

Courts to use TV testimony

Oakland County Probate Court will take part in an experiment in which psychiatrists from Clinton Valley Center can testify in court by closed-circuit television.

Use of television testimony will be limited to lawsuits challenging court-ordered psychiatric treatment.

The experiment designed to save the time of psychiatrists, who now must go to the court to testify in commitment hearings, said Thomas F. Baldwin, professor of telecommunications at Michigan State University and project coordinator.

However, probate judges have mixed feelings about the project, which will begin in the spring. Some are concerned testimony given in such a fashion might violate a person's right to due process, i.e., to confront a witness in court.

THE SIX-MONTH project will be funded with \$25,000 from the Michigan Department of Mental Health. The State Bar of Michigan is contributing another \$1,000.

"It was found that 76 percent of the total time is spent in traveling and

waiting, and the Clinton Valley Center is only about a mile and a half from probate court," Baldwin said.

"A lot of time could be saved in cities where the hospital and the courts are miles apart.

"If the system is objectionable to judges or attorneys, we will change it or abandon it," Baldwin said. "But we hope to give it the full six-month test and continue with it."

THE EXPERIMENT will take place at the Center, formerly Pontiac State Hospital, with the consent of the State Supreme Court, which sets rules for lower courts.

According to Oakland's chief probate judge, Norman R. Barnard, the project is a long way from being implemented. Judge Barnard said planners were still waiting to string the cable that will connect the Clinton Valley Center and the courthouse.

And the judges, he said, were trying to determine where television monitors will be located in the four probate courtrooms.

Despite the approval of the Supreme Court, probate judges have not given the experimental project their full backing.

Judge Barnard said the bench is split. "Some judges are concerned," he said, "with matters of due process."

"They are afraid that the person's right to confront the 'expert witness' will not be protected if the use of television monitors is allowed. They want to know," Judge Barnard said, "if the person has the right to demand that the witness be present in the courtroom."

Witch Watch

by GUNDELLA



Chinese 'life lock' assures many years

"A friend of mine is planning to open a boutique soon and has been shopping for rare and unusual items with which to stock her shop. She recently returned from a jewelry show in New York, laden with very expensive, authentic antique Chinese jewelry. She brought these things to my home to show me — and I couldn't resist buying half her stock.

Among other things I now own are a very ornate silver container that once hung suspended from the belt of a Chinese doctor sometime before 1850. This ornament, which I wear on a cord around my neck, was originally used to carry acupuncture needles.

THERE ARE RINGS, beautifully painted porcelain balls, fingernail guards and hair ornaments made from kingfisher feathers — all centuries old.

One necklace has an elaborately carved hollow silver dragon on it. Supposedly, a spirit lives inside this dragon. When you wear it, the spirit helps you travel painlessly and joyfully from this life into the next.

My favorite piece is a Chinese life lock. This is a rope of green soapstone beads, to be worn around the waist. When properly tied, it "locks" in your life, insuring you longevity.

On one end of this rope is a beautiful ornament — quite large, about three inches across — made of breathtaking white jade. Carved on one side of this is a fish, the symbol of life, and on the other side some Chinese letters.

I ASKED A Chinese friend to read them to me, and I learned that this particular life lock was made as a wedding gift and wished the original owner double blessedness.

On the other end of the soapstone rope hang two shiny, silver shepherd bells to ward off evil spirits; a little silver horse, a symbol of prosperity so that you may ride rather than walk through life; and two silver melons, which symbolize the Chinese wish for newweds: "May you have as many children as there are melons in the field."

I think I'll remove the melons and give them to one of my children on his or her wedding day. Then I'll tie the life lock around myself and live to a ripe old age, enjoying all those grandchildren.



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