

Testimony on Death—

Victim Suffered Epileptic Seizures

ANCHORAGE — Violet Arrow had a history of alcoholism, but a physician's report suggests she was not drinking prior to death at the Alaska Native Medical Center.

The report, written by Dr. F. J. Phillips, said the 52-year-old woman did suffer epileptic seizures on the day of her death. Phillips is a consultant to the

Social Development Center, where Mrs. Arrow had been undergoing detoxification treatment.

She had been having "various types of seizures during the day," he wrote.

"Early this morning, she had a typical grand mal epileptic seizure . . . She does not have the odor of alcohol on her breath," Phillips wrote. He also noted an apparent hip fracture and bruises on the back of her head.

Conflicting reports from the ANMC indicate she was treated as an out-patient, but did not give the diagnosis of physicians.

Anne Bowen, counselor coordinator for the SDC, was with Violet Arrow prior to her death. "She looked pretty sick and was lying down in bed," Bowen said.

"She appeared to not be able to rise from her bed . . . she looked very ill and did not appear intoxicated. She had no alcohol odor about her."

Mrs. Arrow wanted to go visit her daughter, a patient at the ANMC, but Bill McDowell, director of the SDC, agreed with Bowen that Mrs. Arrow should

(Continued on page 6)

Testimony on Death . . .

(Continued from page 1)

be admitted as a patient.

SDC personnel said Mrs. Arrow had an epileptic fit prior to being brought to the hospital; yet less than two hours later the hospital advised that she did not need hospitalization.

McDowell said Mrs. Arrow appeared very weak on the evening of April 4 and her condition had not changed on April 5, so when the ANMC personnel sent her back to SDC, the SDC personnel returned her to the hospital. Finally, on the evening of April 5, she was admitted to hospital. A short while later, she was dead.

Cause of her death has not been made public, since the autopsy report is not yet complete and that information is being withheld.

But the attitude of the PHS Survivors Committee, which brought the protest to a head, was perhaps best summed up by Charles Pedro, a private consultant on Native Affairs who has his office at the ANMC.

"There is no basic cause or reason why Violet Arrow should

have been refused medical help and admitted into the hospital," he wrote in an opinion given the District Attorney's office.

"The fact that Violet Arrow was considered intoxicated because she was laying on the floor, when, according to the medical doctor's report (from the SDC physician) she could not stand up because of a bone fracture - brings more questions to mind.

"I believe that Violet Arrow would be alive today if she had been given the proper medical attention. She was refused care on the basis that there was no space, no beds and that she did not need medical care. Yes, she was a chronic alcoholic, but she also was a human being," Pedro said.

The District Attorney's office meanwhile, is investigating the case, trying to determine if there was criminal malpractice in treating Violet Arrow and if so the case may be handled the District Attorney or must be turned over to federal authorities.