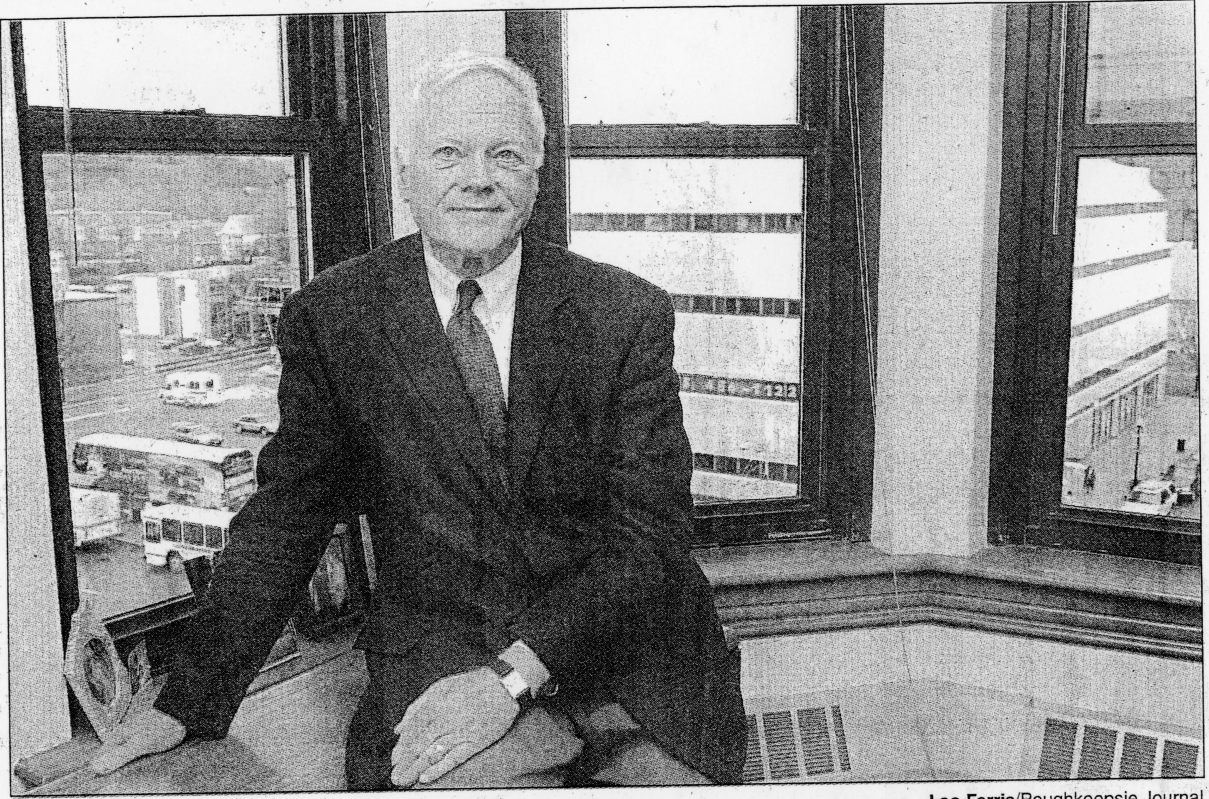


# County losing 31 years of experience, class



Lee Ferris/Poughkeepsie Journal

Dutchess County Chief Assistant District Attorney William J. O'Neill will retire from his position after 31 years on the job. He is seen here in his office overlooking Market Street in Poughkeepsie.

## Chief assistant DA retiring

By Larry Fisher-Hertz  
Poughkeepsie Journal

In 1971, when Albert Rosenblatt was district attorney of Dutchess County, he met an FBI agent who told him he was looking for a job that would enable him to move back close to his childhood home of Red Hook.

Rosenblatt sized up the young but seasoned William J. O'Neill and remarked to then-Assistant District Attorney George Marlow, "We've got to get this guy in front of a jury — on our side."

Rosenblatt hired O'Neill as an assistant district attorney in September 1971. And over the next 31 years, O'Neill faced dozens of juries and impressed prosecutors, judges and defense attorneys alike.

"We prided ourselves in

**'The intensity of being on trial is thrilling.'**

**William J. O'Neill**  
chief assistant district attorney

the DA's office with presenting cases with credibility," said Rosenblatt, now a Court of Appeals judge. "Here was a guy who was the embodiment of credibility. He would never think of going into court, carrying with him the trust of the people of the state of New York and the DA's office, without speaking to every available witness and consulting every available document. That's how Bill handled every case, and he carried himself in such a way that jurors reacted very favorably to him."

O'Neill, who has been

the chief assistant district attorney — second in command to District Attorney William Grady — since 1984, will retire at the end of the month, just before his 65th birthday.

### **'No band playing'**

"The intensity of being on trial is thrilling," he said. "There you are in the spotlight, with your ego and your sense of competition and some sense of righteousness for your cause. And then you get a conviction, and a lot of times almost no one else is there. There's no band playing, and maybe there's nobody else back in the office when you get there."

"But still, there's the thrill that you've been successful, and on the drive home you savor that. And then the next day, you're back at work on

## IF YOU GO

### RETIREMENT PARTY

**What:** Retirement party for Dutchess County Chief Assistant District Attorney William J. O'Neill.

**When:** Jan. 24.

**Where:** Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel.

**Tickets and information:** Call (845) 486-2300.

something new."

O'Neill, a graduate of Red Hook High School and Brown University, didn't discover his thirst for prosecuting until he had spent nearly eight years as a special agent with the FBI. He said he enjoyed the job, which he took right out of Duke Law School in 1963.

"But there came a time when I wanted to stop

Please see **O'Neill, 2B**