



By Bo Rader — Evening Sun Staff

Judge Robert M. Bell, left, gets some help with his robe from law clerk George L. Russell III.

Bell of success tolls as model for Dunbar students

Appeals court judge returns to his school for swearing-in re-enactment.

By Robert Hilson Jr.
Evening Sun Staff

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Cinneen Johns, a senior at Lake Clifton High School, says she is determined to succeed in a career in the law.

Johns, 16, was one of about 1,000 students from schools throughout the city who were present yesterday as the swearing-in of Robert M. Bell as a judge of the Maryland Court of Appeals was re-enacted at Dunbar High School.

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The aim of the re-enactment was to show off Bell as a role model for inner city students. For Johns, the event was right on the mark, although she expressed some reservations.

"I still don't know because there are only a handful of blacks who can become judges, or can get into good law schools," Johns said. "He gives me and everybody hope that we can do it, though."

Bell, a graduate of Dunbar, Morgan State University and Harvard Law School, was officially sworn in on May 16, 1991, in Annapolis. Gov. William Donald Schaefer did the honors yesterday as he did then.

At Dunbar yesterday, Bell was home.

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"I am touched by this re-enactment of my swearing-in. I am home at Dunbar where I got my start," Bell said.

Ten busloads of students from around the city witnessed the re-enactment, thanks to Allen Quille Sr., the parking lot magnate who helped pay for the buses. Also in attendance were former Baltimore Circuit Judge George L. Russell Jr. and city school Superintendent Walter G. Amprey, who was in Bell's graduating class at Morgan.

Prior to the swearing-in, many students said they had never heard of Bell. Some mistook him for retir-

ing Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. One student, at first, thought that Bell was a "rich, white man" who knows President Bush.

Emmanuel Faulkner, a junior at Dunbar, said that, although he had only vaguely heard of Bell before yesterday's event, he was proud that the judge is a Dunbar graduate.

"It shows that someone from our school can do something important," said Faulkner, 16. "He builds up blacks and gives them something to look up to. He's accomplished something he wanted to do. If he can do it, anybody can."

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Roy Taylor, a Dunbar senior, said Bell's ascendancy to the Court of Appeals is a plus for minorities.

"It's something new, something special. Anybody who succeeds and is black, I am proud of him," Taylor said.

Bell, 47, told the students that, despite his lofty status, he is not unique and that anyone can become a judge or a lawyer or anything they choose.

"You may not reach it the first time. You may not reach it the sec-

ond time. But you will if you keep trying," Bell said.

He said it is a tragedy that many young blacks aim low. "If you reach for the stars and get nothing but the moon, that's not failure," Bell said.

Johns is aiming high. She hopes to attend Duke University.

"Everybody is happy for Bell and for what he has done," Johns said.

"I've got to have the good grades to get into Duke, and I'll get them. . . . Bell accomplished a lot and we're proud of him. I'm going to do the same thing."