

THIRD ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PUBLIC GUARDIAN  
Fiscal year ending June 30, 1948

To the Honorable Board of Supervisors,  
County of Los Angeles, California.

Gentlemen:

The Office of Public Guardian is of necessity in close contact with those agencies that supervise and care for the mentally ill. The history of mental cases has shown that provision for their care, comfort and control has always lagged behind the increase in the mentally ill population. California in general and Los Angeles County in particular seem far in the lead of other states and counties in their care, nevertheless the mentally ill population over-crowds its institutions both public and private. This department thru the medium of guardianships concerns itself with handling the business affairs of those mentally ill and minors who have no one to do it for them, and the number is increasing rapidly.

During the fiscal year ending June 30, 1948 over 6,000 cases passed through the local mental health court. This is in excess of 500 cases per month of all types, including stimulants. The number may seem large but in a county of over 4,000,000 people the percentage is about 1 to each 8,000 of population per month. The percentage will always be larger than other areas since Southern California attracts the elderly because of its favorable climate. Those who become incompetent MUST be taken care of.

During the fiscal year just ended this office paid to Los Angeles County the sum of \$31,840.42, as follows:

To Mental Health Department	\$ 2,517.03
To Department of Charities	<u>\$29,323.39</u>
Total	\$31,840.42

This amount is an increase of \$3,783.48 over the preceding year and is \$13,255.42 in excess of salaries paid the entire staff of this office. The indirect benefits to the county tax payers, however, are much greater. We have approximately 400 wards receiving Old Age Assistance or Blind Aid which they could not receive unless they had a Guardian. For each 100 such cases it would cost the County  $100 \times 60 \times 12$  or \$72,000 per year for their care if they did not have a Guardian. However, the County's portion of each \$60 grant is \$5.00 per month, therefore because there is a Guardian, the County's portion of the cost would be  $100 \times 5 \times 12$  or \$6,000, a saving of \$66,000 per year per 100 such patients. The actual saving to the County is somewhere between 3 or 4 times \$66,000 per year.

In cold dollars and cents this office fully justifies its existence. In addition it performs a distinct service to incompetents who have no one to fight their battles for them. Their properties, often considered lost, are redeemed and protected. At the present time this office has three cases where the wards have been imposed upon by unscrupulous and designing people to the extent of losing their homes. In one case the Public Guardian has begun an action to have the deed set aside and in the other two those who obtained title have agreed to deed back the property after being advised of the action the Public Guardian would take to protect the ward. The property thus reclaimed will provide funds to take care of the patients the rest of their lives, and the County will be saved the burden of caring for them. In another case a property was immediately deeded back to the patients, an elderly couple, by a neighbor who had acquired it without proper consideration, when he discovered that the Public Guardian was interested in the case.

In many cases these elderly people have abandoned property

thinking it had been lost for delinquent taxes or street bonds, when in fact the rights of redemption had not lapsed. Several parcels of property were redeemed by this office within the year. Thus the property was put back on a tax paying basis and the ward recovered some of his investment.

There is another function of this office. There are many mental cases urgently in need of custodial care that have no one to take the necessary step. Under authority of Section 5047 of the Welfare and Institutions Code the Public Guardian files on these people after due investigation and they are taken into custody, placed under observation on the Psychopathic Ward and in due time have a hearing. A very practical method of procedure has been worked out with the assistance of the Department of Charities where most contacts with these cases is first made. Where a case is referred for filing a thorough investigation is made and in many instances other solutions of the problem are found. NO ONE IS RAILROADED! The plan was begun May 21st, 1948 and by June 30th 20 cases had been disposed of. 11 were given custodial care and 9 were adjusted in some other satisfactory manner.

The activities of this office are on the increase. In considering the volume of work and consequent need for increase in personnel and supplies one is inclined to compare the work of this office with that of the Public Administrator. This is not a proper comparison as a Guardianship is a COING CONCERN. The administration of the estate of a deceased person is usually completed and closed in a reasonably short time. The Guardianship continues as long as the ward lives or until restored to capacity, and in the case of a minor until he reaches his majority.

The ward must be fed, clothed, bills paid, rents collected,

accounts kept, periodic reports made to the Court, properties sold, taxes paid, income tax computed, reported and paid when due. Relatives contacted, law suits instituted or defended. There is endless correspondence regarding the ward's affairs with various persons and agencies. Practically all legal papers are prepared in this office. It is often necessary to have ancillary proceedings in other states where the ward owns property.

FINANCIAL

Cash on deposit with County Treasurer 6/30/47	\$112,603.96
Receipts during fiscal year	<u>402,641.05</u>
	\$515,245.01
Disbursed same period	<u>\$380,467.85</u>
On deposit in County Treasury 6/30/48	\$134,777.16
On deposit in California Bank 6/30/48	<u>2,348.00</u>
Total bank and County Treasury	\$137,125.16

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Total appointments & pending 1936 to 6/30/48	1759
Total discharges same period	<u>1250</u>
Active and pending cases June 30, 1948	509

The Public at large, especially those in the medical and legal fields appreciate the need of an agency such as this department offers and hardly a day goes by but that there are one or more calls for information or request for assistance. They of course learn that this department functions for the benefit of those who have no one able or willing to act for them, and is not designed to shift the expense or unpleasant duty to the County when there is some one available to handle the problem.

Very often Guardianship matters come before the Court and the petitioner or his nominee is not satisfactory to the Judge. The matter is often referred to this office. It is a source of much satisfaction to the Public Guardian that his work has the approval of the Courts and attorneys. He is also very grateful for the co-

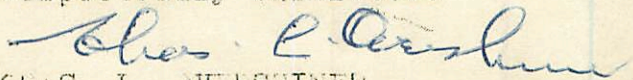
operation of other departments of the County some of which, such as the Department of Charities, medical Social Workers, Health Department, Public Administrator, County Surveyor, Mental Health Department, Sheriff's Office and Police Departments make the most frequent contacts.

In no field is there a greater opportunity for charitable minded people to alleviate the suffering or add to the comfort of mankind than in the realm of the mentally ill. Most of the patients are merely deteriorated due to old age and are in no way to be classified as insane. They should be kept occupied whenever possible. Patients with little or no funds might be supplied with cigarettes or some simple luxury, or perhaps a wheel chair, walker, crutches or other equipment. Arrangements might be provided for an incapacitated relative to visit the patient, or vice versa.

Any person wishing to make a gift or memorial could find no more worthy outlet than that of endowing an institution for the care of the mentally ill who have little of this world's goods. Or they might contribute by will or otherwise to a fund to be used for the study, cure and prevention of mental diseases.

This office is understaffed and in need of larger quarters, but is endeavoring to the best of its ability due to a very loyal staff to meet the demands made upon it. Appropriate legislation is to be sought at the next session to increase the effectiveness of the department and perhaps its income.

Respectfully submitted.

  
CHAS. L. OVERSHINER,  
Public Guardian.