

Judge Cole recalled with warm memories

By ROBERT HILSON JR.
SUN STAFF

Judge Harry A. Cole often recited the line, "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one." He lived by its interpretation: Actions speak louder than words.

Yesterday at Morgan State University, the school from which he graduated as valedictorian in 1943, Judge Cole's deeds were honored as more than 700 friends, colleagues and state and local officials paid him tribute. Judge Cole died Sunday of complications from pneumonia at Church Hospital in Baltimore. He was 78.

Judge Cole was remembered as "The Big Judge" who demanded excellence from young lawyers in his charge. He was the ever-accessible man down the street "who just happened to be a judge" and who would go to bat for the underdog.

And he was "Handsome Harry," the caring husband who loved to dance and joke and cherished being there for his three daughters.

"This city and community has lost a great person," said Earl G. Graves, publisher of *Black Enterprise* magazine, a longtime friend of Judge Cole and fellow Morgan alumnus. "He was a dynamic, interesting person."

One of five children, he was born in Washington on New Year's Day in 1921. His father, a tailor, died when he was an infant, and his mother moved the family to Baltimore, where she had been raised. He graduated from Douglass High School in 1939 and from then-Morgan State College in 1943.

He spent the last two years of World War II in the Army, serving in the European and Pacific theaters. After the war, he attended



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Remembered: Chief Judge Robert M. Bell of the Maryland Court of Appeals speaks at services for Judge Harry A. Cole.

the University of Maryland School of Law, graduating in 1949.

Judge Cole was a man of many firsts for African-Americans in Maryland: the first to serve on the state's highest court, the Court of Appeals, from 1977 to 1991; the first elected to the state Senate, in 1954; the first state assistant attorney general.

During his career, Judge Cole treated everyone the same: with respect and decency. And yesterday, at his flag-draped coffin surrounded by flowers, young and old, black and white, and rich and poor paid homage to him.

"He always felt that excellence was expected," Baltimore Circuit Judge Kenneth L. Johnson said. "He was always telling young lawyers of excellence. Just excellence. He always said to be the best."

Judge Cole was instrumental in the legal and political careers of many young blacks — in many cases, by paving the way.

Clarence M. Mitchell III, a former West Baltimore state senator, campaigned for Judge Cole when he ran for state senator. His success inspired Mitchell to run for office.

But what Mr. Mitchell mainly recalled was that even after Judge Cole entered public office, he maintained his law office on Druid Hill Avenue and McMechen Street.

"He was in the heart of the city,

and never forgot that he came out of the community," Mitchell said.

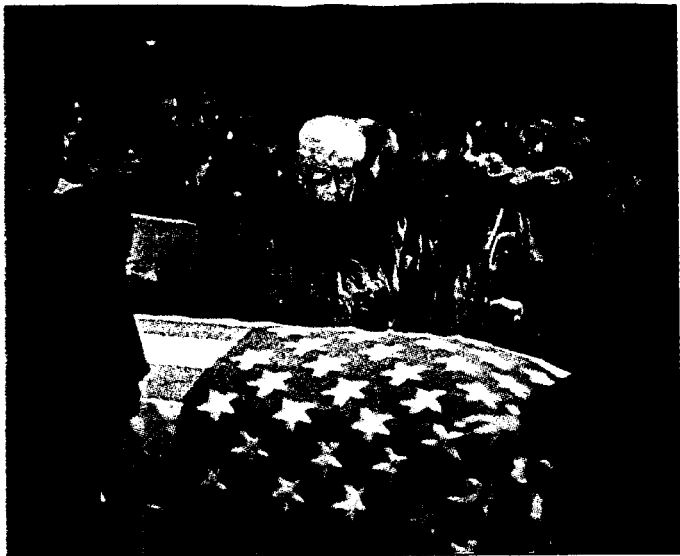
Under overcast skies yesterday, many students watched mourners file out of Murphy Auditorium. They were keenly aware of Judge Cole's contributions — as well as his Morgan connection.

He was the first editor of the school newspaper, the *Spokesman*. In 1995, he was named chairman of the university's board of regents.

"He showed that Morgan students, or black students anywhere, can be revered and respected," said Keron Edwards, 21, a former Morgan student. "His history should be taught in schools because he had to fight a lot harder to get where he was than today's graduates."

Obituaries

Because of limited space and the large number of requests for obituaries, *The Sun* regrets that it cannot publish all the obituaries it receives. Because *The Sun* regards obituaries as news, we give a preference to those submitted within 48 hours of a person's death. It is also our intention to run obituaries no later than seven days after death.



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Mourning for judge

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Doris Freeland Cole (center) stands by the flag-draped casket of her husband, Judge Harry A. Cole, with their daughter Susan Cole Hill at the judge's funeral yesterday at Morgan State University. Judge Cole, 78, died Sunday of complications from pneumonia. (Article, Page 4B)