

Courthouse Receives Sherbow Portrait

By DON WALLS

A formal tribute from the state judiciary, the legal community and local governments to the late Joseph Sherbow is long overdue. Yesterday afternoon a portrait of his likeness was presented by his widow and children to the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City and was unveiled during a ceremony attended by a large crowd of friends, colleagues, and distinguished persons from law, business and government.

The portrait by Dr. Emanuel S. Glasser will be permanently exhibited in Room 534 of Courthouse East. A large collection of portraits and photographs of local judiciary from the past are exhibited on the fourth floor of Courthouse West. The last portrait to be presented to the Supreme Bench was of Judge Emory H. Niles in 1979.

Mr. Sherbow died on December 16, 1979 after nearly 60 years as a major influence in various phases of legislative reform. He was known as an eminent leader of "commissions" and "committees" and most of them were identified by his name. One of the last "Sherbow Commissions" he headed was organized by appointment from Governor Marvin Mandel to investigate which government services should remain locally financed and which should be taken over by the state. The commission's 1975 report recommended the abolition of state property taxes and the substitution of increased income tax.

Chief Judge Robert C. Murphy of the state Court of Appeals was one of the dignitaries present at yesterday's ceremony. At the time of Mr. Sherbow's death it was Judge Murphy who called him "one of those legends that will live on for a long time. He



Mrs. Sara Sherbow poses beside the portrait of her husband, the late Joseph Sherbow, who was an associate judge of the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City. Dr. Emanuel Glasser (right) is the artist commissioned by the Sherbow family to paint the portrait which will be permanently exhibited in the Baltimore City courthouse.

was a marvelous man — a very powerful lawyer and a very powerful judge."

It was during the years between 1944 and 1962 when Judge Sherbow was an associate of the Supreme Bench and earned a reputation as a crusader who often disregarded the judiciary's traditional role to demand reforms in the courts, the welfare system and other branches of government. He was never timid in his criticism for police when they ignored certain laws.

His help and advice were solicited by governors and city mayors, both Democrat and Republican and his influence extended from administrations in the 1920s through the 1970s.

While sitting on the Supreme Bench, he ruled that the Maryland Subversive Activities Act — known as the Ober law — denied constitutional freedoms. The decision, which gained him national publicity, was later reversed by the Court of Appeals but it had rendered the act void for practical purposes. He was active in judi-

cial reform to keep politics out of the courtroom for more than 40 years. He called for the elimination of competitive judicial elections and the creation of a "merit system" for appointing judges.

He considered the methods that judicial candidates used to raise funds for campaigns to get elected was demeaning and out of character with the judicial office as characterized in the constitution which distinguished the position for integrity, wisdom and sound legal knowledge. He saw it as vulgar that candidates had to raise money for advertising their philosophies by appearing constantly at political meetings, oyster roasts, crab feasts, etc.

When Judge Sherbow finally retired from the bench it was because "his pay was too low" he said. He returned to private practice in partnership with Edward J. Sherbow and Charles M. Tatelbaum, Sec. after he left the bench he was appointed special prosecutor to investigate the scandalized Department of Employment Security. He con-

tinued to serve on numerous state commissions (including tax reform, duplication of services in the city and state, scout services and regulators law. He was considered to be one of the most influential lobbyists in Annapolis during the early 1960s.

He was known to frequently scold people who pinched pennies for allocations to reform legislation that would revise the constitution when he was a participant in the state's 1967 Constitutional Convention.

"I don't think you can put a dollar value on good government," he said.

Mrs. Sherbow, in an interview before the ceremony, remarked that her husband's idea were ahead of their time because many of his proposals for reform and revision were eventually adopted. The portrait which took almost a year to complete was an idea that Mrs. Sherbow decided on soon after her husband's death.

"I wanted to do something that would perpetuate his wonderful life," she said. SEE Portrait, page 6

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life and at first I thought about having the history of his life written but it would have taken too long and the idea of a portrait seemed better and especially be-

cause it would be able to hang in the courthouse," she said.

Mrs. Sherbow recalled a story her husband often told and one which was recorded as an oral history for the Jewish Historical Society.

"He came from a very poor family and was obliged to sell newspapers to help. They lived somewhere near the courthouse and as a child on the way to pick up his papers he would pass the building. He was fascinated with wondering who were all the important people that were behind the windows. When he found out they were lawyers he decided he wanted to be one of them. He worked during the day and went to school at night and despite all the financial hardships in his family he never gave up the goal to be a person who belonged inside the courthouse. He became a brilliant lawyer and I know he would want to be remembered by having his portrait there," she said.

She said Mr. Sherbow did not sit for the portrait. Dr. Glasser, a member of the family, composed the facsimile from photographs that included one which had been taken when Mr. Sherbow was an influential participant in the Constitutional Convention 12 years before his death.