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Ivorey Cobb, municipal judge for Colebrook, stepped down from his court bench last week, but Ivorey Cobb the lawyer says he "never intends to retire."
(Staff photo—Wyman)

After 19 years, Judge Cobb steps down

By Lucy Wyman

COLEBROOK — It must have been this time of year, 19 years ago, that Colebrook's retiring municipal judge, Ivorey Cobb, first set eyes on the northern New Hampshire country that was to become his home.

Judge Cobb, recalling his first trip to northern New Hampshire seeking an associate position with an established lawyer, says he remembers the day well; "I was weary, I stopped my car by the highway (near Littleton), there was one more place to look, in Colebrook, near Canada," pondering whether or not to make the trip. The soon to be retired Army Major realized he'd spent

20 minutes deciding, and could've been well on his way; he decided to take a look.

The judge continued, "It was in the autumn and the color was the most beautiful I'd ever seen." As he progressed northward, along the Connecticut River, through the valley from which mountains rise on either side, he was reminded of other places he's been while in the service; "I had seen areas like this in the Rhone River Valley (between France and Switzerland) and in the northern and southern Alps." Ivorey Cobb gives the definite impression that the foliage of that year was entirely responsible for his move

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Judge—

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north, as he wonders aloud whether it's ever been quite as spectacular. "I decided since God had blessed them (the people of the area) by making such a beautiful place, they must be special people."

Nineteen years later, the Judge confirms his suspicions of that fall day he remembers so clearly. He says the people of Colebrook are indeed "beautiful people" and "if it weren't the place I wanted to be, I'd have left a long time ago." To Colebrook with him came Ivorey's wife Elsie and three daughters, Marilyn, Gretchen and Louise. Although none of the girls has established a home here, their father says they all consider their roots to be here. Mrs. Cobb, according to her husband, has been content in Colebrook as well, making firm friends and participating in the local Episcopal Church.

New Hampshire is a long way from Ivorey Cobb's birthplace in Alabama, but not so far from Pittsburgh, Pa., where the young man was reared. He completed high school in Pittsburgh, but only after leaving and later returning, realizing "to get anywhere one needed an education." Immediately after high school in 1933, and for almost ten years until he was drafted into the Army in '42, Ivorey and several friends created and published the Pittsburgh Examiner, a small weekly newspaper. With the proceeds from the paper he was able to pay his way to night college, where he gained 28 credits from Duquesne University and the University of Pittsburgh, before entering the service.

Determination is apparently not in short supply with Ivorey Cobb. It was not until 1962 that he received his law degree from Boston's Suffolk University. It took 20 years of commuting from the posts where he was stationed to nearby schools that offered night law classes, to attain his objective.

Seeking a position outside of the state of "Tax-achusetts," the newly accredited lawyer and retired Army Major, sent resumes throughout New Hampshire. A response from Attorney Frederick Harrigan prompted his visit to Colebrook where he ultimately decided to establish a private practice, rather than join another.

In '68 lawyer Cobb was appointed by then Governor of New Hampshire, John King, to the municipal bench. Now, 13 years later, he is required to retire at the age of 70.

It's clear Gov. King picked the right man for the job, listening to Judge Cobb who welcomes "the opportunity to contribute constructively to community life" and later expressed the opinion that "those who get the most out of life, are those who give to others." While sitting on the municipal court is not such a demanding job, there are opportunities to do just what the judge enjoys.

One novel program Judge Cobb instituted while at the Colebrook court was giving local youths the option of attending church weekly for one year, as a possible alternative to spending time at the YDC in Concord. To those who cried, "Against the first amendment," he responded, "I gave them a choice."

All did not benefit from the controversial program but "so many did, I thought it was worthwhile" says the Judge. Kids get to running with a certain crowd and they know no others; the affiliation with the church introduced them to other options. Such was the theory behind the judge's idea, and the weekly essays that accompanied church attendance gave the kids time to think, he explained. Citing one girl, who was embarrassed by her friends not to attend church, as she once had, Judge Cobb told how delighted she was to be required to do so, as the result of a shoplifting incident.

As far as retiring goes, Ivorey Cobb says he doesn't "ever intend to retire" and "expects to spend no more than two days a week" in his law office. He has some other irons in the fire, in the way of diversions but would not divulge them to the Democrat.

The cold winters of northern New England apparently hold no

dread for this born southerner. The Judge remembers one cold, stormy winter day, not long after his arrival in Colebrook, when he met Earl Wadsworth on a street corner. "Do you regret coming here?" the latter asked. He didn't then and he doesn't now, but the retiring judge does foresee a time in the future when he may migrate "to warmer climes" for the coldest months of the winter. Until then, retirement won't mean seeing any less of Ivorey Cobb.