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Legal Services to the Elderly—Revisited

by Anthony J. Agnone



photo by Chris Michael

One of the better learning experiences made available to students at the University of Baltimore School of Law is a program called Legal Services to the Elderly. This project, located in the Waxter Center for Senior Citizens at 861 Park Avenue, is designed with a two-fold purpose: providing legal assistance to those Baltimorean senior citizens who cannot afford it, and at the same time providing a way in which a student intern can put into practice the theory he has learned in the classroom.

Currently funded in part by a federal grant, with cooperation by the City of Baltimore, the program is administered by Assistant Dean William I. Weston and is operated by Director Anne K. Pecora. Ms. Pecora, a 1972 *cum laude* graduate of University of Baltimore School of Law and a member of the Maryland Bar, is assisted by legal secretary Barbara Katzoff and approximately four student interns from the law school.

Through this internship program, much needed legal services are afforded to the elderly within the community. In far too many instances the nation's senior citizens, who must depend upon Medicare, Social Security, and other Federal, State and local programs, lack adequate legal services. A 1976 survey shows that over 24% of the nation's elderly are "poor", yet only 7% are able to obtain legal assistance through Legal Aid programs. The U. of B. clinic attempts to fill some of this void by offering individual counselling concerning legal problems. Additionally,

it monitors newly developed government regulations and specifications which affect the elderly. The program also assists in cutting through the bureaucratic complexities, which often overwhelm laymen, particularly those whose mobility is somewhat hampered by age or lack of transportation, or both.

Participation in "Legal Services to the Elderly" can be as beneficial to the intern as it is to the individual served. The intern will have a first hand experience with a real legal problem. He will also be able to sharpen his skills in client interviewing and counselling. In the initial interview, the intern has to elicit the sa-

lient facts, as well as digest all of the information given by the senior citizen. The student then must do the necessary research associated with the problem and contact the interested parties. After a discussion with Director Pecora on the course of action to be taken, the intern is tasked with writing the necessary legal communique and following the case until completion. Although the interns are not assigned to any fee-generating situations or criminal cases, they do receive assignments in the areas of torts, criminal cases, contracts, wills, deeds, landlord-tenant relationships, guardianships, and pleadings and motions, as

well as other legal problems of the elderly.

The "Legal Services to the Elderly" program is open to second, third, and fourth year law students. Each participating intern must complete fifty academically related hours per semester for each academic credit. This amounts to about four hours per week per credit on a regular basis during the fall or spring semester. Internships are also available during the summer months. Students who wish to receive more information about the program may contact Dean Weston, Anne Pecora, or Tony Agnone (752-4528).

Recollections of the Democratic Convention

by Ronnie Wainwright

The Maryland delegation at the Democratic National Convention in New York's Madison Square Garden was surrounded with an air of camaraderie, just plain folksiness, and quite a bit of cigarette smoke. The last perhaps was my own problem, since I sat between two chain smokers. It certainly wasn't a garden by any stretch of the imagination.

By lot Maryland was the forty-seventh state to select seating at the convention and therefore the delegates sat on the extreme right and in the back while the alternates sat in the opposite direction and high enough to have a perfect view of the podium. Needless to say, we delegates found it advantageous to switch frequently with our alternates just to hear and see. In fact, on the first day of the convention I didn't really know there was a podium until Barbara Jordan spoke and everyone sat down.

Born a New Yorker, I was grateful for a reason to return and my first impression was that New York certainly had

photo by Tom Basham



Ronnie Wainwright

changed. The big apple was coated with candied syrup: shopkeepers were kindly, policemen were fatherly, and New Yorkers, as a whole, were considerate. Perhaps Art Buchwald was correct, and the real New Yorkers were shipped to Staten Island while Midwesterners were imported to take their places. Even the public transportation was free to the delegates, and the subways were stamped with safety guarantees. Law students, however, may take issue with the validity of such a guaran-

tee. As to the technicalities of the convention, although Jerry Brown won the majority of Maryland's popular vote, Jimmy Carter won the majority of the delegates. Thus, in New York, the Carter delegates controlled the Maryland delegation and harmony prevailed in the Democratic party.

Three committees reported to the convention: Credentials, Platform, and Rules. Again, harmony prevailed. There were no credentials fights as there were in 1972 between the old guard and the new. A platform dispute involving a mandatory equal representation between the sexes for the 1980 convention was averted by the women's caucus: Carter endorsed the women's platform except for that single issue, and the women decided to concede that issue in light of the gains made as a whole. The arguments on the convention floor occurred as to the Rules. I will detail one rather sad example of democracy in action: the delegates voted on Minority rule # 4 proposed by a Maryland delegate, Joseph Gebhart of Bethesda. The Alabama delegation, sitting directly in front of Maryland, cast 35 votes against Minority rule #4 (the Minority wanted an elected mini-convention rather than an appointed one in 1978). One observant Marylander noted that only one person, not thirty-five, was seated in Alabama's section. Since no proxy voting was allowed, this violated the convention rules; however, when we tried to challenge the vote, the answer was that only a member from within a delegation