

MORE CITY/COUNTY

A family judge retires

■ **Pioneer:** *Circuit Judge Friedman focused her career on issues affecting women, children, families.*

By ALLISON KLEIN
SUN STAFF

Baltimore Circuit Judge Kathleen O'Ferrall Friedman, who brought a social work bent to her judicial duties in becoming one of Maryland's most effective advocates for children and families, retired from the bench yesterday.

During her 16 years as a judge, Friedman set case law and helped create Baltimore's pioneering Family Court — a Circuit Court division designed to handle heavy caseloads that demand a light touch.

"She broke ground," said Circuit Court Administrative Judge Ellen M. Heller. "She helped create a family division model for the state of Maryland. I think she's outstanding."

During her 23 professional years before she became a judge, she was a teacher, probation officer and divorce lawyer who co-founded the women's law center and the House of Ruth, a shelter for battered women and their children.

Circuit Judge Albert J. Matricciani Jr., who calls himself her "mentee," said Friedman "raised consciousness on the bench."

"I have suffered at her heels for many years and learned enormously from her," Matricciani said. "She was the first woman appointed to the bench who brought a real sensibility of women's issues."

A case she presided over in 1995, *Coburn vs. Coburn*, paved the way for abusive spouses to be held accountable for a "history of abuse" when they are on trial in Maryland.

William E. Coburn Jr. was found guilty of slapping, punching and threatening his wife, Marcia Coburn. When she applied for a restraining order, her husband objected to her testimony showing he



AMY DAVIS: SUN STAFF

Heavy burden of troubling cases: *"It's a small miracle not to become jaded," says Judge Kathleen O'Ferrall Friedman.*

next month, then sit part-time as a retired judge, as is customary.

Friedman, 61, said she is looking forward to traveling with her husband and spending time with her two children and five grandchildren. Years of presiding over hard cases has taken its toll on her.

"It's difficult to hear cases when parents are killing their children figuratively, if not literally," she said. "It's frustrating to see people who want to fight with each other more than they want to love their

While she is proud of the strides the court has made, she is keenly aware of the reasons that make it necessary.

"This court is so overwhelmed by cases," she said. "We're like a factory the way we process it. It's a small miracle not to become jaded."

Continued on next page

had previously beat her. Friedman allowed the testimony, the husband appealed to the Court of Appeals, and lost. Prior abuse then became admissible in court.

Friedman, born and raised in Baltimore, said she grew up with a deep interest in people and families. After she graduated from University of Maryland Law School in 1966, she earned a master's in social work.

Friedman, one of three judges in Family Court, was the administrative judge in charge of the domestic docket from 1987 to 1996. At the request of the court, she will remain a full-time judge through

children."

Friedman got her start in law working for the Department of Juvenile Justice as a probation officer. She became a partner in private law practice, and in 1985 was appointed to the Circuit Court.

She has been a criminal and civil judge, but spent most of her time working in the family division.

In 2000, she helped to establish Family Court in its current form, a one-stop shop for family matters. It combines courtrooms with parent seminars, medical offices and social service coordinators. Last year, Family Court handled 16,953 new cases.

City overpaid merchants to relocate, audit reports

Businesses displaced for west-side revival

By SCOTT CALVERT
SUN STAFF

The city paid more than necessary — in some cases by more than \$100,000 — to compensate merchants displaced by the effort to revive downtown's west side, according to an audit set for release today.

The report by Comptroller Joan M. Pratt's auditors questioned the \$2.4 million the city paid to businesses for their inventory. If the program had been handled differently, the audit said, the city could have realized "substantial" savings, though the amount was not specified.

One of several problems the audit identified was that the city did not require proper documentation, making it impossible to verify the true cost of the goods. "Why should we pay more to these business owners than their inventory is worth?" Pratt asked yesterday. "This is taxpayers' money."

The city had spent \$19.8 million as of May 15 to buy 30 properties and to help 32 merchants move or cover the cost of inventory. In many of these cases, the city used its condemnation power to assemble an entire block for Bank of America's \$70 million Centerpoint retail and residential project.

Baltimore Development Corp., which is guiding the west-side initiative, concluded before the audit was completed that a lack of documentation and "meticulousness" raised concerns, said President

M.J. "Jay" Brodie.

Brodie noted that the relocation program, previously handled by the city's Department of Housing and Community Development, has been farmed out to a private company called Diversified Services. He said a "tighter definition" of inventory would be used in the future.

But Brodie said BDC, the city's economic development agency, disagreed with one of the auditor's findings — that the city should consistently follow federal relocation guidelines to save money. Brodie said that would not necessarily be fair to merchants.

Mayor Martin O'Malley made a *similar point to Brodie's last year*, saying the city would not be "just kicking the merchants out with the bare-bottom minimum."

The audit said the city followed federal guidelines for moving expenses and property acquisition — but not for the cost of inventory claims. Those guidelines say merchants should receive the cost of the inventory or the cost to move it, whichever is lower.

Under the guidelines, the city could have paid Bare Feet \$9,000 to move its shoes instead of \$128,086 for the cost of the shoes, the audit said.

The audit also said Bare Feet's documentation consisted of "hand-written listings" of inventory, "presumably prepared by the shoe store owner or his personnel." No documents were signed or dated. Other merchants also failed to provide invoices or similar documents.

The audit also identified other overpayments totaling \$82,698.

maps crimes in Baltimore

By DEL QUENTIN WILBER
SUN STAFF

Noting a promise to make city Police Department "transparent," Mayor M. O'Malley and Police Commissioner Edward T. Norris are preparing to unveil a Web site providing crime statistics at the neighborhood level.

O'Malley and Norris said they hope the Web site — which will provide maps that show most crimes — will give residents information about their neighborhoods. "It's about getting people to take ownership of their own Baltimore," O'Malley said.

The site, which cost \$70,000 to develop, will be launched at a news conference today. It was the idea of O'Malley, who was impressed by a Web site run by the Chicago Police Department.

Police officials in Baltimore said the site will allow users to search crimes by city neighborhood, school, police post, or a half-mile or quarter-mile specified address.

The maps show crimes with colored dots. Click a button and the dots turn into a table showing the dates and times of the crimes. Click on a specific dot and a map shows when that crime took place.

Users will be able to view data for murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, auto theft, burglary and theft from vehicles during two-week periods with most recent 90-day period. Police said, to protect investigators and prevent criminals from finding out whether police are tracking their movements.

The site will have no details of specific crimes and will provide only statistical information, though designers are contemplating adding more features as the site evolves.

"It's a cool Web site," said O'Malley. "We promised to be transparent. If [residents] want to see the crime picture in their neighborhood, they can."

The site was designed by Dale R. Wise, a retired police lieutenant, with Lt. Craig Meyer, I. Herman and city employees Ballard and Frank Perelli.

It can be reached through the department's Web site at www.baltimorepd.org.