

HISTORY OF THE ARLINGTON COUNTY JUVENILE & DOMESTIC RELATIONS COURT

By

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Early History of Juvenile Court Movement in Virginia

In researching this topic, I came upon a speech given before the Virginia Juvenile Officers Association Convention in Waynesboro, Virginia, May 18, 1972, by Carroll R. Minor, Director, Division of Youth Services, Virginia State Department of Welfare and Institutions, which he called "From Then to Now in the Juvenile Justice System."¹ In it he documented some of the more important developments in the field of Juvenile Corrections in Virginia. According to Mr. Minor's speech, the Virginia Board of Charities and Corrections was created by the Virginia Assembly in 1908 and charged with the general supervision of all "charitable and correctional" activities at the state and local levels. (In 1922 this Board became the Board of Public Welfare.) According to Mr. Minor, in 1918, a man named J. Hoge Ricks became the first Juvenile Probation Officer appointed in Virginia (Richmond) and a year later he became the first "Juvenile Court Judge" in the State. The philosophy and concepts written into the Juvenile Court Law were slow to become adopted and as late as 1951 only six cities in the State had established specific Juvenile and Domestic Relations Courts with only thirty-six probation officers. Elsewhere police or civil justices presided over these matters.

Very Early History of Juvenile Court in Arlington

H. Bruce Green, a practicing attorney in Arlington County, retired from the position of Clerk of Courts in 1973, having served in that capacity since 1945 and before that, as Deputy Clerk from 1936-1945. He spent many hours researching the following information from old "Minute Books" in the County. He found records dating back to August 23, 1912, when Arlington County was still part of Alexandria County. There were notations of several "trials" held by William C. Gloth, Trial Justice, in 1915 and 1916, in which the defendants were charged with felonies (for example stealing coal, housebreaking, etc) and having been found guilty, were sentenced to "reform school." Several of the sentences were suspended and in one instance, "on condition the boy leave the County at once." In another case, two brothers charged with "a felony" were sentenced "to reform school" upon recommendation of their mother. There were also notations of several children being "committed to Childrens' Home Society" by Judge Gloth.

Of interest also were two notations on 10/12/23, one in which a boy was found "incorrigible" and a girl found guilty of larceny and incorrigibility. Both were "committed to the Board of Public Welfare" by H.R. Thomas, who signed himself "Judge of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court."²

It appears that prior to 1930 juvenile and domestic relations matters were

heard by a justice of the peace, trial justice or what was referred to as a "juvenile and domestic relations justice"; in 1930, the County Court of Arlington was created by Act of the General Assembly. Anna Hedrick, an attorney in Leesburg, provided information that "the Act of 1930 was adopted especially for Arlington County as Arlington was the only County in the State of Virginia that could qualify as having a population greater than 500 inhabitants per square mile." This Act provided for an election of a trial justice to be held in November, 1931, and every four years thereafter. The person was to be a resident and qualified voter of the County and a member of the bar thereof. The salary was set at \$4,000 per annum. The County Court was to be the juvenile and domestic relations court of the county, as well as have jurisdiction over many other matters. Furthermore this Act abolished the office of justice of the peace, trial justice and juvenile and domestic relations justice.

Records in the old Common Order Books in the Arlington County Clerk's office show that Benjamin M. Hedrick (Anna Hedrick's brother) was elected to the position of Trial Justice of the County Court for four years, 1/1/32 to 12/31/35, and again for the term 1/1/36 to 12/31/39. According to Ms. Hedrick he was re-elected for a third term in 1939 but before that term ended he entered military service and served in World War II. Ms. Hedrick reported that, during his tenure of office, Judge Hedrick appointed Clarence Ahalt as a Substitute County Judge and for a short period Ms. Hedrick substituted as County Court Judge. Ms. Hedrick believes the majority of the cases her brother heard involved traffic and civil matters as she states in "those days" people generally took care of their children themselves and they were not often brought into Court. She states further those cases which came to the Court's attention were referred to the local Department of Public Welfare and were handled in the early days of the County Court by Mrs. May Jacobs, head of the Department, the sister of H.R. Thomas.³

Apparently, Judge Hugh Reid succeeded Judge Hedrick as Trial Justice of the Arlington County Court. According to my research of the Old Common Order Books in the Arlington County Court's Office, his first term was from 1/1/44 to 12/31/47 and his second from 1/1/48 to 12/31/51. In November, 1951, he was elected Judge of the County Court for another term.

The Honorable Paul Douglas Brown, currently a Judge in Arlington County Circuit Court, remembers being appointed by Judge Reid as a substitute Judge in Arlington County Court in July 1950, but states he "substituted" every day and this was Judge Reid's way of creating a new judgeship. Later, he states, Judge Reid resigned as County Court Judge and remained Judge of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court. The Circuit Court then appointed Judge Brown County Court Judge. In the early fifties, the Courtroom was located on the first floor of the old courthouse and the criminal cases were heard at 9:30 a.m., the traffic at 10:00 a.m., and civil cases at 11:00 a.m. The Juvenile cases were heard in the Judge's office (shared by Reid and Brown as well as their entire staff) on the second floor of the Courthouse. During that particular period Judge Brown remembers Ryland Simmons being the only probation officer, with Marguerite Hughes doing secretarial work and work with alcoholics. Constance Lautier, who later became Court Psychologist, was a part-time worker.⁴

At the suggestion of Judge Brown, I contacted Mr. Ira O. Beaty (who incidentally is the father of Shirley McLain and Warren Beatty). He was the first probation officer under Judge Reid. Mr. Beaty, still an Arlington resident, recalls well how he came to Arlington in January 1945 from Richmond, where he had been the principal of a high school earning \$2,700 per year, to accept a job as principal of Washington-Lee High School. That job did not work out and Judge Reid offered him \$3,000 to be a probation officer. He accepted. He states prior to that the "delinquent kids" had been handled by the local Department of Public Welfare which had an office across the street from the Courthouse. Mr. Beaty's office was in the old Courthouse and having no secretary he did his own typing and kept his own files. He soon found he could not afford to raise a family in the Northern Virginia area on his salary and was offered a substantial increase to be principal of Thomas Jefferson Junior High School. He states Judge Reid tried to match the offer but could not so let him go, requesting he find someone to take his place. Mr. Beaty recommended Mr. Ryland Simmons from Richmond, who arrived around October 1, 1945, to replace him.⁵

Ryland Simmons states he came to Arlington at the suggestion of Mr. Beaty in October 1945 to take the position of lone probation officer under Judge Reid. As was the case with Mr. Beaty, Mr. Simmons "did it all" including secretarial work in the beginning until Judge Reid was able to get money appropriated for a secretary. He worked for the Court until his resignation November 1, 1957 but continued in the field, retiring in recent years from Washington, D.C. Parole. He "retired" again in June, 1982, when he closed his law office in Northern Virginia where he still lives.⁶

Beginning of the Arlington Juvenile Court as We Know it Today

Section 16-172.4 of the Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court Law of 1950 provided for the establishment of a Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court in each County of the Commonwealth, and for the appointment of the Judge of said Court by the Judge of the Circuit Court of the Judicial Circuit within which such County was situated. Pursuant to this Act, Judge Walter T. McCarthy of the Arlington Circuit Court appointed the Honorable Hugh Reid, (Judge of the County Court of Arlington), as the Judge of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court on December 21, 1951 for a term of four years, commencing January 1, 1952 through December 31, 1955. Thus was established the first separate Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court in Arlington County. Judge Reid served as the Judge of said Court until his retirement September 4, 1964. I think it is safe to say the Arlington Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court as we know it today was set up by Judge Reid. I could not relate the early history of this Court without mentioning some of the important contributions made by this outstanding man.

The Winter Issue of the *Juvenile Court Judges Journal* in 1964 was dedicated to Judge Reid and in it his colleague and friend, Alfred D. Noyes, a retired Judge of the Juvenile Court for Montgomery County, Maryland, wrote an article entitled "Irishman from Arlington" in which he related some of Judge Reid's accomplishments.⁷ Prior to his judicial service in Arlington County, Judge Reid had served

three terms in the Virginia House of Delegates and sponsored much of the progressive legislation, including the Act which created the County Manager form of government for Arlington County, the first county in the United States to adopt such legislation. As Juvenile Court Judge he was responsible for many forward looking and progressive innovations in the administration of justice for children. He instituted a teenage driving clinic and continuously challenged his staff to use the most modern techniques in working with children and their families. The Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Home was his idea. He was instrumental in setting up in the County many of the early programs for dealing with alcoholism. He worked closely with William P. ("Bill") Ames, an Arlington lumber merchant, who was active in Alcoholics Anonymous here, and in fact, according to Judge Brown, introduced AA to the Washington, D.C. area. I spoke with another of Judge Reid's colleagues, Judge Irene Pancoast, who retired December 31, 1977, after serving as the Judge of Alexandria Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court for approximately twenty-five years. She stated that Judge Reid guided and helped her organize the Alexandria Juvenile Court and its programs. He introduced her to numerous sources and through him she became active in the Metropolitan Council of Juvenile Court Judges as well as state and national organizations where she made contacts which proved most helpful in the performance of her job.

Judge Reid was the founder of the Juvenile Court Judges' Council of Virginia and a co-founder of the Blue Ridge Institute for Juvenile Court Judges. According to Judge Noyes, Judge Walter Criswell of Florida had the idea and got it started but Judge Reid worked with him and as Judge Criswell said, was "Dean" of the Institute. In addition Judge Reid served many years as a member of the Executive Committee of the National Council of Juvenile Court Judges. Not only in Arlington County, in the Washington Metropolitan area and the State of Virginia, but nationally, Judge Reid was a leader in the Juvenile Court Movement.

The staff of the Court and the practices still followed here to a great degree were instituted with the hiring by Judge Reid of a Mrs. Margaret S. Booth in October 1952. Mrs. Booth became the Director of Social Work (today known as Director of Court Services) and under her leadership the staff grew and the Court's services to the community expanded. In the mid-fifties, with Judge Reid's support, she established a "Shelter" in a section of the Arlington County Jail which was used by Arlington and later also Fairfax County and Alexandria to temporarily detain as many as ten young people. This "Shelter" was the forerunner of what is today the Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Home (in operation since 12/19/60). Most of the "matrons" hired and trained by Margaret Booth were later employed by the Detention Home. She hired and trained a competent staff of probation officers. In addition, she supervised several interns from the Catholic University School of Social Work. She demanded a high calibre of performance from her staff and, because of her personality and leadership, the staff responded. Had it not been for her untimely death in 1958 due to cancer it is thought by many who served under her that she would have become a national leader in the field of Juvenile Justice.

Among some of the early staff members hired by Mrs. Booth were the following: Frank Deierhoi (1/1/53 to 8/10/56) who resigned and set up a Juvenile Court

in Fairfax County which I understand was to a great extent modeled after the Court in Arlington. Frank went on to become Judge of that Court, a position from which he retired March 31, 1983. Other probation officers included Joseph Jerz (7/1/53 to 8/26/55) and Joseph Gallagher (3/15/55 to 10/25/56), a retired Federal Probation Officer still living in the Northern Virginia area. Mr. Gallagher remembers the staff including, when he was hired, Judge Reid, Margaret Booth, Ryland Simmons, Frank Deierhoi, Joe Jerz and Marguerite Hughes. In addition, there was a Bernie Wrenn (9/1/55 to 7/1/56) and Jean Hartwell (February 1954 to November 1956). The offices and Courtroom were located in the basement of the Professional Building at 1430 N. Uhle Street, a building which has since been demolished.

From almost the very beginning, Constance Lautier worked for the Court. Her training was in psychology and she worked full-time as a psychologist with the Washington, D.C. School System. Ryland Simmons thinks she first came to work at the Court as a volunteer and was paid only gas mileage, but later became salaried as part-time psychologist and she served in that capacity until her retirement in 1973.

Jack Sisson worked at the Court as a probation officer from 1956 until May 1957, when he went into the military service. He returned in November 1957 and worked until his resignation in November 1960. After Mrs. Booth's death, Jack served as "Acting Director of Social Work" until Judge Reid appointed Donald Barrow to that position in June, 1959. (Mr. Barrow resigned February 12, 1965.) Jack Sisson still lives in the Northern Virginia area and is employed training Federal Probation Officers and, he says, still using some of the techniques taught him by Margaret Booth.

Other Juvenile Court probation officers in the fifties and early sixties included Paul S. Phillips, Gertrude Hill, Ronald Haptonstall, William Throckmorton, William Hall, Francis Carney, Brice Johnston, Jesse Jones, Jack Carroll, Perry Russ, Harry W. Hauk, Ross Wingo, Jay Carpenter, Richard Stark, Ronald Pedigo, Riley Nixon, Michael Rohla, Joseph Sheridan, Kenneth Johnson and Mary Speight. For many of these people, the years of training they received in this Court under Judge Reid, Margaret Booth and Donald Barrow served as a basis for their expanding and broadening careers in the field of human services. For example, Mary Speight went on to become a Judge in the Virginia Beach Juvenile Court. In 1981 I received recognition from Arlington County for 25 years service with the Court. Another long-time employee, Marianne O'Brien O'Connell was hired by Judge Reid as a probation officer in 1960 and was employed here until 1975. Later she was employed by the Court on a contract basis investigating contested custody cases, and on February 14, 1983 returned as a full-time probation counselor.

As mentioned above, in the early formation of the Arlington Juvenile Court, there was no secretarial staff and of course, no separate Clerk's office. It was during the early fifties under Judge Reid that the first secretarial staff was hired and a deputy clerk appointed. Elsie Clore was one of the first, if not the first, deputy clerk, and was later joined by Dorothy Jones and Carolyn Posey. Lois Siefreid and Frances Coppage were two of the first secretaries. Frances states she handled the switchboard, acted as receptionist, and called the cases for Court as well as doing typing and filing. Frances was "right hand man" to Judge Reid and Mrs. Booth. She was in charge of the administrative staff until her retirement around 1967. She lives with

her husband, George, a retired Arlington policeman, in Scotland, Maryland.⁸ Another secretary in the early fifties was Jean Payne, currently employed in another department in the County. Lucius McCall, known around the Courthouse as "Mac", was one of the first bailiffs (1956 - 60).

The Court has been fortunate to have a number of outstanding Arlington attorneys serve as Substitute Judges. The Honorable Hugh Cregger, a practicing attorney in Northern Virginia, remembers being appointed by Judge Reid to serve in that position in the Spring of 1951 and continues as such today. He states he had served as a Substitute Judge in the County Court under Judges Reid and Brown. He remembers the Judges having to write the warrants as there was no Violations Bureau as we know it today. In 1964 the Arlington Circuit Court appointed Thomas W. Dodge and Earl Shaffer Substitute Judges for the term 2/3/64 - 12/31/65.

On 9/4/64 Judge Reid's retirement was accepted by the Circuit Court Judges. This followed his having a stroke. At that time, Hugh Cregger, Thomas W. Dodge and Earl Shaffer were serving as Substitute Judges. My recollection is that these men rotated hearing cases from the time of Judge Reid's stroke until Berton V. Kramer was appointed Judge by the Arlington Circuit Court Judges in September, 1964. He continues to serve in that position to date. In August, 1967, he was joined on the bench by Andrew B. Ferrari who also continues to serve. We have been most fortunate to have these two able men in our Court and under their leadership the staff and services to the community have continued to expand and grow. Today we have four Substitute Judges and a Clerk's office staffed by eight. Carl Beyeler, Director of Court Services, has been with the Court since 1965, and supervises a full time Court professional staff of twenty-two as well as eleven school probation counselors and an administrative staff of nine.

REFERENCE LIST

- 1 **Citation of a Speech:** Carroll R. Minor, "*From Then To Now in the Juvenile Justice System*," (May, 1972).
- 2 **Acknowledgment of Credit:** Acknowledgment is made to H. Bruce Green for data on very early history of Arlington Juvenile Court.
- 3 **Acknowledgment of Credit:** Acknowledgment is made to Anna Hedrick for data on early history of Arlington County Court.
- 4 **Acknowledgment of Credit:** Acknowledgment is made to the Honorable Paul Douglas Brown for data on Juvenile Court development in the early fifties.
- 5 **Acknowledgment of Credit:** Acknowledgment is made to Ira O. Beaty for the data on beginning of the probation staff in Arlington Juvenile Court.
- 6 **Acknowledgment of Credit:** Acknowledgment is made to Ryland Simmons for data on further development of the probation staff.
- 7 **Citation of an Article:** Alfred D. Noyes, "Irishman From Arlington," *Juvenile Court Judges Journal*, (Winter Issue, 1964).
- 8 **Acknowledgment of Credit:** Acknowledgment is made to Frances Coppage for data on first secretarial staff of Arlington Juvenile Court.