

Ryan steps up to 6th Circuit

By M.B. Dillon
staff writer

"Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye! The United States Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit is now convened in extraordinary session, the Honorable Cornelia G. Kennedy presiding. All persons having business before the court draw near, give attention and you shall be heard. God save these United States and this Honorable Court."

— The Crier
Court Executive John P. Mayer
United States District Court

THUS BEGAN the investiture of the Honorable James L. Ryan as a United States Court of Appeals Judge in the 6th Circuit — witnessed Thursday by a standing-room-only gathering of members of the federal and state judiciaries and bar associations, United States Navy and religious orders, educators, family and friends.

Dozens of well-wishers who could not be accommodated in the packed courtroom in downtown Detroit's United States Court house viewed the solemn and at times light-hearted ceremony on videotape from an adjoining room.

Among the 300-plus who saw the Redford Township resident take the oath of office administered by U.S. Circuit Judge Cornelia Kennedy were 6th Circuit Court of Appeals Judges Ralph Guy and Damon Keith, and U.S. District Court Judges John Feikens, Avern Dohn, Julian Cook, Robert Demaselo, Horace Gilmore, Richard Sohrheinrich, Anna Diggs Taylor and George Woods. Representing the Michigan Supreme Court were G. Mennen Williams, chief justice, Dennis Archer (who replaces Ryan on the high court), Patricia Boyle, Michael Cavanagh, Charles Levin, and Dorothy Comstock Riley.

Judges, lawyers and prosecutors, naval officers, journalists, and family members and friends from out of state completed the ranks — which saluted the 6th Circuit's newest member with a standing ovation that resounded for several emotional moments within the white-paneled walls of the well-appointed courtroom.

President Ronald Reagan was heard from, as a decree signed by the chief executive was read by United States District Court Executive John P. Mayer of Birmingham. In read, in part: "Know ye that reposing special trust and confidence in the wisdom, uprightness, and learning of James L. Ryan of Michigan, I have nominated, and by

and with the advice and consent of the Senate, do appoint him United States Circuit Judge, Sixth Circuit, and do authorize and empower him to execute and fulfill the duties of that office according to the Constitution and laws of the said United States, and to have and to hold the said office, with all the powers, privileges and emoluments to the same of right appertaining, unto Him, the said James L. Ryan during his good behavior."

IT WAS EVIDENT that despite the heights to which Ryan has risen during his career of public service, he has not forgotten those who helped him along the way.

Delivering the invocation was Father Norbert Clemens of Catholic Central High School, whom Ryan credits with "teaching me more about thinking on my feet than anything or anyone else." In the audience was Father John Hardy, who met Ryan when the future judge was a youngster visiting his uncle, the late Father John Conway, at St. Michael's Church in Livonia. "I'm as proud as all get out," beamed Father Hardy, now retired from St. Michael's, after the swearing in. "Jim's uncle would be very proud of him today." Agreeing, Livonia's Peggy Conway said of her relative: "Jim always has time for everybody."

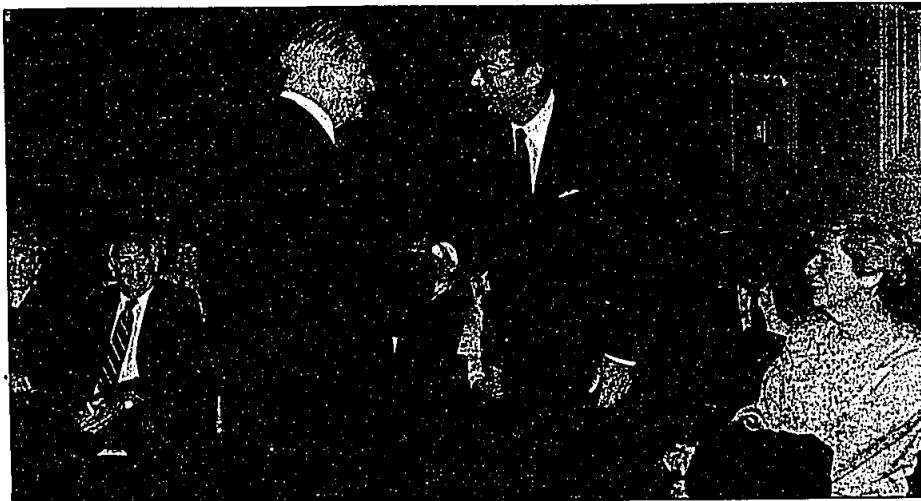
It was an afternoon of accolades.

The Honorable Thomas E. Brennan, founder and president of Lansing's Thomas M. Cooley Law School and a former state Supreme Court chief justice, praised Ryan's "innate ability, renowned scholarship, prodigious industry and commitment to the principles of truth and justice."

"... As we approach the 200th year of our Constitution, the nation needs, as never before, judges who will exercise judicial power judiciously. Because we know James Leo Ryan to be such a man, we celebrate this day. For today there has been found among us a just and wise man who has accepted the mantle of her service. Judge Ryan honors all who know him, as he will honor the nation for many years to come."

Similar sentiments were echoed by Stuart Dunning Jr. of the American Bar Association, Julia Darlow of the State Bar of Michigan, Robert Hurlbert of the Federal Bar Association and countless others during a Detroit Club reception hosted by Cooley Law School following the proceedings.

HAVING DONNED his new robe with the help of his wife, Mary Elizabeth Rogers Ryan, the smiling judge at last had taken the podium.



Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice G. Mennen Williams seizes an opportunity to congratulate fellow Justice James L. Ryan as he accepts a lifetime appointment to the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The court — just one step below the U.S. Supreme Court

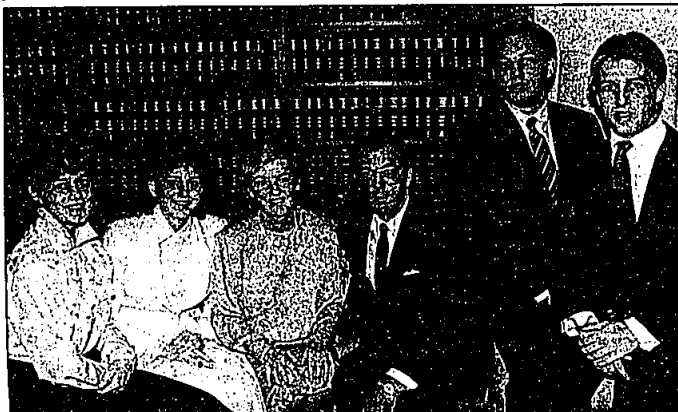
in the judicial hierarchy — hears cases arising in Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee. Looking on are (at right) Ryan's wife, Mary Elizabeth Rogers Ryan, and (at left) 34th District Judge James B. Stone.

Photos by
Art Emanuele

His theme was gratitude — to those in attendance; to the priests who taught him at Catholic Central and the University of Detroit; the friends "who gathered in our living room many years ago to decide whether public service would be a good idea," and to the "colleagues who taught me to be a good lawyer" and judge.

Of his fellow Supreme Court justices, from whom he learned over 10 years "how to disagree without being disagreeable," Ryan said: "I cannot leave them without a pretty good-sized lump in my throat. I will miss the chance to be with them." Thanks also went to his law clerks, to students and administrators of both the Cooley and University of Detroit law schools where Ryan has taught, and to the "people of Michigan for the privilege they've extended to me for several November in permitting me to be of service and to set an example for those to come after."

A life dedicated to public service, he said, "is worth the sacrifice, and the privileges are extraordinary."



Savoring a special day are Justice James and Mary Ryan and their children (from left) Kathleen, Colleen, James and Daniel. The newly appointed U.S. circuit judge will give up his Farmington office and divide time between United States courthouses in Detroit and Cincinnati, where the appellate court is headquartered.

Statements regarding the apparel of United States 6th Circuit Court of Appeals Judge James L. Ryan were not limited to his robe. Cooley Law School President Thomas Brennan in his remarks at Ryan's swearing-in declared, "Unlike Sparky Anderson in 1984, Jim Ryan doesn't need a lucky undershirt."

A pleased Judge Ryan addresses a happy crowd of colleagues, family and friends.



Ryan signs documents signalling the start of a new chapter in a public service career that has seen the 63-year-old soar to success in both the United States Navy and academe as well as in the Judiciary. Mary Ryan (center) understood perfectly when her husband asked U.S. Circuit Judge Cornelia Kennedy (right) to administer the oath of office. As Judge Ryan explained it, the two were sworn in together 19 years ago as Wayne County circuit judges, and "this Irishman simply cannot avoid" succumbing to superstition.

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