

Lawyers swamping Oakland County market

By LYNN ORR

Horror stories about unemployed attorneys are failing to dissuade a throng of students bent on making the legal profession the most popular of the decade.

The swelling number of law school graduates is one reason behind a 12 per cent statewide growth in the profession in the past two years. However, Oakland County's legal population spiral tops that.

Since 1976, the county's legal headcount has jumped by 23 per cent, with a 36 per cent increase in Farmington Hills alone, according to statistics gathered by the Michigan Bar Association. With 132 lawyers, Farmington Hills has the sixth highest legal population in the county.

Adding the City of Farmington's 45 lawyers doesn't change the legal league status. It means there is about one lawyer for every 373 people in the 36-square-mile area.

That doesn't approach Southfield's lavish legal numbers—one lawyer for every 64 residents. But it does add up to a lot of lawyers in Oakland County.

What are all those lawyers doing?

"Probably going hungry," quips Burton Shifman, president of the Oakland County Bar Association. He believes growth in population, law school graduating classes among the highest in history, and a greater influx of business in the county requiring legal work account for the legal groundswell.

"People who want a professional career think of law, much the way they thought of engineering during the Sputnik days," Shifman explains. "Every law school but one in Michigan operates an evening school, which is another reason. You can pick up the career while being gainfully employed."

Unlike medical schools, which are dependent on the American Medical Association for training of interns, law schools proliferate.

"American medical schools don't turn out enough doctors to meet the health care needs of the public in my opinion," he says. "But we're probably turning out too many lawyers."

THERE'S another reason many lawyers are setting up practice in Oakland County.

"The character of Oakland County has changed greatly in 20 years," says Shifman, who's been practicing for that long in Southfield. "Oakland

County was a bedroom community with the exception of Pontiac, but now the county is becoming one big city, with businesses and banks that require legal services."

The trend away from urban-centered lawyers is directly linked to the growth in suburban business, he says, which may be one reason why court caseloads fail to parallel the attorney avalanche.

Circuit court cases in the county have climbed by about 10 per cent a year in recent years, according to John Mayer, associate state court administrator.

But litigation fails to reflect the legal workload, he points out.

"When you get out in the country, court cases can reflect the legal population," he says.

Side-by-side counties out-state with similar populations could have diverse court caseloads reflecting diverse legal populations, he says.

"But when you get into urban areas, you have to count business," he points out.

As a statistician for the state courts, he hopes to be able to pinpoint more accurately the caseloads and lawyers in the near future, when the court reporting system takes effect.

IN FARMINGTON HILLS, the court caseload fluctuates from month to month, rather mysteriously, says Marilyn Duguid, court administrator. But she doesn't believe the courts can explain a 36 per cent attorney increase in the area. The City of Farmington's allotment of attorneys has been stable.

Salary increases for attorneys don't appear to be the answer, either, according to Sheldon Hochman, assistant executive director for programs of the State Bar of Michigan.

Although figures detailing attorneys' incomes are not available, an economic survey updated in 1977 indicates that inflation accounts for most of the income upgrading, he says. The median income of an attorney with less than five years of practice was \$15,232 in 1972. In 1976, it was \$18,700.

Shifman maintains that attorneys earn about one-quarter the income earned by doctors. "With all these figures for both professions are difficult to accurately attain or measure, he says.

Shifman does believe the attorney spiral may pose a problem.

"We do have to do with all these people," he asks. "You can't create legal services, but you can do better

inform people what a lawyer can do for them."

The bar association is attempting to do just that, he says. "We want to let the average person know what a lawyer can do for them at a reasonable cost."

The Oakland County Bar Association provides a lawyer referral service which can be consulted for \$15 a half hour.

But he's opposed to individual professional advertising.

"I think advertising of any professional service is probably ridiculous," he maintains. "In our business, you can't measure the service until it's rendered. Too often you don't know what time and services are going to be involved."

ALTHOUGH FARMINGTON may have a lot of lawyers, its total looks stagger beside other cities in Oakland County.

Southfield, with 1,326 attorneys, has more lawyers than any city in the state, with the sole exception of Detroit. In fact, there are more lawyers in Southfield than in Flint, Grand Rapids and Jackson combined. There are five times as many attorneys in Southfield as there are in the entire Upper Peninsula.

Proximity to both Wayne and Oakland County courts are one reason, officials say; while the city's business and commercial growth is another motivation.

Other assorted facts gleaned from the state bar association's report include:

•The remote Kennewaw County in the Upper Peninsula had no attorneys in 1976. Two years later, the county retains that distinction.

•Wayne County has the most lawyers, 5,355, as opposed to 3,410 in Oakland County. Detroit alone has 4,116.

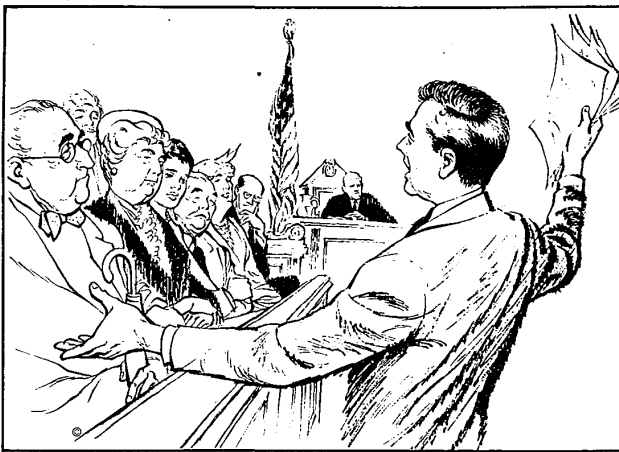
•Lansing, where most of Michigan's laws are created, has 789 lawyers, an increase of 146 in just two years.

•Way behind Southfield but second in attorney population for Oakland County is Birmingham, followed by Troy. Little Bloomfield Hills takes fourth place with 268 lawyers.

•The city of Honor in Benzie County has a population of about 300 people and just one lawyer registered with the bar association.

•Other communities with just one attorney include Hickory Corners, Benzonia, Sodus, Bath, God Hart, Jonesville, Ancharoville, Wixom, and Wood Pigeon.

•MacKinnon Island lacks attorneys. Draw your own conclusions.



Big push made to catch county child murderer

A last push for citizen help in finding the killer of four Oakland County children has been undertaken by the police task force investigating the murders.

The task force last week released a new batch of color posters with a composite sketch of the suspect and a photograph of the blue Gremlin, which has figured prominently in the probe.

"Citizen cooperation urgently needed," the poster proclaims.

The composite is the same one police have been using for months, but Lt. Robert Robertson of the state police, task force commander, said the color adds a new dimension, making the drawing more life-like.

"It's sort of a grand finale," said Robertson. "We figured we might as well do it up right (by adding color)."

The new posters also highlight the \$100,000 reward offered for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the child killer.

State police recently doubled the reward fund by adding another \$50,000. Birmingham had pledged \$25,000, and \$25,000 is offered by the Detroit News Secret Witness Fund.

"The real reason to do it (issue new posters) was to get the \$100,000 before the eyes of the public," Robertson added.

A POLICE profile of the suspect accompanies the composite. He was last seen standing near a blue Gremlin parked behind the Chatham Supermarket near Maple and Adams roads in Birmingham. This was on March 16, 1977, when Timothy King of Birmingham—the last of four victims—was kidnapped.

The suspect's characteristics:

- He is a white male, 25-30 years of age, 150-170 pounds, with an athletic build.
- He may be living or associating closely with another person.

• He has a job that allows freedom of movement.

• He may live in an area where he could hold a child captive for several days without creating suspicion among neighbors.

• He may have altered his appearance with a new hairstyle or glasses.

The killer is believed responsible for the King slaying and three others: Kristine Mithelich of Berkeley, found in Franklin on Jan. 21, 1977; Jill Robinson of Royal Oak, found in Troy on Dec. 26, 1976 and Mark Stebbins of Ferndale, found in Southfield Feb. 19, 1976.

All were 10-12 years of age and were held captive for several days prior to being murdered.

The task force, which has received more than 15,000 tips on the slayings, will continue operating with contributions from local communities through December of this year, Robertson said.

Birthplace of the stars

Theater fights for life

By ETHEL SIMMONS

A benefit performance of "For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow Is Gone," Saturday at Detroit's Fisher Theatre may be just what it takes to save Will-O-Way Apprentice Theatre from closing.

Will-O-Way, licensed in 1949 as a trade school of the theater in Michigan, is expected to continue its summer classes despite a threatened foreclosure on the Bloomfield Township property.

Although payment of \$20,000 on a note held by private investors comes due today, Will-O-Way will go on, according to Celia Merrill Turner, director.

A fund drive to raise \$40,000 for theater expenses was started in the last few weeks. So far, \$1,000 in personal contributions has been raised.

BUT THE BENEFIT matinee performance at the Fisher hopefully will net \$25,000 for Will-O-Way. The benefit will include the 2 p.m. Saturday show of "For Colored Girls" (which closes its run at the Fisher on Sunday) and a champagne reception at the Hotel St. Regis.

The Saturday matinee is sold out, except for our tickets," said Ken Turner, Will-O-Way Apprentice Theatre general manager.

Benefit tickets are priced at \$30 apiece and may be obtained by calling Will-O-Way at 644-4418. "Just give us a call, and we'll get the tickets to you," Turner said.

Will-O-Way Director Celia Turner, who is the wife of Ken Turner, said that ABC Television stars are being lined up to perform at the reception following the benefit performance.

Among the ABC-TV personalities will be 19-year-old Michael Binder of Birmingham, who is now living and working on the West Coast.

BINDER MAY become a household name and as big a star as others on the network after his TV series debuts this fall.

Entitled "Apple Pie," the comedy produced by Norman Lear will be televised Saturdays at 8:30 p.m. Rue McClanahan, who played the best friend on "Maude," stars in "Apple Pie," about an oddball family whose members have been recruited through want ads.

Binder, a comedian who performs at the Comedy Store in Los Angeles, is a former Will-O-Way student.

The play "For Colored Girls" is co-produced by Joseph Papp and Woodie King Jr. King, who also studied at Will-O-Way, has been helping to organize support among well-known New York and Hollywood performers to whom Will-O-Way gave early theatrical training.

Mrs. Turner said the apprentice theater has received permission to put an extension on the note due today, "to come up with something." She said that \$21,500 will get a one-year extension on the note.

The play "For Colored Girls" is a collage of writings by Ntozake Shange, arranged by director Oz Scott and choreographed by Paula Moss. The National Company of the New York Shakespeare Festival production is performing at the Fisher.

Mrs. Turner said a steering committee representing community groups has met at her home near the theater and taken blocks of tickets to their organizations.

Among the performers who studied at Will-O-Way are Martha Henry of the Stratford Shakespearean Festival and New York character actor Paul Price, who was a scholarship student in 1951. Both are writing letters in support of Will-O-Way.

Mrs. Turner said, "Will-O-Way has been asking ex-students to send letters telling the benefits they gained personally and professionally from taking classes there."

"We can plan on taking the letters to Bloomfield Township," Mrs. Turner said. "David (Scharfman of the Pontiac Arts Council who has been acting as business manager) thinks there may be a rebate on taxes."

FOR YEARS Will-O-Way has paid taxes to Bloomfield Township without asking for a tax-exempt status available to educational institutions, she said.

"I think we are going to be able to continue with the theater. It involves reorganization to get grants."

The story of Will-O-Way's financial plight has been released nationally, and many former students, including the famous, have rallied 'round.

Comic Michael Binder read about the problems, in a California paper, and called twice to volunteer his services.

By chance, the Turners' daughter Christine (Tine), 15, was visiting Stratford, Ont., with a group of fellow students from the drama department of Roper School in Bloomfield Hills, and talked with Martha Henry.

"The talked about the difficulties, and Martha was very concerned and is writing a letter," said Mrs. Turner. More than 50 letters of support have been sent to Will-O-Way.

A woman who worked as a teacher at the apprentice theater in 1947 wrote a poignant letter, offering to send \$10 each month from her Social Security money.

"I said no."

A LETTER from the mother of one of the school's present students said she had tried to find a place for her child to study and of four theater schools listed in the phone book, Will-O-Way was the only one she could reach that offered the kind of training she sought.

Mrs. Turner, who is from a theatrical family, said another letter came from a man who studied with her mother, Treasa Way Merrill, and that he remembered Celia when she assisted her mother.

"My Dad made the only movie of Jesse Bonstelle, up on the hills of Will-O-Way," Mrs. Turner recalled.

The summer term at Will-O-Way runs July 9-Aug. 13. Enrollment is open for adult evening classes and afternoon classes for young people and teenagers.

Will-O-Way has offered four full terms each year since being licensed in 1949. Junior, senior and master's certificates are earned, to pass prerequisites in universities.

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