AFRO reviews court cases of 1974

By Pam Widgeon

Lawyers, teachers, minister, politicians and many prominent citizens appeared in Criminal and Federal courts during 1975 for various charges.

Some were fortunate; while others were convicted by a jury or a judge. Summarized are some of the cases the AFRO has covered during 1974.

FATHER FRANKLIN

Father Patrick Henry Franklin, pastor of St. Martin's Church of Christ Scientist was convicted in July of committing a hand gun violation.

Criminal Court Judge James A. Perrott imposed an eight year sentence.

After eight hours of deliberation, a jury found him not guilty of murdering James Lee Gregg, 18.

SCHOOL TEACHER

Drury Reinhardt Baskerville, 53, a suspended elementary school teacher was acquitted of first degree murder in September.

However, he was found guilty Jan. 4, of defrauding two city banks of $3,000.

ERNEST MARSHALL

Ernest Marshall, 52, 900 block N. Denison St., was charged with the Sept. 5, murder of Lonnie Sprouill.

Sprouill, 56, 3400 block Fairview Ave., a widely known personality had worked at the Chevrolet Plant. He was gunned down on the parking lot as he went to his car.

CAPT. MELLO

Indicted along with six other policemen in 1974 was the retired Western District commander Capt. Dennis Mello.

Mello was charged with accepting payoffs of $250 a month from a gambling operation. However, he was found not guilty by a Federal Court jury.

BUS STATION MURDER

Miss Mary Washington Brown, 16, was convicted of first degree murder. She was found guilty of murdering and attempting to rob Miss Charlotte Lessem, 76, of Fayetteville, N.C. last January in the Greyhound Bus Station.

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Miss Tina Louise Green, 16, also charged in connection with the murder pleaded guilty last August to attempted armed robbery.

Miss Green testified against her friend, Miss Brown. Miss Green will be sentenced in January 1975.

SHERMAN DOBSON

Sherman W. Dobson, 20, son of a family of prominent Baptist ministers was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

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Sentenced imposed included 10 years concurrent for each of two charges, kidnap of a local cab driver and robbery with a deadly weapon plus five years for possession of a handgun. The sentence followed a jury verdict handed down Dec. 11, 1973.

LIDDIE JONES

John Edward (Liddie) Jones, 33, was convicted of possession of heroin with intent to distribute and maintaining a common nuisance. He was convicted this month and sentenced to 21 years.

Liddie is now serving a 30-year sentence in Lewisburg, Pa. penitentiary for conspiracy to violate federal narcotics laws.

$650,000 AWARD

A six-year old girl was awarded $650,000 for permanent injuries she sustained in an accident leaving school on Dec. 2, 1971.

The May case is believed to be the largest amount ever received for one plaintiff in the state courts. The jury returned a verdict in favor of Alnetta Miller.

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Mrs. Mildred Leggett mother of the child, originally filed suit for $2 million. She was granted $1,297.60 for her daughter's medical expenses.

PAUL CHESTER

Indictments were handed down in September against Paul L. Chester, clerk of the Court of Common Pleas.

As first black head of any court, Mr. Chester supervises many employees, issues business licenses and permits and marriage licenses.

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Mr. Chester filed a multi-million dollar suit against a daily newspaper which claimed he demanded that his employees contribute money to his primary campaign fund.

SEN. CLARENCE MITCHELL

A case charging failure to file income tax returns against Senator Clarence Mitchell 3rd, were closed in April in Federal Court, after government attorneys and defense counsel stated to the judge that the amounts in dispute were so minimal that there should be no finding of guilt or sentencing.

U.S. District Judge Joseph Young, who heard the case, accepted a plea of nolo contendere offered by Sen. Mitchell, through his counsels Marvin J. Garbis, Michael B. Mitchell and Allen J. Schwalb.

MRS. MILDRED COLLINS

Judge Meyer Cardin suspended the balance of a murder term of life plus 10 years in prison and placed Mrs. Mildred Collins, 63, on probation for five years.

For nine years, Mrs. Collins has been wondering if she would ever be released from the Women's Institution in Jessup, Md.

Mrs. Collins widely known as "Milly" is a former dancer who performed in a bird cage in a night club. She was serving a life sentence for killing her husband-to-be three hours before their July 23, 1965 wedding.

STEPHEN MILES

The corruption trial of Stephen L. Miles, a Baltimore county lawyer for Liddie Jones was delayed for nearly a month, due to the "inexplicable" disappearance of Mrs. Ada Jones, mother of Liddie.

Miles was indicted for obtaining $72,000 illegally from the Jones family while acting as Liddie's attorney and for conspiring with Liddie and his mother to bribe certain public officials to fix a criminal case. Miles was acquitted.

THE FIRST OF HIS RACE—David T. Mason, former Secretary of the Dept. of Employment and Social Services, became the first jurist of his race to be named to the Maryland Court of Special Appeals. This photo shows him being sworn in on Dec. 2 by Governor Mandel.

MOUNTAINS OF GARBAGE could be seen in parts of the city as the city's first garbage strike dragged on for 15 days. This pile, affectionately named "Our Dump" by the residents of the area, was seen at the corner of S. Register and E. Pratt Sts.

(AFRO staff photo by Roman Hankewycz)

Baltimore city faced strike after strike

By Portia E. Badham

As 1974 slowly came in, the cost of living quickly went up putting many family supporters in a difficult situation.

Before everyone was acquainted with the new year there were protesters here and picket lines there, both in search of higher salaries and lower prices.

February began the strike year when nearly 6,000 teachers of the Baltimore city schools staged a four week walk-out for an 11 per cent pay incease. They eventually got a 5 per cent increase.

Only three weeks later, guards at the City Jail had a "wildcat walk-out" which lasted for six hours. The guards requested new uniforms and better security equipment both of which they did get.

The Hilton Hotel was gripped with sudden shock on March 16 when the Hotel and Restaurants Employees and Bartender's Union, AFL-CIO went on strike causing the plush hotel to cancel many of its more expensive and elaborate affairs.

An employee strike at Murphy Stores on March 30 for higher wages and better medical plans after one month had spread to three adjoining states.

Some 350 people carrying signs protested on May 1 in front of the downtown office of the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company because they felt the rates were too high and increased to much.

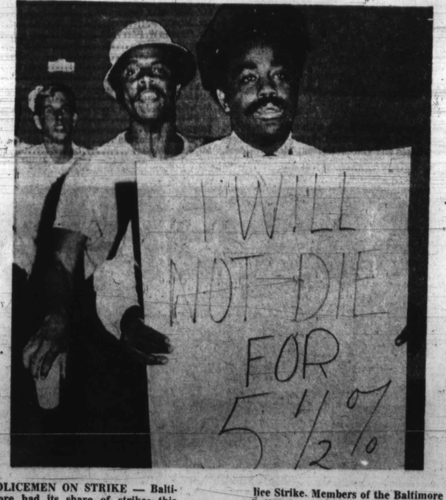
In July the peaceful status quo changed a bit when two major walk-outs occurred, police officers and sanitation workers. Both wanted a pay increase and as important as their jobs were intended to stay out until their demands were met.

The police officers stayed out for four days leaving the city unguarded with vandals and arsonists having a "time to run loose".

Although the sanitation workers were out for a month, citizens in the city did not over flow the trash cans and some made their own deliveries to the city dump.

With only a month left to go the hospital service and maintenance workers took their turn in the pay increase requests.

After staying in the picket line for 10 days they got their increase and returned to work, with more money for the holidays and a better outlook towards the recession now occurring.



POLICEMEN ON STRIKE — Baltimore had its share of strikes this year, including an unprecedented Police Strike. Members of the Baltimore Police Dept. refused to further jeopardize their lives on the front line [illegible] salary and benefits.

(AFRO Photo by Benjamin M. Phillips IV)

Teacher strike starts eventful school year

By Portia E. Badham

The Baltimore city public school system, fifth largest in the U.S., gained much focus in this year beginning most importantly with the Feb. 4 teachers' strike that lasted four weeks.

Some 6,000 teachers joined picket lines, leaving nearly 185,000 students unattended in class. A 6 per cent pay increase instead of the 11 per cent requested reluctantly brought the teachers back on March 5.

In May, AFRO editor Mrs. Elizabeth Murphy Moss ended her 14 year term on the School Board and was replaced by Dr. Beryl Williams, dean of the Center for Continuing Education at Morgan State College.

The School Board on June 7 voted to accept a plan required by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare that would desegregate elementary and junior high schools in September.

Two weeks later, the 10th school year came to a close leaving thousands of students and teachers to begin summer vacations.

However there wasn't exactly "hot fun in the summertime" when some 300 angry supporters of Superintendent Dr. Roland N. Patterson foiled the plot of five white board members to oust the school superintendent.

More than 25 supporters stormed the stage at Coldstream Park Elementary School on Aug. 8 preventing Commissioner Robert Schaefer from continuing his motion that a new school leader be appointed.

By summer's end, four young ladies were preparing to enter for the first time as students at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute. Although some protest came from the all male students at the school, the board voted to admit the girls to the school's "A" and "B" courses.

On Sept. 5 school doors opened under a new plan that desegregated the school system, giving the board one of its more severe headaches.

In many instances, black and white students were together for the first time and found it a bit difficult to overcome the hostile influence of parents.

Angry parents flocked to school board meetings requesting transfers for their children because of harassment, long distances and low academic standards at certain schools.

The board began to give in to the whims of these parents by allowing transfers which caused the desegregation plan to revert, defeating the board's original intentions.

Before long most of the students were back in class and it was business as usual. Or was it?

The Board of School Commissioners was then faced with preparing a high school plan that would have to comply with HEW, further desegregate the schools and avoid some of the problems of the previous plan.

While working on the desegregation plan, the board was plagued with many complaints from parents and teachers that the number of assaults and robberies in the schools was increasing.

A Douglass High School security officer was shot by two assailants in October which sparked the cry of many other officers to carry arms inside the schools.

In an attempt to curtail the problem, a committee was formed to study the situation and bring out some solutions.

To end the year, the School Board will have four empty seats that the Mayor must fill. This may very well determine the direction the board will take next year if it has new members.

WRITING IN — State's Attorney Milton B. Allen pulls the lever in the November General Election. Allen lost his bid for re-election but will be remembered for his unprecedented write-in campaign effort.

REGISTER now so you can vote for the next mayor and city councilpersons. Do so today at Supervisors of Elections, People's Court Building, Fayette and Gay Sts. Next election is Sept.,

Political year in review

By Angela Chatman

Politically, the year 1974 was a truly historically eventful one. Local events were overshadowed, in the early part of year, by the national events surrounding the downfall of former President Richard M. Nixon.

The televised impeachement proceedings were the climax of a chain of events begun over a year ago. The hearings began on May 8. Two months later, on Aug. 8, Nixon resigned as president of the United States to be succeeded by Gerald Ford on Aug. 9.

One month later, Nixon was pardoned in a move, by the new president, that was almost as controversial as the impeachment itself.

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Marylanders also witnessed the changing of the guard at the State House as Governor Marvin Mandel said goodbye to his former wife Mrs. Barbara Mandel and said hello to his new bride Mrs. Jeane Dorsey Mandel, all in the same day.

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Locally, Baltimore was preparing for fall elections. Black candidates produced many firsts in Maryland politics.

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For the first time, 14 blacks ran for city-wide that "We must not allow and courthouse posts Mrs. Barbara Thomson Jefferson, the first woman, was among them.

Black ministers, Rev. St. George Crosse; Rev. Harold Dobson and Rev. Wendell Phillips challenged the 1887 Maryland law barring members of the clergy from running for public office.

In the surprise upset of the year, State's Attorney Milton B. Allen was defeated in the Sept. 10 Primary by William A. Swisher.

Allen fought back by mounting the strongest write-in campaign in this history of the state of Maryland. He lost his bid but will be remembered for mobilizing one of the most powerful political machines ever. Even his opponents had to admit that his campaign was a strong one.

Allen's campaign also encouraged other black candidates who had been defeated in the primary to try again. Defeated State Senator Robert L. Dalton, (D.) 45th District, was among them.

When the election was over, Baltimoreans in the 38th, 40th, 41st, and 45th Districts had retained their old representatives in the Maryland General Assembly save for one new delegate, Larry Young, 38th District, and a new Senator, Robert L. Douglass, 45th District.

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In the Statewide elections, we saw two battles of the sexes as Mrs. Louise Gore challenged Governor Marvin Mandel for his position and Ms. Barbara Mikulski challenged Senator Charles McC. Mathias for his seat in Congress. Both women lost their bids but will not be forgotten.

However, Marylanders will see three new black representatives in the General Assembly from Prince Georges County. They are Senator Tommie Broadwater Jr. and Delegates Decator Trotter and Nathaniel Exum.

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The year ended on a high note with the memorable swearing in of David T. Mason as the first lawyer of his race to be named Associate Judge of the Maryland Court of Special Appeals on Dec. 2

City crime rate up this year, 284 slain

Baltimoreans will remember 1974 as one of the most gloomy in the city's history in terms of high impact crimes including murder, rape, arson and theft.

By Dec. 23, city police reported 284 homicides as compared with 280 for the whole of last year. Police state general crime went up 15 per cent more than last year.

While citizens lived in fear the economy of the nation sagged steeply into recession and its attendant layoffs.

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However, city residents will for a long time remember the cold Nov. 12 morning discovery of the gang-style murder of one of the east coast's most beloved and prominent ministers: Dr. Melvin Chester Swann in his Northeast Baltimore home.

Police found him dead in a pool of blood, his feet in the doorway of the ground floor powder room. Police state he was shot four times in the head and neck while his feet were bound with a leather belt and his hands tied behind him with two neck ties.

The city received the news with indignation, uncertainty and sadness and citizens volunteered to help find the minister's murderer or murderers. It was through information supplied by one of such persons that led to the arrest of a suspect, Garland Avon Spencer, 22, on Nov. 2. His trial is still pending.

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Mystery still surrounds the torture death of Bryan Spencer Holmes, a 10-year-old student of the Edgewood Elementary School, whose body was found in the 700 block N. Fremont Ave.

Relatives told police the youngster had left home to play basketball in his school. Nobody saw him at the school and he never returned until his body was found.

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Police are still looking for suspects in the death of Melvin Wade, 44, who was found slain in a vacant dwelling in the 600 block W. Conway St. Jan. 4.

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Northwest Baltimoreans still remember with shock the slaying of Mrs. Vivian Valentine whose body was found in her bathtub in the 4500 block Umatilla Ave. one Tuesday morning.

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Homicide investigators are still without suspects or clues in the murder of Mrs. Eloise Galbreath, 93, 3600 block Towanda Ave. Police found her nude body in the 4500 block Park Ave. Relatives told police the victim had left home to go for a walk.

Relatives and friends will have a hard time forgetting what police termed, "senseless" slaying of Miss Sharon E. Clinton of Dundalk.

REV. MELVIN C. SWANN

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Police state the 18-year-old Miss Clinton was slain on the No. 10 bus during an argument between two men. A gun discharged during the struggle and Miss Clinton was hit.

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Also slain during the year was a well-liked Park Heights butcher, Harry Yunpa, 42, 6500 block Sanzo Rd., in his store. Residents told police they found the body of the butcher in the back of the counter after they heard a gunshot and observed two youths running away from the scene.

Another aspect of this year's killings is confrontations between citizens and police. Police report four policemen were slain in the year and police killed six civilians.

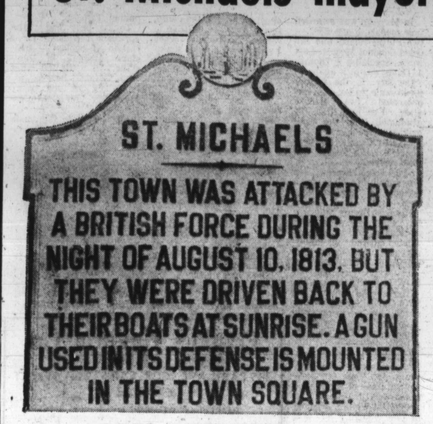
Gist blasts prosecutor for firings

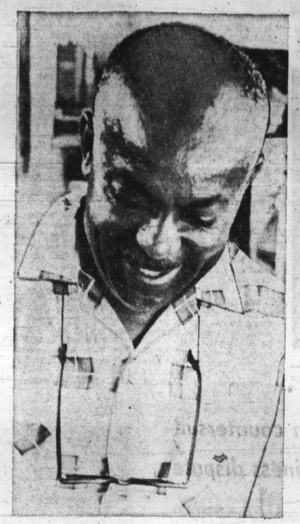
GREENSBORO, N.C. — Herman Gist, community worker, has blasted Raymond Alexander, Guilford County's newly elected district attorney, for firing an administrative assistant and a special investigator.

Alexander has hired two other blacks, one as assistant district attorney and one as special investigator, but is replacing the two men of experience with whites, according to Gist.

Gist said that during a telephone conversation Alexander said he was terminating the two for no specific reasons, "Which is highly unjust for two men with long experience and superb qualificaiotns," said Gist.

St. Michaels' mayor No.1 citizen in history of Maryland



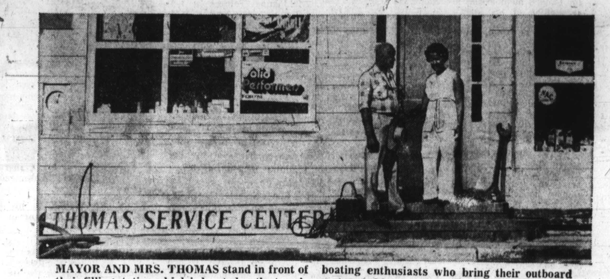


Meet a famous Marylander

MAYOR JAMES E. THOMAS, a lifelong resident of St. Michaels, Md. on the Eastern Shore, has an unusual personality which allows him to overcome any barriers of race. A descendant of the famed abolitionist, he was unanimously elected in June, 1974 as head of the Town Commission in the very city where Douglass was once a slave. Mr. Thomas and his wife, Mrs. Leona Wilson Thomas, own their home which is on the land of the old plantation where Douglass was a slave. The land has been in the family nearly 150 years.

AN HISTORIC TOWN — St. Michaels, Md. where James E. Thomas heads the Town Council, is noted for the time during the War of 1812 when the British were driven off by just a few citizens. Now called "The Town That Fooled the British," it was established as an historic area by the commission in regulations of 1972. In September, 1974, the cannons used against the British were fired again to mark the 160th anniversary.

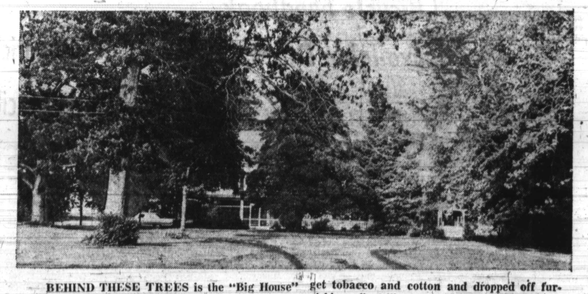
MAYOR AND MRS. THOMAS stand at the gate of their home which has spacious lawns and flowers for every season. When the AFRO visited them in June, Mrs. Thomas proudly admitted her husband has been elected by members of the Town Council as mayor of St. Michaels.



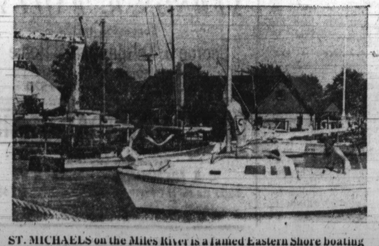
MAYOR AND MRS. THOMAS stand in front of their filling station which is located on the town's main street. He also has most of the town's boating enthusiasts who bring their outboard motors to him for repairs, a trade in which he is an expert.

MAYOR THOMAS stands in the hallway of his home and shows off a marble top table and bowl, the priceless possessions he inherited from Frederick Douglass.

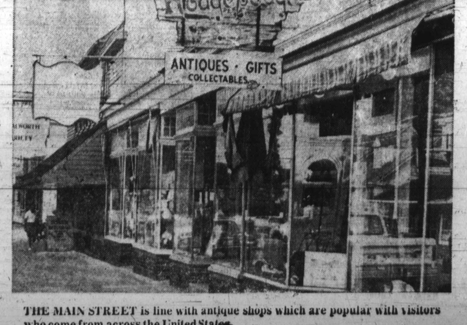
FREDERICK DOUGLASS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL on the land owned by the man who was once a slave is now integrated and witnesses youngsters studying in harmony.



BEHIND THESE TREES is the "Big House" where Frederick Douglass once worked as a slave. The colonial mansion, now owned by a local family, fronts on the Miles River where in colonial days the ships came from England to get tobacco and cotton and dropped off furnishings, fine silks and jewels. The old plantation is less than 500 yards from the Thomas house and the land he owns.



ST. MICHAELS on the Miles River is a famed Eastern Shore boating town.



THE MAIN STREET is line with antique shops which are popular with visitors who come from across the United States.