

# New Superior Court judge sworn in

By **STEVE PEREZ**  
Sentinel staff writer

**SANTA CRUZ** — Civil attorney Bob Yonts was sworn in as a Superior Court judge in a ceremony Friday afternoon in the court of his new colleague Judge Tom Black.

As was the case during Thursday's judicial swearing-in of former prosecutor George Kovacevich, the courtroom was packed with members of the legal community. Also in attendance were Yonts' friends and relatives, with, noted the new judge, the exception of his 18 grandchildren.

"There wouldn't be room if they were all here," he joked during his talk after being sworn in by retired Judge Joseph Rattigan.

"You haven't lived until you had 13 granddaughters all in one place," he said, drawing laughter as he added, "I defy anyone to say I have gender bias."

Several local women lawyers have criticized the Yonts and Kovacevich appointments this week, saying most county judges are white men.

Yonts, a lawyer for 25 years, was appointed to the bench by Gov. Pete Wilson on Monday. After Friday's gathering, he said he would take the bench two weeks from Monday after settling affairs at the law office he shares with partner David Fulton.

Black's few remarks introducing Rattigan also drew laughs. According to the judge, civil attorney Austin Comstock was one of those who wrote to Wilson, urging Yonts' appointment.

According to Black, Comstock wrote of Yonts: "He's a lot smarter than he looks."

Rattigan, a retired state appellate justice, read aloud the simple letter Yonts wrote him in 1967, applying for a clerk's position.

Both men, along with Rattigan's secretary, share a birth date, Jan. 24, Rattigan said. But that was not the reason Yonts was hired, he said.

Rattigan said his former clerk made it to the bench on his own merits, not because he is anyone's "protege."

After Yonts was sworn in, and several of his grown children assisted in the donning of the black judicial robe, the new judge talked about how it looked on his somewhat portly figure.

"I want to say I love my new black muumuu very much," he said, as those in the audience enjoyed a laugh. "Indeed, it will be helpful in hiding my many imperfections."

After quipping his way through thanks and tributes to his relatives, wife, children and colleagues such as Black, District Attorney Art Danner and poking fun at himself, he closed on a serious note.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

New Judge Yonts get a hug from a supporter.