

LIKE a diamond, Audrey's life has had many facets. Her interests and accomplishments have reflected both a gusto for living and a strong commitment to her community. A horsewoman, banker, lawyer, mother, civic activist, community volunteer and judge, she has given more than one hundred percent to every endeavor.

Born in Chicago, Illinois, Audrey grew up on a farm in southern Prince George's County and attended school in Upper Marlboro. Her father, a World War I colonel, died of a heart attack at the outset of World War II, and her mother, a French Canadian, sold the farm and moved with Audrey and her brother, Clarence, to New York City. Audrey attended St. Faith's, an Episcopal boarding school for girls in Saratoga Springs, New York.

## AUDREY E. MELBOURNE

Judge, 1930-



The family later returned to Prince George's County and lived in Laurel. Audrey earned her bachelor's degree by attending George Washington University at night; she worked during the day at Riggs National Bank. After graduating from college, she attended law school at night at the University of Maryland in Baltimore and continued to work during the day at a local law firm. One of only two women in a law class of nearly a hundred students, Audrey received her law degree and was admitted to the Maryland Bar in 1962. She established a criminal law practice in Laurel, later joining Howard Goldman and forming Melbourne and Goldman.

An avid and lifelong horsewoman, Audrey hunted with Laurel's Iron Bridge Hunt Club. She also owned race horses and became very knowledgeable about the racing business. Not surprisingly, therefore, she

handled a number of cases involving the racing world. The initial attorney for seven jockeys who were charged with fixing a race at Laurel Race Track in the renowned St. Valentine's Day racing case of the 1970s, she and the defendants became known as "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs!" Audrey also litigated *Kathy Kusner v. Maryland Racing Commission* in 1967, which required the Commission to license the world's first female flat track jockey. She was selected Woman of the Year by the Laurel Business and Professional Women's (BPW) organization for her successful efforts in that case. In the 1970s, she successfully argued to have the first female steeplechase jockey compete at Saratoga Springs, New York, in *Ryan vs. National Steeplechase and Hunt Association*. With such an impressive legal background, Audrey became the first woman to be appointed to the District Court of Maryland in 1977; a year later, she was the first woman to be appointed to the Circuit Court.

A trendsetter, Audrey had a Amish buggy made to meet highway standards during the gas shortages in the 1970s. While other drivers were impatiently lined up at gas pumps, she was care-free and on the move, being pulled along the Laurel streets by a high-stepping trotter. On several occasions, she found herself unexpectedly racing through the streets after a convertible passed by—the lively steeds were used to having convertibles start trotting races!

While buggies as a form of modern transportation did not catch on, Audrey's adoption of the British collarette did. Used to adorn the neckline of the black robes worn by English female litigators, Audrey discovered the fashion during a trip to England and returned to Prince George's County with a supply of collarettes. Before long, other women judges had copied the British legal fashion tradition.

Someone who has immersed herself totally in everything she has done and has always been committed to doing her best, Audrey has exemplified the accomplished individual who has found both pleasure and purpose in life. ♣

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