

Black judge hopes to command respect

By The Associated Press

Judge Harry A. Cole thinks respect is an important element in having other people consider your viewpoint on current issues.

And so Cole, the first black appointed to the Maryland Court of Appeals, plans to



HARRY COLE

Court of Appeals judge

earn the respect of his fellow judges so that his viewpoint will count in court opinions.

"I have to command the respect of my fellow judges," the 56-year old former state senator said. "This is the only way to do the job for all people, and minority groups as well as others.

"Anyone can look at me and know who I am—a black judge. But I believe I have been fair and impartial as a judge, having full recognition of prejudice, but not getting enmeshed in it. I believe this is the way to make my viewpoint count."

His feelings on respect go back to advice he received from Charles Houston, one of the architects of the successful Supreme Court challenge to school segregation.

He told Cole "to commit yourself to excellence."

"What he meant was that a person must do his job so well that he would be beyond criticism," Cole said. "It was only in this way that all people will respect you and give consideration to the viewpoint you bring to bear on current problems."

Cole was a judge on the Baltimore City Supreme Bench before Acting Gov. Blair Lee appointed him to the Court of Appeals on Dec. 1.

Cole is not a child of privilege. Recently, he recalled that his early life in Baltimore was marked by hard times.

His father died when he was very young, and he was raised by his mother who, because of her strength of character, got the family through the 1930s depression.

"Of course times were tough," Cole said.

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"You've heard of potato soup—you call it vichyssoise now maybe. But when I was young, we had the soup at noon, and the potatoes at night and that's all."

While still in the Baltimore City public schools, he developed an interest in the law, which was later kindled by his friendship with W.A.C. Hughes Jr., a lawyer with whom he used to play ping-pong.

"During arguments, I would always get out the rule book, and Mr. Hughes would say I was sure to have a career in the law," said Cole.

The judge eventually went to Morgan State University and the University of Maryland Law School

After law school, he set up a law practice and then embarked on a political career.

He ran for the House of Delegates the first year out of law school and lost.

The next year he ran for the Baltimore City Council and lost again.

"With that loss, I knew how to win," he said. "I spent three years organizing, healing black divisions and trying to make black people see that I could do everything another elected official could do, plus represent their viewpoint."

In 1954, he became the first black elected to the state Senate.

Thirteen years later, he was appointed to the Baltimore Municipal Court and then to the Supreme Bench.