

Judge Bell picked for state court

Special Appeals slot to be filled by black

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ANNAPOLIS — Robert M. Bell, a Baltimore Circuit Court judge who received the most votes in a hotly contested judicial election in 1980, was elevated to the Maryland Court of Special Appeals by Governor Hughes yesterday.

The 41-year-old jurist will become the only black on the 13-member appellate court. The Special Appeals bench has been all white since the retirement of Associate Judge David T. Mason September 1, 1983.

Judge Bell will represent the judicial circuit that encompasses Baltimore city. He will succeed Associate Judge Solomon Liss, who retired from the court October 16 and became chairman of the state's Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas Commission. **NOV 16 1984 SUN**

The Bell appointment, which is subject to Senate confirmation, runs through the 1986 general election, when city voters will determine if the appellate judge should be retained for a full 10-year term.

Not long after his 1980 appointment by Governor Hughes to the Baltimore Circuit Court, Judge Bell led a field of six judicial incumbents and challengers in an election of five judges for 15-year terms.

Boosting his performance at the polls was the vigorous campaign of William H. Murphy, Jr., a lawyer who mobilized black voters with a "vote black" appeal and captured a judgeship for himself.

Last year, Judge Bell was one of two blacks who applied for Judge Mason's seat on the Court of Special Appeals, but neither was among the six finalists selected by a judicial nominating commission. The absence of a black nominee sparked a protest by the Monumental City Bar Association, a group of more than 250 black lawyers.

Rosalyn B. Bell, who had been a Montgomery county Circuit Court judge, was chosen for the Mason seat. She remains the Special Appeals court's only female jurist.

Robert Bell was later nominated with 10 judges and private attorneys as a candidate to replace Associate Judge Thomas Hunter Lowe, who died June 13. In September, Governor Hughes selected Judge Robert L. Karwacki, who, as chief administra-

five judge of the Baltimore Circuit Court, was among the strongest contenders. **NOV 16 1984**

Robert Bell, a native of Rocky Mount, N.C., graduated from Morgan State University in 1966 and received his law degree from Harvard University in 1969. **SUN**

Before he was named to the Circuit Court, he served for five years as a Baltimore District Court judge — occasionally sparking controversy by criticizing police evidence in dismissing prostitution cases and by calling for a halt to prosecution of so-called victimless crimes.

As a circuit judge, he handled a number of celebrated cases, including the much-publicized escape cases involving prisoners from the Brockbridge prerelease center in 1981 and the numbers trial of Willie L. (Little Willie) Adams, the West Baltimore businessman and political kingpin, last summer.

Judge Bell dismissed the charges against the prisoners, who were arrested in an investigation of work-release programs at the Jessup facility. The Court of Appeals later reinstated the indictments, but the state's attorney declined to prosecute. **SUN**

The judge acquitted Mr. Adams, saying the state had failed to prove its case. **NOV 16 1984**

Most recently, Judge Bell has been assigned to Juvenile Court.

Other nominees for the appellate post were two members of the state attorney general's office: Diana Motz, the civil division's chief of litigation, and Avery Aisenstark, chief counsel for opinions and advice. Judge Bell's appointment brings the bench to full strength.