



BY ANDREA BRUCE — THE WASHINGTON POST

An interview with District Court judge and Maryland first lady Catherine Curran O'Malley is airing tonight on MPT.

MARYLAND PUBLIC TELEVISION

A Few Words From Katie O'Malley

First Lady Reflects on Political, Personal Lives in Interview

By LISA REIN
Washington Post Staff Writer

She doesn't think the Ehrlichs recycled. The rumors on the campaign trail about her marriage were hardest on her teenage daughters. If she weren't a judge, she would become a kindergarten teacher.

Those are among the opinions shared by Maryland first lady Katie O'Malley in a 30-minute interview scheduled to air today on Maryland Public Television in the first of an occasional series of profiles of state newsmakers.

Catherine Curran O'Malley, 44, works full time as a District Court judge in Baltimore, where she sentences some of the city's most troubled residents. She rides from the governor's mansion in Annapolis with her four children to school in Baltimore every morning. And she likes to do dishes after the official chef cooks dinner.

According to a copy of the "First Impressions" show provided to The Washington Post, she says one of the first things she noticed when her family moved into the mansion with their three dogs and two cats in January was the absence of a place to recycle a can of soda she had just finished.

"Nobody had recycled at the house," O'Malley tells interviewer Rhea Feikin, sitting in the mansion's yellow room. That has

changed. And the first lady plans to make the mansion more energy-efficient, "so we don't contribute to global warming and the high cost of energy."

Henry Fawell, a spokesman for former governor Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. (R), declined to comment on whether the Ehrlichs recycled in the mansion. "They're in private life now," he said Friday.

O'Malley seems not to be crazy about the way the place is decorated. First lady Patricia Hughes "did a great job" restoring the home in the 1980s, she says. Then, "the next administration changed it all, but not in a systematic way," an apparent reference to changes made by Hilda Mae Snoops, the companion of Harry Hughes's successor, William Donald Schaefer.

O'Malley says she was a shy child, one of four, with a mother who was an artist and a father who was famous: Joe Curran, a former Democratic state senator, lieutenant governor and longtime attorney general who retired last fall.

She recalls "turbulent times" in her father's career, when the family's Baltimore home was picketed by the Ku Klux Klan after Curran voted to overturn Maryland's ban on interracial marriage. She was 8 years old.

"It had me very, very scared," O'Malley said.

Political fliers from that era and family photos flash on the screen,

including wedding photos of the first lady and Gov. Martin O'Malley (D), who was mayor of Baltimore before defeating Ehrlich in November.

The O'Malleys have been married 17 years. Among the trials of the campaign were persistent rumors, spread by an Ehrlich aide, among others, that Martin was unfaithful.

"It was awful," the first lady says. "I thought to myself, 'This is the worst type of people to be doing this.' It was such a determined campaign." Her teenage daughters, Tara and Grace, took out their anger by working harder on their father's campaign. "They knew their dad's a great man and he loves me," she said.

As first lady, O'Malley is devoted to working with truant teenagers and volunteers at a truancy court program run by the University of Baltimore. "Rather than put some parent or guardian in jail for a few days" for allowing his or her child to skip school, "I'd rather find out what's the problem," she says.

She also wants to help develop programs for inner-city children to have more time to play outside in venues across Maryland, "so they get involved with what's in nature."

"First Impressions" is scheduled to air at 7 p.m. today. It will be rebroadcast at 10 p.m. Oct. 28.