



## Suit over furniture

# Mandel faces another battle

By Doug Struck  
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Annapolis—As former Governor Marvin Mandel completes his punishment resulting from one legal battle, another court fight soon will resume.

The state attorney general's office said yesterday it will push for a trial in the civil case it filed almost three years ago against Mandel and his wife, accusing them of having taken thousands of dollars of fine furniture and supplies from the governor's mansion.

The suit has been lingering in the Anne Arundel County Circuit Court since September, 1980, when the judge hearing the case said he would wait until Mandel was out of prison before proceeding.

The Mandels, in turn, sued the state, charging that thousands of dollars worth of their own furniture was

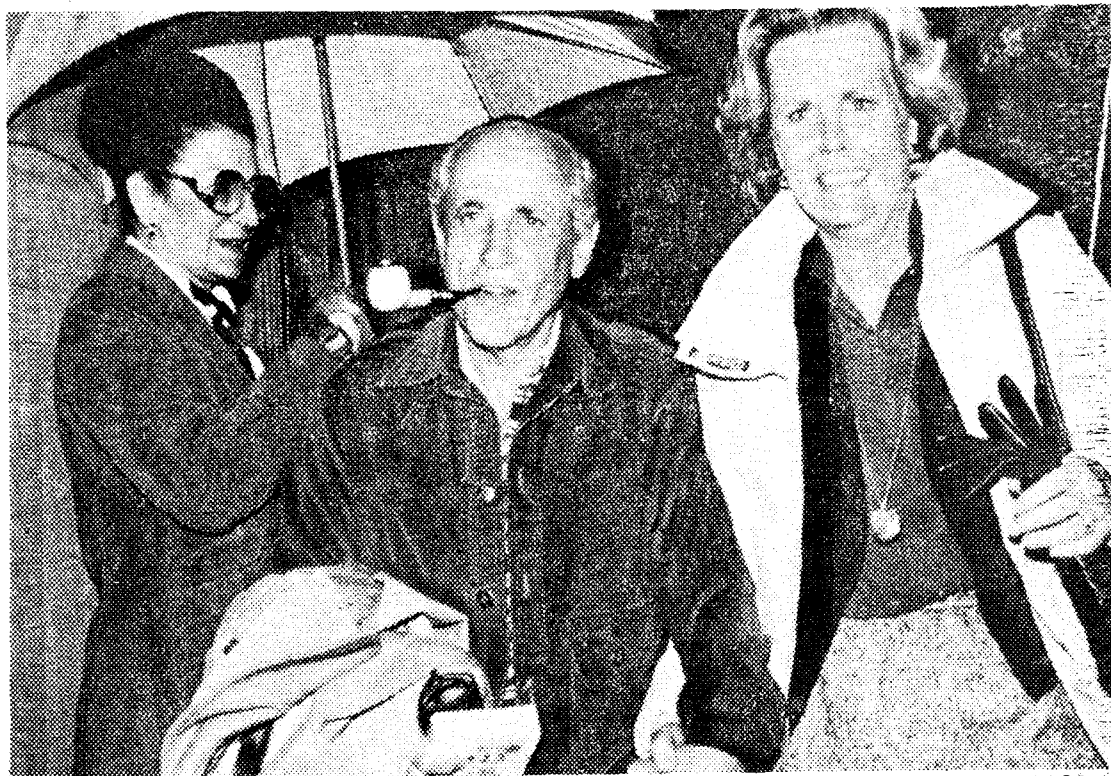
left at the mansion when they vacated it in 1977 and has been improperly confiscated by the government. The two suits have been joined into one.

A deposition—legal testimony before lawyers—is being scheduled to be taken from Jeanne Mandel, the former governor's wife, next month. The state will ask to take similar testimony from Mandel soon, according to James L. Shea, one of the assistant attorneys general handling the suit.

Testimony taken Thursday in St. Marys county from two friends of the Mandels might shed some light on who owns what furniture, Mr. Shea said. The lawyer said he hopes to take depositions from about a dozen other people.

Pretrial motions still must be decided, but he said he would ask the court soon to set a trial date.

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AP  
Marvin Mandel's return to Maryland from prison began (top) with a farewell to his Florida lawyer, J.B. Murphy, then a smile (above) as he carried away a few possessions. Late in the day (right), he arrived with his wife, Jeanne, at the Volunteers of America halfway house on Boston street to await release December 20.

Sun photo—Joseph A. DiPaola

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# Md. suit over furniture awaits Mandel's release

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While the amounts involved in the suit are comparatively small—the state estimated the antique and fine wood furniture cost about \$9,600 when purchased and was worth something more than \$20,000 by 1980—the accusations contained in the civil suit allege petty behavior by the couple.

The suit alleges that the Mandels virtually stripped the governor's mansion of many of the best—and also some of the most common—furnishings and supplies.

For example, the suit charged that Mrs. Mandel ordered the mansion staff—over the objections of the house manager—to order huge amounts of food and supplies in the 16 days before the Mandels moved and then had them pack much of it for shipment to the Mandels' private residence.

Among those items, the state alleged, were 350 bottles of liquor, \$489 in dog food, \$201 worth of toiletries

and 43 cases of cleaning supplies.

These charges prompted the bitter, forceful response by the Mandels, who got to court first with their suit. They charged the Hughes administration with political vindictiveness and claimed the Attorney General, Stephen H. Sachs, was merely seeking publicity.

"Now that [Mandel] is coming back, the attorney general will leap on his charger and try to excoriate the last bit of publicity out of it," said T. Joseph Touhey, the lawyer hired by the Mandels for the suit, in part because of his past clashes with the attorney general.

The Mandels contend that much of the furniture in dispute was taken into the mansion by them or bought with the understanding they would repay the state and take it with them when they left.

The question of the missing furniture arose when an inventory of the furnishings was taken after the Mandels left the mansion in October, 1977, following Mandel's

conviction in federal court.

The suits by the state and the Mandels were filed in January, 1979, after public wrangling over the issue failed to solve the dispute.

Judge Bruce C. Williams said in September, 1980, after Mandel reported to prison, that the former governor "has got a right to be here to testify. I'm obviously not going to have this heard until the governor is out of jail."

Another legal question Mandel soon will face is his right to make a living as a lawyer.

Since December, 1977, Mandel has been temporarily suspended from legal practice. He himself had agreed at that time to a temporary suspension, pending the outcome of his federal legal difficulties. He had contended, however, that his federal convictions for mail fraud and racketeering were not crimes of "moral turpitude."

Moral turpitude, often, is grounds for permanent disbarment.

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