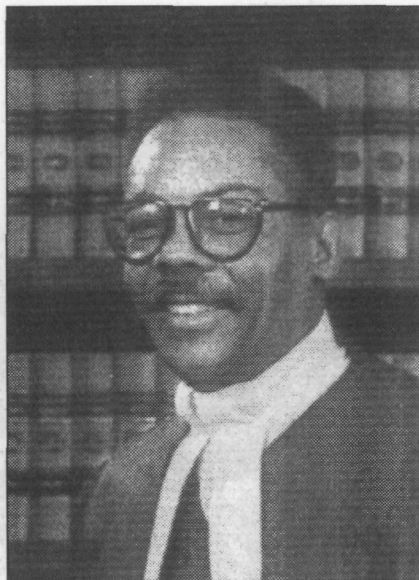


Robert M. Bell, Chief Judge, Court of Appeals of Maryland



PROFILE

Name: Chief Judge Robert M. Bell

Court: Court of Appeals of Maryland

Law School: Harvard Law School

Region: Central Maryland

County: Anne Arundel County

MARYLAND
LEADERSHIP in LAW
AWARD

Robert M. Bell, chief judge of the Maryland Court of Appeals, is the first African American to preside over the state's highest court and the first to serve as the administrative head of the Maryland judicial system.

He is also the last to tout his accomplishments, which started rolling in early on in his life.

While attending Dunbar High School in the 1960s, Bell and 11 of his friends were refused service in a downtown Baltimore restaurant; afterward, they were arrested and convicted of trespassing. Bell led an appeal of the verdict before the United States Supreme Court. In the landmark civil rights case, *Bell v. Maryland*, the *de facto* racial segregation in Maryland was brought to an end.

A modest man by nature, Bell has served at every level of the Maryland judicial system during the last 25 years. He believes that in order for the legal system to have a positive impact on citizens of any community, they first have to *understand*, not fear, the legal system.

"Trust and confidence in the system is instilled by knowledge," he said. "The best way for me to do my part in this process of education is by making myself accessible. The knowledge that is gained by the community then helps to take away the fear of the unknown."

Bell graduated from Morgan State College in 1966 and from Harvard Law School in 1969. In this same year, he was admitted to the Maryland Bar, yet it was not until 1975 that he became a judge for the District Court of Maryland, District

1, Baltimore City.

From 1980 to 1984, Bell served as an associate judge for the Circuit Court for Baltimore City, eighth Judicial Circuit, then as a judge for the Court of Special Appeals, 6th Appellate Circuit (Baltimore City) from 1984 to 1991. In 1991, he was appointed to the Court of Appeals of Maryland, and in 1996, Gov. Parris N. Glendening named him chief judge of the Court of Appeals.

In addition to his renowned career on the bench, Bell chairs the Judicial Compensation Committee, the Maryland Alternative Dispute Resolution Commission, and the committee on Building Public Trust and Confidence in the Justice System.

Additionally, he is a member of the Judicial Education Committee and the State Bar Committee on Judicial Administration. He recently was honored with the 1999 Legal Excellence Award for Advancement of Public Service Responsibility, Maryland Bar Foundation and the 2001 Access to Justice Tribute Award, Pro Bono Resource Center.

Aware of his influence in history, Bell admits that his career has been inspired by historical figures, including Thurgood Marshall.

"He provided input that you don't soon forget," Bell said. "He showed us what life is all about, what it really means. That is something that I strive to achieve with people who may look up to me as a mentor."

Rebecca E. Paulsen