

Judge Parker

humor, Parker is a realist. Chipping away at the docket is no guarantee of a smooth session.

With the mixture of 28 cases involving pretrials, sentencing and formal hearings, Parker winds up spending the lunch hour in court, not at the Oakland County Bar meeting she had planned to attend in Pontiac.

"The bar is actively involved in educating the public about the legal system," she says. "I'll try to attend a luncheon meeting. But this (court) comes first."

At 2 p.m., Parker finally breaks for lunch and asks her clerk and court reporter Carol James to be back in a half hour. Instead of a luncheon in Pontiac, it's the drive-

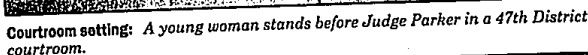
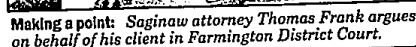
In the late afternoon session, a key prosecution witness in a retail fraud case is not in court. Assistant prosecutor Kirsten Nielsen reports the bad news.

Parker moves on to other matters, asks a police detective to call the man, who is in St. Clair Shores.

Now comes some real judgment. She can stay at court and work for an hour or two and go home to her husband Brad and daughter Jill. Or she can go home and spend time with her family, and then get up in the middle of the night and work.

"I try to make sure I spend time with my family," she says. "That sometimes means working in the middle of the night."

And she got through the entire docket. A good day by any measure.



Mirror, mirror:
Judge Marla
Parker takes
one last look in
the mirror
before heading
for court.



By BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

• If justice delayed is justice denied, those who are closest to the system are well aware of the law's delay.

"We have two judges and 38,000 case a year," said John Grewell, 47th District Court administrator. "That is more of a case load than any district in Oakland County."

And 1991 statistics bear out what Grewell says. The 47th District Court had 34,572 filings with two judges; the 44th in royal Oak had 19,423 with two judges, the 46th in Southfield had 38,667 with three judges, the 50th in Pontiac had 28,623 with four judges and the 52-4th in Troy had 25,643 with three judges.

But most courts have the same horror stories. Defense attorneys who are late because they have other cases the same morning in other courts; witnesses don't appear, deadlines for cases push other cases off the day's docket and witnesses who just forgot

the court date. And the judge has to make some tough decisions.

"The senior citizens who volunteer to report handicapped parking violations do a magnificent job," said Judge Fred Harris. "But they have little or no experience with the court system and they don't understand when a case has to be delayed."

And for many, an adjourned case can mean lost wages or other problems, he said.

Assistant prosecutor Kirsten Nielsen, who is assigned to the 47th District Court, said she has to meet with defense attorneys, discuss the case and often work out pleas before going into the court room.

"I start at 8:30 (a.m.) and meet with defense lawyers up until 11," she said.

And although she sometimes has enough cases to bring before a judge, Nielsen often has to make sev-

Nielsen appreciates judges who are prompt. If

"If a judge doesn't take the bench until 10 (a.m.), defense attorneys won't show up until 11," she said.

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