

J. Harold Grady, city mayor, chief judge, dies at 84

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SUN STAFF

J. Harold Grady, who spent three years in office as Baltimore's 40th mayor before resigning to become a judge, died of cancer yesterday at Stella Maris Hospice in Timonium. He was 84 and had lived in Homeland.

The former Goodale Road resident, who had lived at the Mercy Ridge retirement community in Timonium since July, spent 22 years on the bench — including four as chief judge of what became the Baltimore Circuit Court — until retiring in 1984.

"He felt very comfortable with the law and very uncomfortable as mayor," said former Mayor Thomas J. D'Alesandro III, whose father, Thomas J. D'Alesandro Jr., was defeated by Judge Grady in the 1959 mayoral election. "He was a man of intellect, a sense of humor and was always approachable. And you always knew you were dealing with a man who was fair."

"He accomplished a great deal as state's attorney, mayor and chief judge in a most unassuming way," said J. Robert Brown, a Social Security Administration administrative judge and friend.

In the early 1950s, Judge Grady attracted wide attention in the legal community as a prosecutor in the state's case against G. Edward Grammer, who was convicted of murdering his wife and using an automobile accident on Taylor Avenue as a cover-up. Grammer was put to death in 1954.

"I could always rely heavily on his judgment, and he was always a dominant figure both literally and physically at the trial table," said Anselm Sodaro, the city state's attorney during the Grammer trial who later became chief judge of the Supreme Bench of Baltimore.

After succeeding Mr. Sodaro as the city's top prosecutor, Judge Grady was drafted to run for mayor in 1959.

That year, he rode to victory on a wave of political change, defeating three-time Mayor Thomas J. D'Alesandro Jr. in the hotly contested Democratic primary by a 33,000-vote margin.

In the general election, Judge Grady defeated Republican Theodore R. McKeldin, former mayor and governor, by more than 81,000 votes.

The election of Judge Grady, who was backed by Irv Kovens, also had historic consequences. It marked the eclipse of James H. "Jack" Pollock's political machine and the rise of Mr. Kovens as a kingmaker.

When Judge Grady and his running mates, Philip H. Goodman and Dr. R. Walter Graham Jr. — popularized as the Three Gs for Good Government — were elected, they gave every appearance of being a united team. Before the administration finished its first year, it became apparent that the team was not pulling together.

Mr. Goodman, the City Council president who succeeded him as mayor, and Dr. Graham, the comptroller, were complaining that Judge Grady was not consulting them on important matters, and they began disagreeing with the administration line on occasion.

The city's financial problems afflicted the new mayor. To save money, he discontinued free public baths and merged the Park Police into the Baltimore Police Department. He also speeded up land acquisition and construction of the Jones Falls Expressway and the Baltimore Civic Center, later renamed the Baltimore Arena.

Judge Grady was a special agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation from 1942 until 1946, when he resigned to practice law in Baltimore. He was appointed assistant state's attorney for Baltimore in 1947 and deputy state's attorney in 1955. He was named state's attorney the next year, to complete Mr. Sodaro's term, and elected to that post in 1958, the year before the mayoral race.

After retiring as chief judge of the city Circuit Court in 1984, Judge Grady became a partner in the Baltimore law firm of Siskind, Grady, Rosen & Hoover, and continued to go to his office at 2 E. Fayette St. until late last year,

when he retired.

He was married in 1942 to Patricia Grogan, who died in 1994.

Judge Grady was a communicant of the Roman Catholic Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, 5200 N. Charles St., where a Mass of Christian burial will be offered at 10 a.m. Saturday.

He is survived by two sons, Joseph H. Grady Jr. of Saratoga, Calif., and Thomas L. Grady of Baltimore; two daughters, Maureen Callahan of Point Pleasant, N.J., and Kathleen Ann Donovan of Timonium; two sisters, Marianna Davis of Lutherville and Maxine Eagan of Towson; and five grandchildren.