

■ THE PROFESSION

Law Day Duly Arrives, on Schedule

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Court houses around the state yesterday were the setting for Law Day, which, since 1958 when May 1 was so designated by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, has been a time for the legal profession to reflect on its role in society.

Chief Judge Robert M. Bell of the Court of Appeals, addressing an audience of about 200 in the plaza outside the Baltimore County Circuit Court in Towson, said the most important aspect of American jurisprudence is that the rule of law governs.

The legal process brings necessary stability and predictability, Bell said, reminding judges and lawyers about the



Chief Judge Robert M. Bell of the Court Appeals speaks on the subject of Law Day before an audience in Towson.

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important role they play in a free society.

In contrast to that oft-quoted and generally misunderstood phrase by Shakespeare — “The first thing we do, let’s kill all the lawyers”—Bell reminded the legal community that it is the line that separates order from chaos, freedom from oppression.

Towson High School student Courtney Schlaffer, first place winner in the Baltimore County Bar Association’s essay competition, told the crowd that recognizing diversity was essential if there is to be true freedom.

“People have various opinions, beliefs and cultures, yet all citizens have a common bond linking each other together,” Schlaffer said. “The Constitution gives each of us certain rights and freedoms. ... These privileges bring us all together and we all strive for one common goal to ensure and promote democracy within America.”

Circuit Court Judge Barbara Kerr Howe concluded the Baltimore County ceremony by presenting the Law Day 2000 Award to Baltimore County District Court Judge Patricia S. Pytash, who is retiring soon.

“She is patient, patient, patient,” Howe said of Pytash, noting that she never sought to leave the district court for higher office.

Pytash understands the important role the district court plays, Howe said, because it is the only contact most citizens ever have with the legal system.

County bar association leaders ex-

pressed a sense of melancholy after yesterday’s proceedings because Barbara J. Fiorino, association executive director, will retire early next month after 20 years on the job.

C. Theresa Beck, bar association president, credited Fiorino with expanding the organization, the membership of which has grown from 350 to 1,400 under her guidance, Beck said.

Fiorino is one of the few lay people to receive the county’s Law Day Award, earning the honor in 1993 for her contribution to the legal community.

“The time has gone really fast,” Fiorino said, “because I have planned the next occasion by the time the previous one is finished. It reminds me of what stores do; they bring out stuff for Valentine’s Day and you hardly realize that New Year’s has come and gone.”

In the state capital, about 150 members of the Anne Arundel County Bar Association gathered at the Circuit Court for a multimedia presentation, “We, The People,” by Administrative Judge Clayton Greene Jr. Also, about 40 high school students spent much of the day with District Court Chief Judge Martha F. Rasin.

Rasin not only told the students how courts operate, she encouraged them to work hard and dream large.

She told them the legal field is a place of opportunity, said county bar association Executive Director Fran Czajka, who offered this as proof of the judge’s claim:

“Judge Rasin told them how she went from being a legal secretary to chief judge of the Maryland District Court,” Czajka said.