

Big Case Load, VISTA lawyer Runs out of Funds

By LAEL MORGAN
KOTZEBUE — Legal Services in Alaska has always had a low budget but their Kotzebue office beats all this month. VISTA

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PAMELA AND HER DOG ADA IN TENT

lawyer Pamela Herman has moved to a tent on the edge of town. "If the wind isn't threatening to tear it apart, I can hear the mosquitos hurling themselves against it. But it could be worse," she says stoically. "I don't want to leave." The head office of Legal

Services in Anchorage has decided the Kotzebue branch must be closed, at least temporarily, for want of funding.

"I am sure they're not making it up. Legal Services is very poor. Getting poorer ever year," Miss Herman observes. "And even

those who want to move it say it's only temporary. But this is an area where people are just beginning to know how to make use of an attorney. It seems like a terrible time to leave."

In 1972 a VISTA lawyer was first stationed in Kotzebue but eventually the caseload was moved to the Nome office. Later an attorney was back in Kotzebue, then moved up river to Kiana.

"People just never know whether there will be a lawyer here or not," notes Miss Herman, who replaced the Kiana man, basing again in Kotzebue. "Certainly it's hard to work the Kotzebue region out of Nome. I tried it for a while, but the two regions are very different."

"It's hard to get through to Kotzebue on the phone. The only way to get messages to people in the outlying villages is through the radio station and if you can't call KOTZ on the phone from Nome, that's it. Also, it's very expensive to travel to the villages from there."

When Miss Herman first took the Kotzebue caseload last March there were 40 cases, mainly family matters; adoptions and divorces. Now there are more than 100. For a time there was a para-legal to help but she had to leave and so the VISTA lawyer carries on alone.

Her first office was the Kotzebue Fish Co-Op.

"Now I'm in the teacher's lounge of the BIA school. That's a step up. At least there's a light at the school."

But the lease runs out in August and so does the funding for Miss Herman's part time secretary.

"The main office is allowing me to try and raise money to stay but will take about \$30,000."

At the moment, Miss Herman's salary is not a problem for it is paid by VISTA but in October her tenure with them is up and,

because VISTA, too, is short of funds, that agency doesn't feel it can spare another lawyer in Kotzebue.

The needed \$30,000 would be for the salary of a regular attorney, secretary, office upkeep, library and travel.

The city fathers are well aware of the problem and several of them including the city manager (a woman, so I guess we'll refer to her as a "city mother") approached this reporter hoping the Tundra Times would help.

Also concerned is NANA, the Kotzebue regional Native corporation particularly since much of Miss Herman's work concerns disputes over Native land allotments. However there is some question as to whether NANA, chartered as a profit-making corporation, could legally support a Legal Services office, and the region's non-profit organization doesn't happen to have \$30,000 handy at the moment.

Until last week Miss Herman had a home, for the service of babysitting a large dog. Now the owner has returned, reclaimed the dog and house, and the lawyer has moved to a tent borrowed from VISTA rather than pay expensive rent, so she will have a larger travel budget for village work.

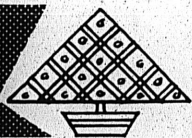
Unfortunately her big dog Ada tried to come through the side of the tent, making a large hole, which means that Miss Herman will have to purchase the tent from VISTA . . . a month's rent.

Also Ada is pregnant and, Miss Herman fears, her pet has been indiscriminate in the choice of a father for her brood so she may have trouble getting rid of her puppies.

With winter ahead the whole project could get pretty grim but Miss Herman isn't giving up. This week, encamped in cold and fog and a bit mosquito bitten, it's business as usual.

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Jerry Lewis Telethon

This year 193 television stations have signed on to air the 10th annual Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon to benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA).

"This is the largest number of stations ever assembled for a single humanitarian fund-raising effort," according to Mr. Jack Murphy of Fairbanks, member of the Executive Committee of the Alaska Chapter of MDA.

Last year 174 stations broadcast the Labor Day marathon spectacular.

"These stations, which Lewis calls the 'Love network', cover the entire country — the continental U.S., Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Guam," Mr. Murphy said. "Last year, more than 75 million Americans saw the Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon, contributing more than \$16 million for MDA's research and patient services programs, an all-time telethon record."

Lewis, MDA's National Chairman for 25 years, had high praise for the members of his "Love network." "By participating in our Labor Day Telethon, local television stations bring to the communities they serve an awareness of the desperate needs of those MDA serves and, by doing so, perform a tremendous public service," Lewis said.

"Community involvement," Lewis said, "is what made last year's Telethon the greatest success ever, and brought in the money that has helped us intensify our research effort and expand our patient services program. I'm hoping for a still greater measure of community involvement this year — and even

wider support for our programs."

Mr. Murphy pointed out that in Alaska, MDA maintains a clinic at the Alaska Treatment Center in Anchorage and a well rounded recreational program for the patients.

The 20-hour Labor Day Telethon will originate from the Del Webb Hotel Sahara Space Center in Las Vegas. Lewis and his "anchorman" Ed McMahon will begin the supershow at 10 a.m. on Monday, September 1, and carry on through early Tuesday, September 2.

In the Fairbanks area, the Jerry Lewis Telethon will again be broadcast by station KFAR-TV, Channel 2.

Fairbanks NSB Bicentennial Commission

The Fairbanks North Star Borough Bicentennial Commission will be keeping a calendar of Bicentennial activities planned through 1976.

Clubs, organizations, groups or individuals who are scheduling events are asked to call Bob Morton, 452-2181 days or 452-4268 evenings. A calendar of Bicentennial events will be published monthly.

The Borough Bicentennial Commission will try to fill all requests for speakers, information or assistance.

Everyone in the community is urged to participate and adopt the local slogan "We're in Gear for Our 200th Year."