



AP Photo.

**ACTING GOV. Blair Lee III swears in the new Maryland Court of Appeals judge Rita C. Davidson yesterday in the House of Delegates chamber.**

## *Woman welcomed to high court*

Rita C. Davidson won't have to worry anymore about picking up a Court of Appeals opinion and finding out that one of her decisions on the Court of Special Appeals has been reversed.

At 4:41 p.m. Tuesday, she became the first woman to become a member of the 200-year-old Court of Appeals, the state's high court.

Mrs. Davidson, a judge of the Court of Special Appeals since 1972, was sworn in by fellow Montgomery countian, Acting Gov. Blair Lee III, who had been given the powers of the office for an hour by Gov. Marvin Mandel.

An overflow crowd estimated at 400 jammed the House of Delegates chamber for the ceremony, which blended seriousness with humor about Mrs. Davidson breaking the court's sexual barrier.

"Judge Davidson is going to change the guard," said Chief Judge Richard Gilbert of the Court of Special Appeals, the first of a series of speakers praising the new judge.

"She has contributed more toward Maryland's view about speedy trial than any other judge," Gilbert said.

Shoshana S. Cardin, chairperson of the Maryland Commission for Women, called her "the epitome of womanhood. Her investiture today is the realization of a collective dream."

Chief Judge Robert C. Murphy of the Court of Appeals welcomed Mrs. Davidson on behalf of the six other members of the court with light hearted remarks.

"My colleagues and I have been in conference all day preparing ourselves—perhaps I should say steeling ourselves—for the first onslaught of femininity in our court," Murphy said.

"She is the court's first Jewish mother," he continued. "I'm sure, as a result, the level of profanity will subside, our manners will improve, we'll all dress warmly for court and at lunch we'll clean our plates.

"I welcome her most heartedly on behalf of the court and all of its judges," Murphy said.

Lee, who appointed Mrs. Davidson, said he thinks she will provide a much-needed civilizing influence on the high court.

"I predict she will become one of the most distinguished members of the Maryland Court of Appeals," Lee said.