dist. 11); Nancy Mueller (Dist. 10); Bill Larman (Dist. 5).

—Diane Pawlowicz

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District Court Poster Contest Winner

As part of the District Court’s 30th Anniversary Celebration, a poster contest was held for employees. The winning poster, pictured right, was created by the very talented Cindy Spieth, Administrative Services Specialist at District Court Headquarters. Copies of her innovative poster are on display in every District Court location.
Introducing: 
DAVID DURFEE

On May 2, David Durfee joined the Administrative Office of the Courts as its Director of Legal Affairs. Mr. Durfee will be working primarily in the areas of personnel, contracts, and procurement law, where he has extensive expertise. “I did all of this in my former life,” he said, referring to his experiences at the Office of the Attorney General, where he was Principal Counsel at the Department of Personnel. He also was Deputy Counsel at the Department of Budget and Management. Although he was too modest to admit it, Mr. Durfee has also received a multitude of accolades and awards for excellence, including an “Outstanding Service Award” from the AG’s office. He sees his role in the Judiciary as providing legal assistance and advice on the various matters that arise on a daily basis at the AOC.

On a personal note, Mr. Durfee is not the only “legal eagle” in the family — his wife is also an attorney (“she’s smarter than I am,” he joked.) He has two sons, ages 8 and 6, and considers himself a “sports dad.” The family resides in Baltimore, but will soon be moving to Crofton.

This 1984 University of Maryland School of Law graduate holds a B.S. from Cornell University, and originally hails from upstate New York.

Family Forms Now On-line!

As part of the Judiciary’s initiative to assist pro se litigants (those without legal representation), court forms needed to file for divorce, child custody and other domestic relations situations in Maryland are now available for free from the Judiciary’s Website, at www.courts.state.md.us/family/forms/index.html. Forms designed for judges, masters and court staff can also be downloaded from the website. The forms are currently in WordPerfect 7.0 format, so users will need WordPerfect 7.0 to view and print them without error. They will soon be available in PDF (Portable Document Format), which can be opened and printed by all users.

For further information, contact the Family Services Program, at (410) 260-1258.
NEWS FROM THE BENCH

Baltimore City

Baltimore City Circuit Court welcomes Judge John P. Miller, who was elevated from the District Court, where he has served as judge-in-Charge of the Civil Division since July 2000. He was appointed to the District Court in 1996 after a 20-year career in private practice. He fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Kenneth L. Johnson.

Judges Ronald Karasic and Catherine Curran O’Malley have joined Baltimore City District Court; Judge Karasic has been the Deputy Public Defender for the State of Maryland since 1990. Judge O’Malley has served in the Baltimore County State’s Attorney’s Office since 1991. They fill the vacancies created by the elevation of Judge John Glynn to the Circuit Court, and the death of Judge Alan Karlin.

Baltimore County

Two new jurists have joined the Baltimore County District Court — Judges Nancy Cohen and Dorothy Wilson. Judge Cohen spent 14 years as a Public Defender before entering private practice. Judge Wilson comes to us from the Maryland Insurance Administration, where she served as Deputy Counsel, Chief of Litigation, and Assistant Attorney General. These jurists fill the vacancies created by the retirement of Judge Charles Foos and the election to Circuit Court of Judge Robert Dugan.

Caroline County

Caroline County District Court welcomes Judge Douglas H. Everngam, who fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge L. Edgar Brown. Great legal and judicial minds run in the family — his brother is a new Montgomery County District Court judge.

Montgomery County

Montgomery County Circuit Court welcomes Judge John W. Debelius, III, who fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Martha Cavanaugh. Judge Debelius brings 20 years of legal experience to the bench, most recently as partner with the firm of Debelius, Clifford, Debelius, Crawford & Bonifant.

Montgomery County District Court welcomes Judge Gary G. Everngam, who fills the vacancy created by the appointment of Judge Eric M. Johnson to the Circuit Court. His brother, Judge Douglas Everngam, is also a new judicial appointee in Caroline County.

Also joining Montgomery County District Court is Judge Eugene Wolfe, who fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Joanne T. Wills.

Prince George’s County

Prince George’s County Circuit Court welcomes Judge Melanie Shaw Geter, who was elevated from District Court, where she served since 1996. Before joining the Bench, she was Assistant State’s Attorney for Baltimore City and Prince George’s County, and Assistant Attorney General. She fills the vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Hovey Johnson.

Judicial Retirements

Judge Charles E. Foos, III, Baltimore City District Court

District Court Thanks Organizations for Aiding with ADR

The District Court’s ADR efforts are making an impact, and recognition dinners were held to acknowledge several key organizations that have volunteered their time to realize the program’s goals.

- On June 4th, a dinner was held to recognize the hard work of Baltimore City’s Community Mediation Program and the University of Maryland School of Law’s Mediation Program.
- On June 7th, a dinner was held to thank the Anne Arundel Conflict Resolution Center.
- Finally, a dinner meeting was held on June 27th for the Baltimore County Day-of-Trial Volunteer Mediators, both to thank them for their efforts, and to discuss the program’s progress.
Preserving a record of a case, including a transcript of the proceedings, is a vital component of the judicial process. Recognizing this, and the crucial role played in the judicial process by court reporters and transcriptionists, Court of Appeals Chief Judge Robert M. Bell appointed a committee last year to study court reporting issues, update the Court Reporters’ Manual, and make recommendations on improving court reporting and sustaining professionalism.

The Committee, chaired by Harford County Circuit Judge Maurice Baldwin, Jr., includes members from a broad spectrum of interested groups, including the Court of Special Appeals, the Circuit Courts, the District Court, the offices of the Attorney General and Public Defender, State’s attorneys, as well as numerous court reporters.

The Committee has made great progress since its inception. A Subcommittee hopes to have work on the updated Court Reporter’s Manual ready by the Court Reporters’ Association meeting scheduled for October 2001. Before the year’s end, the Committee will submit a report to Chief Judge Bell, with recommendations regarding such critical areas as certification. In order to continue its important work, the Committee needs your help.

Surveys were distributed to judges, attorneys, other users of court reporting services, and court reporting professionals to gain a better understanding of the court reporting profession, and how it is viewed by various groups who make use of the services. The Committee continues to encourage all Judiciary staff involved with, and lawyers and others relying upon, the court reporting process, to fill out a survey, to identify issues of concern, suggestions for improvements, and areas of success, in the court reporting profession.

The survey forms can be downloaded from the Maryland Court Reporters’ website, at www.mcra.org. Questions and concerns can be addressed to Legal Office and Committee staff, Elizabeth Buckler Veronis at (410) 260-1408.

— Elizabeth Buckler Veronis contributed to this article

Musical and comedy skits were among the many “Follies” that highlighted the annual meeting of the Prince George’s County Bar Association June 5 at Martin’s Crosswinds in Greenbelt. 160 attorneys and judges attended the event to enjoy the festivities and elect new officers.

During the Follies’ judicial version of TV’s “Survivor,” Prince George’s County Circuit Judge William Missouri was voted out of the Upper Marlboro courthouse that he has run as administrative judge since 1992.

photo courtesy of the Prince George’s County Bar Association
Coming to court is difficult for children, especially when dealing with painful issues like abuse and custody. The Baltimore City Circuit Court has implemented many programs to make the ordeal more kid-friendly, including the opening of a Reading Room in the Mitchell Courthouse. And now, thanks to a reciprocal program with local schools and the Maryland Institute of Art (MICA), a cheerful, colorful collection of paintings by area elementary-school students adorns the formerly stark walls of Baltimore City’s Family Divisions offices at Courthouse East. A permanent mural featuring a Crayola fantasyland also graces the formerly colorless space.

This exhibit is the culmination of a partnership that began last year when the Family Division moved to new quarters. Looking to fill its bare walls, the court contacted MICA President Fred Lazarus, who offered artwork from its Community Art Project (CAP) — where MICA students teach their craft at elementary schools lacking art programs — and by the college students themselves. The rotating exhibit features 32 framed paintings from children mentored by MICA students, and new art for the display will be chosen annually from the CAP program. More permanent murals are being painted by the MICA mentors and children, to be completed in Fall 2001. The students and mentors were honored at an exhibit opening and reception on May 23.

“Our goal is for the litigants, who come to us with a lot of problems, to feel uplifted by this artwork, so by the time they get to the courtroom, those painting have calmed them and put them in the right frame of mind to help us resolve their problems,” said Baltimore City Circuit Judge Marcella A. Holland, Judge in Charge of the Family Docket. “We’re very pleased with the partnership we have with MICA.”

The future holds more child-friendly, creative changes for Baltimore City’s circuit courthouses. The Family Division is developing a partnership with Enoch Pratt Library to donate books and library services to the waiting areas.

“This is a wonderful reciprocal program, and an excellent example of how two Baltimore institutions can enhance their offerings to the public . . . I hope the artwork will give the Family Division a more inviting atmosphere, while lessening a child’s anxiety about coming to court.”

Baltimore City Circuit Court Administrative Judge Ellen M. Heller
Legislation was passed by the 2000 General Assembly which will impact the employment status of individuals appointed to serve as standing masters by the Maryland circuit courts. Masters will now have the opportunity to decide whether to remain county employees, or become state employees.

According to Family Services Program Executive Director, Pamela Ortiz, the masters positions have formerly been administered by the counties, resulting in varying payscales. Conversion to state employment, which offers a uniform payscale, may result in higher salaries for some masters. Other issues to consider, such as changing over retirement plans, may or may not prove beneficial, depending on time-in-service and related factors.

All masters hired after July 1, 2002 will automatically become state employees. The goal is to ensure that ultimately, the master system is administered uniformly throughout Maryland.

If you are a master, please note the following:

January 1 through March 31, 2002 — Current masters will have the opportunity to decide whether they would like to become State employees. If they elect state employment, that decision will become effective July 1, 2002. Masters hired from April 1 through June 30, 2002 will have a choice of becoming state or county employees. For further information, please contact Jennifer Keiser, Assistant Director of the Family Services Program, at (410) 260-1290.

Judicial Institute News

The following publications are now available on loan from the Judicial Institute. Judges may borrow the materials for a 30-day period. Please contact Ellen DeChant at (410) 946-4902 for more information.


• Understanding Sexual Violence: The Judge’s Role in Stranger and Nonstranger Rape and Sexual Assault Cases, the National Judicial Education Program and SJI, 2001.


• A Video Seminar on Sex Offenders: Sentencing and Management Issues for Judges, Developed by the Center for Sex Offender Management for State Justice Institute and U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, 2001.
What could be more romantic than a wedding on a wind-swept beach? Each year, many couples, ask this very question, dreaming of waves crashing in the background as vows are exchanged.

Worcester County Circuit Court Clerk Stephen V. Hales is the man who can fulfill their dreams. As Clerk of Court in the only Maryland county on the Atlantic Ocean, he gets calls “all the time” from folks seeking to get married in Ocean City or on Assateague Island. (Other Eastern Shore counties border the Chesapeake Bay.) He tries to accommodate as many as he can. “I could do 100 of these weddings in a summer if I’m not careful,” he said. For non-locals who dream of nuptials on the beach, Clerk Hales may be their only chance — area clergy generally won’t perform weddings for non-parishioners, he said.

When it comes to weddings, Hales helped put his county “on the map”, in yet another way. Picturesque Berlin, Maryland was the setting for the Julia Roberts-Richard Gere flick, “The Runaway Bride.” At the movie’s local premiere, a lucky couple won a free wedding in Berlin, with Hales conducting the ceremony. “It was fun. The wedding had a Hawaiian theme, with a steel-drum band and a luau-style feast,” he said. “500 to 600 people attended.”

Of the beach weddings he has performed, Hales’ favorite took place among the idyllic dunes of Assateague at sunset, featuring a serenade by the bagpiper who performs at White House ceremonies. “I have a soft spot for the kids,” Hale said. “When a young lady is standing there, and she tells me this is her dream, I do my best to fulfill it.”

The District Court of Maryland will soon begin the installation of cutting-edge digital technology to audio-record its judicial proceedings. On September 17, the Glen Burnie Courthouse will be the first of 67 courtrooms to receive this technologically advanced recording equipment during the initial implementation phase. By January, 2003, the installation in all 107 District Court courtrooms in its 32 locations statewide is expected to be complete.

The new system will convert analog audio into a digital audio file, a medium which offers many advantages over the previous technology. A major plus is improved sound quality. Digital files can be handled like other data files, thus giving the District Court many new options for archiving, transporting, playing, and tagging audio court records. The new system also positions the District Court to move into foreign language support in the future.

“Depending on how the technology is used, this system has the potential to improve the effectiveness of almost anyone who interacts with court information,” said Patricia Platt, Chief Clerk of the District Court. “We are very pleased to avail ourselves of this new technology, and look forward to increasing the efficiency and quality of District Court recordkeeping the District Court’s courtroom recording capabilities. This is important for a court that handles more than 2 million cases per year.”

The service will be provided by CourtSmart Digital Systems, Inc., a leading vendor in the area of digital filing for judicial systems.
In July, the District Court added two new commissioner’s offices. In Prince George’s County, a second regional booking facility opened at the new District IV Police Station in Oxon Hill in Eastover Shopping Center. It merges the Clinton and the old Oxon Hill commissioner stations, which covered Southern Prince George’s County.

The new station, which provides 24-hour coverage, is expected to generate over 25,000 transactions yearly, including initial appearance hearings, bond hearings, and applications for statement of charges. Six commissioners, joining the existing staff of 29, operate the new office and provide assistance to the county’s other commissioner’s offices in Hyattsville, Upper Marlboro, and Kentland (Landover).

Also, a satellite station for the District Court Commissioner’s Office in Carroll County opened at the county’s Detention Center. This office, staffed by four on-call commissioners who will provide coverage from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m., and 24-hours on Sunday, assists with the increasing use of commissioners by police, and citizens in the overnight hours. The primary station, still located at the Courthouse Commissioner’s Office, will provide coverage during business hours.

Congrats to:

Montgomery County District Judge Mary Beth McCormick, who has been elected president of the Maryland Chapter of the National Association of Women Judges.

Frederick and Washington County District Court Judge W. Milnor Roberts, who was appointed as the new Administrative Judge for District 11.

Montgomery County Circuit Judge John W. Debelius III, who received the 2001 Professionalism Award from his county’s Bar Association.

Pamela Ortiz, Executive Director of the Family Services Program, and her staff. This outstanding program received the 2001 Pro Bono Service Award from the Pro Bono Resource Center of Maryland.

Deborah A. Unitus, AOC Assistant State Court Administrator, who was elected as vice-chair of the Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification.

Montgomery County District Judge Marielsa Bernard is sponsoring a Storybook Project at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women at Jessup. The project gives inmate mothers an opportunity to tape-record bedtime stories, sing a lullaby or leave short personal messages for their children.

About 30-35 inmates will be participating through this December. Volunteers are needed to go to the prison to assist with this program. For more information, contact Judge Bernard at (301) 279-1551.
Retired Judges Honored by the Maryland State Bar Association

The Sodaro Civility Award, honoring retired Judge Anselm Sodaro, who served 30 years on the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City, is presented by the MSBA each year to a Maryland judge who has demonstrated outstanding judicial temperament, civility and courtesy.

This year’s recipient was retired Prince George’s County Circuit Judge Robert H. Mason. According to MSBA representative Susan Bayly, “Throughout his judicial service, Judge Mason demonstrated respectful courtesy and genuine concern for each of the citizens who appear before him. He has never forgotten . . . that a judge is after all a servant of the public and not the other way around.”

And in an interesting twist, on May 15, Judge Sodaro himself received an honor which celebrated his excellence and achievement in criminal law. At its annual Awards Dinner in Baltimore, the Maryland State Bar Association’s Section Council on Criminal Law and Practice awarded Judge Sodaro with its highest honor: the Robert C. Heeney Memorial Award, which exemplifies “the highest professional standards and achievement in the field of criminal law during their distinguished career.” Judge Sodaro retired from the Judiciary in 1980.

Under Construction

Throughout Maryland, the sounds of construction are in the air, as two jurisdictions eagerly anticipate new courthouses, or much-needed additions and renovations to current structures.

The District Court broke ground in Baltimore City for the new $11.9 million John R. Hargrove, Sr. District Court Building in South Baltimore. The 87,203 square-foot, two-story building will be built on a 6.5 acre parcel of land at Patapsco Avenue and 7th Streets. It will include five new courtrooms, offices for District One Court operations, State’s Attorney and Public Defender offices and expanded parking for 262 cars. The building is named after the late Judge John R. Hargrove, Sr., the first African-American to serve as an administrative judge of any court in Maryland.

Design work will soon begin on an $11 million annex to the Charles County Courthouse, a project that is targeted for completion in three to four years. With the annex, the county should be able to move the District Court offices and some county offices out of the existing courthouse. That would free up space for more courtrooms in the existing building — a necessity for a county that grew 19.2 percent between 1990 and 2000.
### September

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<td>New Trial Judge Orientation, Judicial Institute</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Law Clerk Orientation</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>District Court Admin. Clerks Meeting</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Conference of Circuit Court Judges</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Conference of Circuit Court Clerks</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>* Children in Court, 9:00-12:00</td>
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<td>* Domestic Violence, 1:15-4:00</td>
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<td>* Humanities, 9:00-4:30</td>
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<td>* Actions against Public Officials, 9:00-12:00</td>
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### October

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<td>Child Support Guidelines, Ocean City</td>
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<td>14-17</td>
<td>Mid Atlantic Assoc. for Court Management Conference, Ocean City</td>
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<td>* CINA and TRP, 9:00-12:00</td>
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### November

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<td>* Examin. Legal Research Software, 9:00-12:00</td>
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<td>* Comparative Law, 9:00-12:00</td>
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<td>* Natural Law and Legal Theory, 1:00-4:30</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>District Court Admin. Judges/Admin. Clerks Caseflow Management Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>26-27</td>
<td>District Court Judicial Education Conference, Solomons Island</td>
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### Events

- Conference of Circuit Judges Annual Meeting
- Conference of Circuit Judges
- Conference of Circuit Clerks
- Family Services Conference on Role of Mediation in Resolving Family Conflict
- District Court Admin. Judges/Admin. Clerks Caseflow Management Meeting
- Judicial Institute of Maryland Programs (open to judges and masters)