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ANNE ARUNDEL

Judge to retire today

*Goudy plans to stay
active in the law*

By Dennis O'Brien
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The first thing you may notice about H. Chester Goudy Jr. is that he does not look 60 years old.

Judge Goudy, who will resign effective today from the Anne Arundel Circuit Court bench, still has jet-black hair, a wrinkle-free face and is slender enough to look as if he still could be playing lacrosse for the University of Maryland.

That may give the impression that 18 years as a judge has been a soft life for the University of Maryland Law School graduate.

But, according to those who know him, nothing could be further from the truth.

"He's always taken his work very seriously and been very careful and deliberate in his approach. He really works at it," said Edwin A. Lechowicz, his law partner from 1970 until 1977, when Judge Goudy was appointed to the bench by acting Gov. Blair Lee III.

"He's always been a meticulous, no-nonsense kind of judge, someone who wants to get right to the point of the case and not waste time on irrelevant issues," said Anne Arundel County State's Attorney Frank R. Weathersbee.

Born in Baltimore, Judge Goudy attended Towson High School for

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two years before graduating from the Severn School in 1952.

As a student at the University of Maryland in the 1950s, he took an aptitude test to help determine his vocational interests and found that he had two — farming and aviation.

Judge Goudy remembers that now with a laugh. But at the time, he said, it made sense.

The son of a prominent Baltimore lawyer, Judge Goudy spent his youth working at his parents' Severna Park garden nursery, and he enrolled in the Air Force ROTC program at the University of Maryland with plans to fly in the Korean conflict.

But when the war ended before he graduated, he put his dreams of flying on hold, took his father's advice and went to law school.

By the time he graduated from law school in 1961, his father had died, and he was married and the father of three children himself.

He went to work at the law firm of his uncle, F. Gray Goudy, a Baltimore lawyer who specialized in insurance work.

He spent the next four years there before Joseph A. Stevens, the deputy state's attorney in Anne Arundel County and a former UM lacrosse teammate, offered him a job as a part-time prosecutor. He jumped at the chance.

"I felt like I was being pigeonholed into one area and that's something I've never liked," he said.

For the next five years, Judge Goudy devoted half his week to a private practice in a windowless closet-sized office in Severna Park and the other half at the state's attorney's office, sharing a desk with Mr. Lechowicz.

After six months as an assistant, he was promoted to deputy state's attorney, helping oversee 10 assistants. He held that position until 1970 when he left to practice law full time.

After his appointment to the bench, he ran unopposed for re-election in 1978 and 1994. Gov. Parris N. Glendening has yet to name a replacement.

In an interview last week at his Severna Park home, Judge Goudy talked like a man anxious to get on with his life.



JED KIRSCHBAUM/SUN STAFF PHOTO

Judge H. Chester Goudy Jr., at home in Severna Park, says he'll relax awhile, then decide what to do.

"It's [the judgeship] been a great experience, but what I really need is a six-month sabbatical, and there's no way to get one in this job," he said. "What I'm going to do is just relax for a month or two and then decide on something."

Now a grandfather of 12 children, he plans to spend some time — at least initially — fishing and cruising Chesapeake Bay in the 28-foot power boat that he recently purchased and that he will dock in Cypress Creek behind his home.

Having earned a private pilot's license about eight years ago, he likely will lease and fly small planes out of Lee Airport in Edgewater.

Those who know the judge and the court system say they were not surprised at his decision to retire.

The flood of lawyers entering the profession in recent years has changed the practice of law so that disputes among lawyers are getting nastier, they say.

"Lawyers are using the discovery process as weapons instead of a tool to get information," said Mr. Lechowicz, 59. "You never saw that years ago."

Anne Arundel County Public Defender Alan R. Friedman said he noticed it when he read the transcript of the drug trial for Roger and James

Mitchell Emory, a bitterly contested criminal case that Judge Goudy handled in 1993.

It ended with the brothers being convicted of running the biggest marijuana ring in county history, but not before a series of battles over courtroom procedures and access to information between the lawyers.

"If you don't have the right mindset, you could see how that could really wear you down," Mr. Friedman said.

The retirement also may make financial sense.

Judge Goudy will remain eligible for the \$62,400-a-year retirement provided to Circuit Court judges who retired at the \$93,600 salary level that went into effect today.

The judge said hobbies will not take up all of his time.

"I'm not going to spend my time out fishing everyday," he said.

He said he intends to remain active professionally, possibly by opening a private law practice and working as a mediator for consulting firms that resolve civil disputes privately instead of in court.

Judge Goudy said overall, he has faith in juries, sees a need for a death penalty, believes most lawyers still are civil to one other and always has hated one kind of case — divorces

focused on the value of the couple's personal property.

Judges are trained to decide about the law, he said, not assess "the value of someone's knives and forks."

"You've got judges evaluating the value of a couple's personal property, questions over whether a car is worth \$1,000 or \$2,000. It seems to me somebody else ought to be doing that," he said.

There are two major cases that Judge Goudy has handled that stick in his mind.

When the Maryland attorney general filed suit against Venable, Baetjer and Howard over the firm's handling of the Maryland savings and loan crisis in the 1980s, he presided over a dispute that eventually led to a \$28 million settlement.

He also resolved the dispute between the City of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County over the tax differential allowed city residents who pay both city and county taxes.

But he said the trick to being a judge is to consider each case just as important as the one before it.

"I've always tried to think of each case as the most important case I've ever handled," he said. "I know it certainly was to the people involved."