

The Sun

**Court staff braces for Lewinsky show; Switch: The ex-intern testifies today in Ellicott City against the ex-friend whose secret taping of her led to scandal-fed fame**

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If you want to see her, you'll have to take a number.

Monica Lewinsky -- the young woman whose taste in underwear helped launch a presidential scandal -- is coming to town today to testify against former confidante Linda R. Tripp.

The arrival of a one-time presidential mistress might be a ho-hum affair for Washington, but it promises to be a bit more for the quiet, unassuming suburban courthouse in Ellicott City.

Since Monday, when Judge Diane O. Leasure began hearing pretrial arguments in the case against Lewinsky's one-time telephone pal, more than 30 photographers, reporters and television cameramen have camped out on Courthouse Drive waiting to catch a glimpse of the woman whose every pound gained and lost has been monitored by a tabloid-hungry public.

Even more journalists -- including some from foreign news agencies -- are expected today, now that her schedule has been confirmed.

But while everyone else has been talking, courthouse employees have been told to keep their lips sealed. Last month, Leasure issued a two-page order laying down rules for journalists and forbidding the court staff from so much as mumbling under their breath about the case.

"They absolutely cannot talk," said Margaret D. Rappaport, clerk of the Circuit Court, about staff members. "I have the order and it has been reinforced by me."

Among the rules that reporters are expected to follow: All interviews must be conducted on the lawn outside the courthouse; journalists are forbidden from contacting, interviewing or photographing jurors; there will be no talking on cell phones in the hallway outside the courtroom.

Still, some journalists have gotten themselves in trouble. Yesterday, an NBC reporter was evicted from the courtroom when his pager beeped. He was not allowed back inside until he apologized to Sgt. Randolph W. Robey, the sheriff's department's public information officer.

Reporters rile judge

And Tuesday, Leasure was furious when reporters bolted from her courtroom to file their stories, ignoring the tradition of waiting politely for the judge to get up and leave first.

"They will be admonished for that," Robey said. "That will not be allowed to happen again."

Court officials have been anticipating media fever for months, going so far as to devote part of the county government's Web site to daily updates on the case.

No privileges

Just getting into the courtroom this morning will be a challenge for reporters and ordinary spectators. Since there is room for only 88 people in Courtroom No. 1, sheriff's deputies have been told to admit people on a first-come basis.

To ensure a good view of the woman who rejected Oprah Winfrey in favor of Barbara Walters, arrive early.

"The key to success tomorrow is to be one of the first 88 people at the entrance to the courthouse," Robey said.

Deputies will not discriminate between reporters and ordinary spectators. Once the 88 spots are taken, everyone else can wait amid the media gaggle of cameras, notebooks and microphones.

You leave, you lose

The courtroom promises to be full of shuffling feet and leg-crossing, for the rules of engagement are strict. If you have to, say, visit the ladies' room, you will lose your seat to whomever is next in line.

But not everyone in the courthouse or Ellicott City was thinking about Lewinsky yesterday.

Lisa Spicknall, whose husband was charged with killing their two children last summer, was granted a divorce from Richard Spicknall.

Not everyone excited

Sybil Amos, a bartender at the Judge's Bench, an Ellicott City hangout for lawyers, police and judges, said she is not impressed.

"None of the customers I know care," she said as she polished glasses and wiped the bar. "This whole Monica thing has been done to death."

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Graphics:

PHOTO(S)

1. DAVID HOBBY: SUN STAFF
2. ASSOCIATED PRESS

Caption:

1. Attention: Joseph Murtha, Linda R. Tripp's attorney, draws a crowd in the rain outside the courthouse. An even larger press corps is expected today, when Monica Lewinsky is to testify against her former confidante.
2. Celebrity: Today's appearance by Monica Lewinsky -- and those who chase her -- inspired a judge to create courthouse rules.

Correction:

An article in the Maryland section yesterday about Linda Tripp's wiretap case in Howard County incorrectly spelled the name of the sheriff department's public information officer, Sgt. Randolph W. Roby. The article also incorrectly stated the Web site that lists updates on the Tripp case, [www.courts.state.md.us](http://www.courts.state.md.us), as a county Web site. It is a state courts site. In an accompanying article, a photo caption transposed the identities of Patricia Mancuso and Kathleen Manwiller.

The Sun regrets the errors.

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