

Judge Kathryn Shook Looks Forward to Senior Judge Role

By Jane Day
Sentinel Women's Editor

Judge Kathryn Lawlor Shook, soon to become senior judge of the Circuit Court here, wants "to make this the most efficient court in the state."

Right now she's brimming with ideas on how to "keep the cases moving and courtrooms busy" and hopes to clear up the backlog of cases on the docket by June.

The first woman ever appointed to a Circuit Court bench in Maryland, Judge Shook also has some ideas for dressing up the front entrance hall of the courthouse to lend it the dignity she feels it deserves.

Discussing her new role in her chambers last week, the blue-eyed Judge viewed her new position as one that "will change my duties entirely."

She pointed out that the senior judge is responsible for the court budget-including salaries, jury fees, expenses, equipment and maintenance, among others. The senior judge, freed to some extent from trial duties to take care of the business of the court, also makes trial assignments to the judges.

"But this doesn't mean I'm going to be boss of the judges," said Judge Shook emphatically. "The people elected them for 15 years. They didn't elect them to work for somebody."

As she sat in the high-backed maroon leather chair at her desk, her bright gold knit suit complementing her blond hair, Judge Shook made it clear that as far as she's concerned "Judge (Thomas M.) Anderson is still the senior judge."

She will not take his place until his recent appointment by Gov. J. Millard Tawes to the new Maryland Court of Special Appeals becomes effective, probably next month.



Judge Kathryn Lawlor Shook

Simply Bursting

She plans to confer with Judge Anderson about operating procedures as soon as she can. Meanwhile, Judge Shook feels that by using certain "pre-trial techniques," cases can be speeded up, thus clearing the courtrooms for others that are waiting.

She said she will try to get an estimate of the time cases are expected to take before making the trial assignments. She plans to call on lawyers involved to be as factual as they can about the amount of time they plan to devote to examination, although she added that she was aware this could be deter-

mined only up to a point.

Another thing the Judge wants to see is a courthouse addition. Plans for a new wing to the present courthouse were voted down last March by the County Council.

"We're simply bursting at the seams," said Judge Shook

"We have eight judges and six usable courtrooms and we can't utilize manpower that we have without proper facilities."

"Terrible" Security

As it is, she went on, there's no arrangement for keeping the public "out of the area where court officials have to be." Even prisoners, she said, have "to mingle with the jurors at lunchtime" when they're brought here to wait trial. "Our security matters are terrible," she added.

As for putting a new face on the utilitarian entrance hall of the courthouse, Judge Shook thinks it would be an appropriate place to display

historical exhibits, old records and flags.

"When people go into a building that is properly taken care of with dignity," she said, "they'll think twice about their appearance... women won't be so likely to come in wearing slacks with their hair in curlers."

Judge Shook hopes her role as senior judge will not preclude any trial work for her "because I like it," she said of her years on the bench.

She was appointed by Gov. Theodore R. McKeldin in 1955, three months after Judge Anderson's appointment, and elected to a 15-year term the following year.

Prior to that she had been elected to the County Council where she served from 1950-51 when Governor McKeldin appointed her to a vacancy in the State Legislature. She served from 1952-53.

Call me Judge

Judge Shook likes to say of her upbringing that she "was born in Massachusetts, raised in California,

and when I reached the age of reason, came to Maryland."

She attended American University and practiced law in Silver Spring for 18 years. She has two children and three grandchildren, all county residents.

Both she and her husband, Donald G. Shook, a Silver Spring zoning and planning consultant, are deep-sea fishing enthusiasts. When she has an afternoon off, the Judge also likes to golf and frequently gets in a round with her long-time friend and former law clerk, Kathryn Diggs, controversial former president of the recent County Council.

Judge Shook sees only one problem confronting her as a woman on the bench—people don't know whether to call a woman judge "Mrs. or Judge."

"I'm 'Judge' the same as a woman doctor is 'Doctor,'" is the way Judge Shook clears up that point.

The first woman to serve on Maryland's Circuit Court. . .received her degree from the Washington College of Law of American University. . .active on the local political scene, she served on the County Council and in House of Delegates, where she served on the Judiciary Committee. . .appointed to the Sixth Circuit Court bench in 1955 and was elected to the position a year later. . .honored in 1958 when she received the AU Alumni Association Distinguished Recognition Award. . .a trustee of the Montgomery County Youth Camp, member of Phi Delta legal fraternity and has held office in the County Bar Association. . .active in the Maryland State and American Bar Associations and participates in the National Conference of State Trial Judges. . .married to Donald Gleason Shook, has two children and three grandchildren.



**Kathryn J.
Shook**