

Judge Langdon retiring after 45 years on bench

With the retirement of Judge Kenneth M. Langdon at the end of August, a 45 year career in law will come to an end, at least on a full-time basis.

Ironically, as he retires, his dream of a spacious Juvenile and Family court, with all related agencies housed in the same building, will become a reality.

In September, the Juvenile and Family Court will move from its present cramped quarters in the old Registry Office, Milton, to the administration building on Steeles Avenue.

Cramped it is in the present spot, with the whole courtroom smaller than many living rooms. It measures 12 feet across and is 20 feet long, with the portrait of Queen Elizabeth framed by a wall of peeling paint.

The steaming heat of summer is relieved by a noisy air conditioner, that has to be shut off while court is in session.

The narrow hallway leading to the one toilet each for men and women, frequently serves as consulting space for lawyers and clients, or social worker and troubled child and harried parents.

The drab lobby with as many as 50 uptight people waiting to appear in court, crowd together on benches. The only bright spot is a volunteer Children's Aid worker who makes coffee on the arched window sill.

Heartbreak cases of the present premises more cases are processed here in a morning than in most courts in a week. The harsh word "cases" translates into heartbreak for ordinary people—boys in trouble who don't want to go back home; mothers who want them home; and mothers who don't want them home; girls termed unmanageable at 14; and deserted wives and desperate husbands.

It all goes on in the court with a heart, where the aim is not to find guilt or innocence but to find a solution.

Unfortunately solutions are not easy, instant or necessarily lasting, despite the combined efforts of Children's Aid Society, Family Counselling Service, Welfare Agencies, Probation Officer, churches, organizations and law enforcement bodies.

"The damage frequently has been done before they get there," says outspoken Judge Langdon, who blames early marriage, unwanted children and lack of instruction in marriage and parenthood for the many ills he watches sorrowfully every day, as the parade goes through his court.

The kindly but fearless judge has raised eyebrows and hackles through the years with pronouncements such as a ban on marriage for couples under 20, unless a marriage course is completed. He says there should be at least two years of marriage before children are born, and couples who have passed examinations on marriage and parenthood courses, should qualify for low interest government loans up to the amount of their combined salaries to launch them on their way.

He says unwanted pregnancies should be terminated for anyone who wants it, and be automatic for victims of rape and unwed mothers.

One of his most controversial stands through the years, which has brought wrath down upon him is the advocacy of sterilization of the mentally retarded.

"Lowering the drinking age was a mistake," says Judge Langdon. "Now it is not uncommon to find alcoholics under the age of 21."

The Family Court Judge emphasized the child would never be before him at all, if he had his way. He claims the parent should be there to show why they have not provided adequate control and protection for the child. He claims parents should be responsible for the child until the child reaches university age or is self-supporting. He said the present age of maturity is arbitrary, not considering the mental maturity or the background of the child.

"If at any time the parents feel they are unable to assume responsibility, or feel

K. M. LANGDON



JUDGE KENNETH M. LANGDON as he presides on the bench.

they are incapable, they would have to apply to the courts to be relieved of the responsibility, then the control and protection would be transferred to the state."

The Judge urges a negative income tax to replace welfare, mothers' allowance, special assistance, and baby bonus. He says it would be cheaper to administer.

Judge Langdon feels the type of persons allowed to immigrate to the country should be controlled. "It should be limited to people of our ideals and morals," he commented.

The story of Judge Langdon is the story of the Juvenile and Family Court in Halton, since he has been the only family court judge since 1946, when the court was established here. Prior to that the criminal court was recessed for half an hour, and the court cleared, while juveniles were heard.

He was appointed a deputy magistrate in 1944, then supposedly a part-time job, and travelled 25,000 to 50,000 miles a year as a circuit court judge. At the same time he was carrying on his law practice in Georgetown which he established in 1930.

He assumed full responsibility for Peel, Halton and Dufferin counties, and assisted at Mimico New Toronto, and Long Branch, as well as holding a court at Willowdale, and Newmarket.

In 1946 family court was set up in Halton and he assumed these duties as well. It was not uncommon for him to hold court in Acton, Georgetown, Milton, Oakville and Burlington all in one day.

There were no proper courtroom facilities in most

localities in those days, and court was held in such places as the firehall in Burlington, the old town hall in Georgetown and Georgetown library, when the only source of heat was right over the register.

He recalls the crown attorney wearing a fur coat and fur hat and gloves in Burlington court.

Finally Judge Langdon gave up his law practice in 1953 when appointed a full time magistrate. The court office has been located at various spots in town, including the office in the old Gregory Theatre, on Mill Street, now a burned out derelict. From there the office moved over McClure's store, (now Gougeon Furniture), and lastly to the present location over the Concept store and restaurant on Main Street.

Although Halton alone nearly tripled in population between 1953 and 1970, Judge Langdon retained his dual duties as magistrate and family court judge until 1970 when he was appointed the first full-time family court judge in Halton.

In his spare time he has conducted approximately 3,000 weddings, some of them reluctantly, when the couple were in their teens. He had no choice since parental permission and a license had been obtained.

When he leaves the bench there will still be a Judge Langdon in the courts. His son Kenneth A. Langdon was appointed a judge of the Provincial Court (Criminal Division) December 18, 1974. The only case of a father and son being judges at the same time, in Ontario.

Law is a tradition in the Langdon family.

Judge Langdon's father was a lawyer in Brighton, Ont., as were his four sons, William Osgoode Q.C. deceased (named after the first Chief Justice of Ontario, Charles Vaughan Q.C., Kenneth Murney, and Thomas Rutherford Q.C. W.O. Langdon was later appointed a magistrate for Sault Ste. Marie.

Continuing the tradition, an uncle of the younger Judge Langdon, R. MacIntyre Aylesworth is a lawyer with the federal department of Justice in Ottawa; a cousin W. Herbert Langdon Q.C. is a lawyer with the ministry of the attorney-general in Toronto; another cousin C. Robert Langdon is a Toronto lawyer, as is H. Donald Langdon Q.C., a cousin of the older Judge Langdon.

Judge Langdon, senior, says he wouldn't have traded his lot for anything in the world. "If you're dedicated to your job that is reward enough". He insists the secret of a successful society is competent, interested parents. "They haven't found a substitute for that."



THE WHOLE COURTROOM measures 12 feet across and 20 feet long.



ARCHED DOORWAY to Halton County Juvenile and Family Court. The printing showing it was the old Registry office is still visible.

McKenzie HRCA appointee

Councillor Garnet (Pat) McKenzie was appointed to Halton Region Conservation Authority, to fill the vacancy created by the death of Councillor Len Cox. The appointment made by Halton Hills council Tuesday night, is for the remainder of this year and all of 1976.

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