

Court will decide fate's fate in Michigan

By SANDRA AMBRUSTER

Members of a western Wayne County psychic group say that the future of metaphysical studies in Michigan will be settled by a trial.

"This jury trial definitely will be precedent setting. It will lead the way to witch hunts on what are our own religious beliefs," said Danny Valkos, who is director of the Paranormal Enlightenment Center.

"Under this law, all astrologers and politicians who predict the future would be guilty," Valkos added. "Also illegal would be horoscopes in the newspaper, Michigan Bell's dial-a-horoscope and the Gundella column that runs in your newspaper."

Valkos and four other members of the group were arrested by city of Wayne police last February on charges of violating a state fortune telling law from the late 1800s. They were arrested after holding a "Psychic Fun Fair" on Feb. 15 at the Wayne Community Center.

Also arrested were Ida Vida, a palmist and minister of a spiritualist church; Janice Jarrell, also a minister and an astrologer; Joanna Freeman, a seminary student who read tarot cards; and Marise Rupprecht, who sold books and ran the computer giving astrological printouts.

The charge is a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of \$500 or 90 days in jail. Valkos said he has been charged with five counts of aiding and abetting fortune telling.

Since the Wayne fair, the group has held similar functions at a UAW hall on Plymouth Road in Livonia and at the Plymouth Cultural Center. Valkos said that other groups in River Rouge, Ann Arbor, Ferndale and in Oakland County periodically sponsor fairs on paranormal phenomena.

Wayne Det. Sgt. Mike Butler said

that the five were arrested because they charged \$3 fees for the readings they gave to two police officers and two clerk-dispatchers during the fair. He said that violates the state penal code that prohibits "pretending for money or gain to predict future events . . . (or) to tell fortunes."

Sgt. Butler said that renting the community center and charging a \$1 admission were permissible under the law, but that charging for readings isn't. The fair also included the sale of books and refreshments.

The trial was scheduled for 10 a.m. Wednesday before 29th District Court Judge John Siller at the court building on Michigan Avenue in Wayne.

Sure to be discussed during the trial is whether the group received permission to have the fair and whether they were pretending, in the sense of the state law, or really sincere.

"We told them before they had the fair that we didn't have the power to tell them not to have it, but that we felt it was a violation of state law and that we would do something if they did."

"We went down and had our fortunes told that Friday, and told them they could expect action to be taken," said Sgt. Butler. "You can't get a prosecutor for something like that on a weekend. Monday, the brother of another sergeant died, which the fortune teller hadn't told him. So I got the case."

"Tuesday we went down to the prosecutor's to get warrants, and they were told to come in. So that's why it was almost a week later before they were arrested," he said.

Valkos, co-director of the paranormal center Lea Smith, insist they are sincere about their beliefs. He said the center members had charged for services at the fair to raise enough money to open a school, research center and bookstore in Wayne.

Although they had a location, Mrs.

Smith, who was not in the group arrested, said they "quickly backed out of the deal after this started."

"Our ethics are at stake here. We want to remove the stigma," Valkos said, adding that the group formed nearly a year ago. "We don't pretend. We try to stand as tall as we can in our belief in God."

Richard Beemer, a Farmington Hills attorney, said it would take a decision from an appellate court before the case would actually get a president. John Sloan from the Wayne out-county prosecutor's office was unable to be reached for comment.

Valkos said he has given lectures on the subject for the Plymouth YMCA and points out that the Wayne-Westland Continuing Education Program offers a course in basic extra sensory perception awareness. He has been involved in the subject for 10 years as a

psychic investigator. Mrs. Smith said her involvement goes back 25 years.

"Everyone has psychic ability. Thoughts are electro magnetic waves, and a reader just picks up the frequency that a person is on. There's nothing mysterious about it," said Valkos, who recently lost a job as manager of an auto repair shop.

Psychic experiences, according to Valkos, include manifestation of ghosts, gut feelings and knowing what's going to happen in the future.

Frequency of readings and acceptance of the results is up to each individual, according to Mrs. Smith.

"We prefer that they learn to read themselves, and that they don't become dependent on a reader," she said. "We tell people that they have control over their lives, no one else does (have control)."



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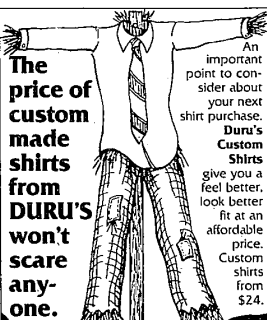
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