

Courthouse Chronicles

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MITCHELL PORTRAIT UNVEILED AT ANNUAL MEETING

Portraits of Clarence M. Mitchell, Jr. and Juanita Jackson Mitchell were the highlight of the Foundation's annual Term of Court Ceremony and Reception on October 24, 1996. Mary B. Widomski, Deputy Administrator of the Circuit Court for Baltimore City, received the Foundation's Award of Achievement for dedicated and outstanding service. The joint program also served as a stated meeting of the Bar Association of Baltimore City, the sixth consecutive year of cooperation between the Foundation and Association in sponsoring the event, and the best attended.

Known as the "101st Senator" for his role in securing the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other landmark legislation as director of the Washington Office of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Clarence Mitchell had the Baltimore City Courthouse named in his honor after his death. Mr. Mitchell

was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Carter.

Juanita Jackson Mitchell was the first African-American woman to graduate from the University of Maryland School of Law and the first to engage in the practice of law in Maryland. The Mitchells' 45 year marriage saw both of them successfully challenge limitations

on the legal status of African-Americans and produce a family committed to public service.

Numerous members of the Mitchell family attended the dedication of the portraits, presided over by Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke. Councilman Keiffer J. Mitchell, Jr., and former Senator Michael B. Mitchell responded on behalf of the



Councilman Keiffer J. Mitchell, Jr., speaks for assembled Mitchell family members at portrait dedication.

Mitchell family. Artist Simi Knox executed both of the paintings, which will be professionally hung in Courtroom 215 of the Mitchell Courthouse. Bar Association President William R. Levasseur noted that the program concluded a remarkable week for Maryland's African-American legal community, including the appointment of Robert M. Bell as Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals and the dedication of a monument to Thurgood Marshall, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, in Annapolis. Mr. Knox also painted the portrait of Justice Marshall which hangs in Courtroom 400.

Mary Widomski has worked for the Circuit Court since 1966 and served as its Deputy Administrator since 1985. She orchestrated, administered and oversaw many of the renovations to the courthouses. Foundation President-Elect Robert T. Gonzales presented Ms. Widomski with her award, but her contributions were recognized by many, including Mayor Schموke.

MUSEUM'S STAFF CHANGES AND COLLECTION GROWS

The Baltimore Law Museum added acquisitions to its collection in 1996 as its staff docents underwent a complete turnover. Frank Cermak, Deputy Clerk of Court, donated twelve directories of Bal-

timore lawyers covering the period 1933-62. The judicial robe and correspondence of the late Judge Avrum Rifman are now in the museum's collection. Administrative Judge Joseph H.H. Kaplan contributed a photograph of former Mayor and Governor William Donald Schaefer.

Late in the year, the Museum's longtime docent, Moses J. Cohen, passed away at age 87. A former assistant state's attorney, Cohen was also active as a volunteer in other civic and charitable activities. Elliott Morrison, the other principal docent, retired from his duties. New docents Priscilla Downy and Irwin H. Cohen are both employed in the jury commissioner's office. They are poised to offer tours to the jury pool at lunch time on Monday, Wednesday and Friday most weeks.

OFFICE MOVES AND STATE FUNDS FUEL NEEDED RENOVATIONS

The Maryland General Assembly allocated \$2 million to refurbish Baltimore's courthouses in its 1996 session. Those State funds fueled a flurry of renovation activity which continues the 1990's trend of annual piecemeal improvements to the Mitchell Courthouse and Courthouse East.

The most striking aspect of the 1996 improvements is the re-dedication of long-used spaces to new uses. The Medical Services Division had been located in a warren of small

spaces on the fifth floor of Mitchell. An October reception celebrated the Division's new suite of offices on the first floor of Courthouse East. Formerly occupied by the Baltimore City Civil Service Commission, the new space required extensive demolition and reconfiguration.

Your Foundation funded a new space for civil marriage ceremonies on the sixth floor of the Mitchell Courthouse. Walls were constructed to define an area in the back portion of the Licensing and Land Records Division. An arbor, stanchions, new carpet, wainscoting, wallpaper, paint and lighting transformed the space into a fitting background for photographs of newlyweds.

New courtrooms are being readied for some of Baltimore's new Circuit Judges. Mitchell courtrooms 600 and 432 are being renovated, as is East Courtroom 540. Completion of all three will be in 1997. The space formerly occupied by Medical Services is being reconfigured for three new jury rooms. Work has begun on new offices and hearing rooms for Domestic Relations Masters on the first floor of Courthouse East.

Public areas of the Mitchell Courthouse will be refurbished with part of the State funding. Twelve public bathrooms are being redesigned to improve access to the disabled. All of the corridors will have new plastering, painting and seating, as well as new tile flooring and enhanced lighting. The grand jury areas will be extensively renovated.

Some of the improvements for 1996 are harder to see. The Juvenile Court QUEST computer system has been dramatically upgraded. Rodent control was funded for the Mitchell Courthouse.

NEW CIRCUIT COURT JUDGES

The Maryland General Assembly and Governor approved four new judgeships for the Circuit Court for Baltimore City: two after October 1, 1996 and another two after July 1, 1997. The addition was the final change in a year which saw the greatest changes in the Baltimore bench in memory.

Veteran Judges Elsbeth Levy Bothe and David Ross retired from the bench in 1996. Judge Marvin B. Steinberg passed away.

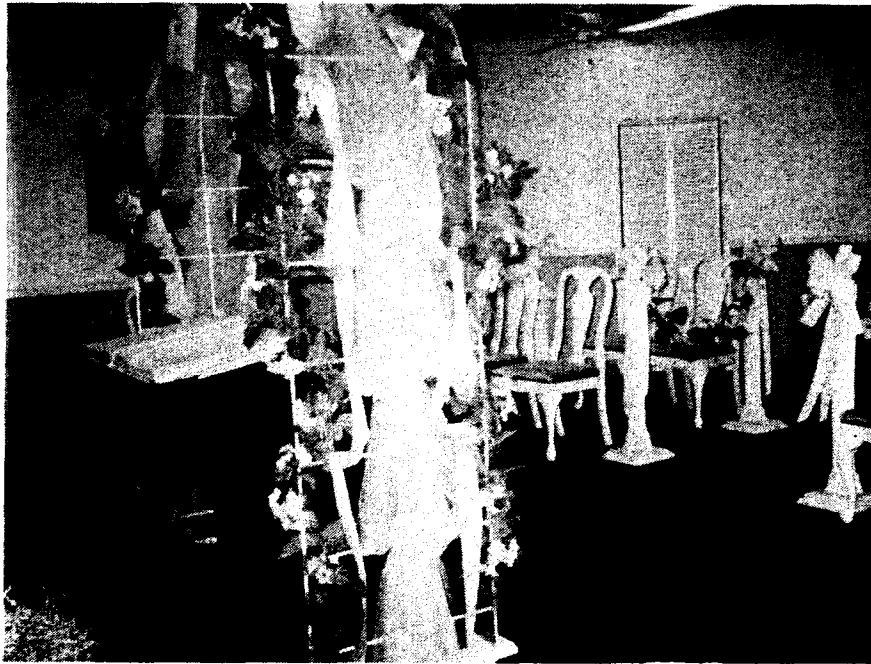
Three new judges were added to the Circuit Court prior to the newly-created positions: Bonita J. Dancy, Gary I. Strausberg and David W. Young. As a result of the legislation, Evelyn O. Cannon and William D. Quarles joined the bench in December. The Circuit Court for Baltimore City now includes twenty-eight sitting judges, its highest number ever.



Recently appointed judges of the Circuit Court: (standing l-r) Albert J. Matricciani, Jr., William D. Quarles, Thomas J. S. Waxter, Jr., David W. Young; (seated l-r) Gary I. Strausberg, Bonita J. Dancy, Evelyn O. Cannon.

FOUNDATION MEMBERSHIP

The Foundation has four membership categories: Supreme Bench Society (former members of the Circuit or spouse), Court of Chancery (Officer, Member of Board of Directors or Board of Governors), Bailiffs Inn (former Circuit Court law clerk) and General Court (all other friends of the Foundation). Dues are a modest \$10 annually and may be sent to the Foundation, c/o Mrs. Sheila Peter, Room 264 Courthouse East, 111 N. Calvert Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202.



New civil marriage ceremony room in the Mitchell Courthouse.

FOUNDATION ELECTS NEW OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

The Baltimore Courthouse and Law Museum Foundation, Inc. is a charitable organization established to support the preservation of Baltimore's circuit courthouses, to operate the Museum of Baltimore Legal History and to foster growth in the collections of the courthouses and museum.

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DECEASED LAWYERS REMEMBERED

Fifteen attorneys who died in 1995 were remembered at the annual memorial services of the Bar Association of Baltimore City on May 22, 1996. Colleagues, family members, and friends gave brief "memorial minutes," recalling the achievements and character of the deceased. Chief Judge Robert I. H. Hammerman, Association President-Elect William R. Levasseur, Memorial Committee Chair Joseph K. Pokempner, U.S. District Judge Andre M. Davis, and Judge Gary I. Strausberg each addressed those assembled in Ceremonial Courtroom 400. Following the services, the audience and speakers adjourned to a wine and cheese reception in the second floor lobby of the Mitchell Courthouse.

Those Honored were:

CHARLES H. DORSEY, JR.
ELI GOLDEN
CHARLES J. HENRY, JR.
JOHN O. HERRMANN
EDWARD J. KABARA
HON. HARVEY M. LEBOWITZ
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