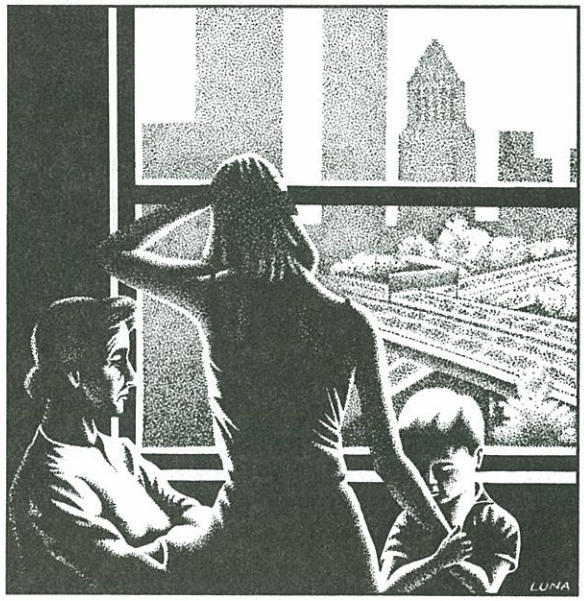
County DIGEST

SEPTEMBER 15, 1994 COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

HOME WAR

Domestic Violence: Occupational Hazard of the Housewife



The leading cause of injuries to women between the ages of 15 and 44 isn't car accidents or industrial accidents occurring away from the safety of home. It's abuse by husbands and partners, behind the closed doors of those "safe" homes, according to the U.S. Surgeon General.

Since 1988, the FBI has consistently reported that each year, almost one-third of all female homicide victims in America are killed by a husband or boyfriend. In 1990, the American Medical Association reported that number to be 50 percent.

In Los Angeles, recent media attention on domestic violence has sparked shockwaves across the nation, shining a bright light on an issue that continues to plague our society, reaching epidemic proportions.

On June 21, Supervisor Burke won approval from the Board of Supervisors to convene a multi-agency panel of domestic violence experts to study the scope of the County's domestic violence problem and recommend what can be done about it.

District Attorney's Report Alarming

"Every nine days, the District Attorney's office is filing a domestic violence homicide case. We need to determine what steps this County can take to curb spousal abuse, whether it's perpetrated by a man or woman," says Burke, whose panel includes representatives from the District Attorney, Sheriff's Department, Probation Department, Department of Children's Services, Los Angeles County Commission for Women, Domestic Violence Council, Los Angeles City Attorney's office and the Judicial Procedures Commission.

The panel presented the report, "Domestic Violence: The War on the Home Front" to the Board of Supervisors on July 26, revealing just what panel members feared–domestic violence is on the rise at an alarming rate.

According to the Los Angeles Police Department, the number of domestic violence incidents investigated have more than doubled from 19,418 cases in 1986 to 42,698 in 1993, with felony arrests in domestic violence cases dramatically increased from 4,871 in 1986 to 7,858 in 1993. Domestic violence is costly.

(see "Violence," page two)

Charlie Sherman: Solution Man

When the force of the Northridge earthquake burst a crude oil pipeline in Tujunga Canyon, sending an out-of-control oil flow down the canyon, Charlie Sherman solved it within 72 hours. And when Monterey Park resident Dora Esquer was involved in a collision on the Pomona Freeway, Charlie comforted the shaken woman within moments of witnessing the accident. Whether at work or in his personal life, Charlie is a man in search of solutions.

As August's Employee of the Month, his dedication to the environment has earned him the reputation of "hazardous spill clean up expert" in his role as construction superintendent for the Department of Public Works. Charlie's ability to track down 95 percent of the sources of hazardous and non-hazardous spills has translated into a savings of almost $3 million per year! His ingratiating demeanor has helped him when the time comes to approach those responsible for the spills, maintaining an impartial outlook on each situation.

(see "Sherman," page two)

"It's my nature to work hard," says Charlie Sherman, receiving his award from Supervisor Burke.

Mission Possible

Anthony Hernandez: New Coroner

Heading up America's third largest coroner's department is a mission possible, states Anthony Hernandez, the County's new Coroner. After all, he's had 22 years to prepare for it.

Born at the LAC+USC Medical Center just yards away from the window of his new office, Hernandez began his career in public service in 1972, following an 18-month Army stint in Vietnam. Hired by the Coroner as an intermediate clerk, he has served in a variety of positions, including account clerk, staff assistant, personnel officer and interim director.

Following a national search, Hernandez was handed the helm permanently by the Board of Supervisors on July 12, 1994.

"Working here has certainly been an ongoing baptism, given the often controversial nature of our work, but the past 11 months as interim director surely gave me added experience in the budgetary and administrative operations, overseeing a staff of 145 and an annual budget of $10 million.

Knowing the ins and outs of the department helped Hernandez apply his management style, using "strong fiscal controls, effective communication, and empowering managers to do their best by being respected as individual experts."

"Our department has persevered over the past four years to attain a new level of credibility, both internally and externally. I plan to further that credibility to adapt to new challenges and service needs of the community," he explains.

Although the County's first Coroner's office opened in 1850, there are still organizational challenges facing the department. Hernandez says he will focus on "dealing with the demands of an ever-growing population," citing the staggering 18,000 cases handled last year, including a ballooning homicide caseload of 2,200.

"I'm looking at restructuring resources, creating a national model for the computerization of all Coroner records, improving communication, increasing revenue and, most crucially, enhancing interagency relationships," he says. "Now I'll have the chance to put my ideas into action."

Like most County departments, the Coroner's Department is fraught with mind-boggling statistics and a constantly overloaded workforce, and mounds of forensic paperwork to support the multilevel lab analyses, public document services and other special programs.

Recently, the Coroner's memorabilia marketing campaign has captured national media attention with its sales of t-shirts, mugs and other items reflecting a macabre sense of humor. Profits benefit a court-ordered program for youthful drunk drivers.

Hernandez admits it's "not a glamour job, but a rewarding one to help this department get its mission accomplished."

Hernandez resides in El Sereno with his wife and two daughters.

Sherman

(continued from page one)

While his job takes him all over the County, often at odd hours, inspecting underground flood control channels, maintaining pump plants and responding to hazardous spills, Charlie still finds time to help others.

After hours, Charlie assists his brother as administrator of four "Sherman Family Homes" which provide shelter and care for abused children.

This 32-year County veteran was also named as the 1994 Public Works Employee of the Year.

Violence

(continued from page one)

Domestic violence costs Americans $44 million a year in the treatment of battered women and children, according to the National Crime Survey. And more than 175,000 paid workdays are missed by abused women.

"In recognition of the tragedy that often occurs as a result of a domestic violence incident, the Sheriff's Department has adopted the policy of handling domestic violence calls as a 'priority' and our personnel respond to family violence calls without delay," says Sheriff Sherman Block.

The report recommended increased agency recognition of the issues of family violence and the need to tract the actual impact of these issues on Los Angeles County. At the top of the list is the victim's safety.

"Victims of family violence look to us to help them find a way out. By working cooperatively with every County department, we can provide innovative and real solutions to family violence," says District Attorney Gil Garcetti.

Sadly, the report highlighted the fact that most victims do not report the incidents to the police for fear of reprisal from the offender – usually their husband or boyfriend.

Employee Disaster Assistance is on the Way

Following the January 17 earthquake, the County implemented employee response policies including paid leave for earthquake-related absences and negotiated service-connected overtime, and provided all employees with information on available disaster assistance to help in their recovery. Now, a multi-department Employee Disaster Assistance Task Force, supported by the Emergency Management Council, has adopted several employee assistance programs for activation immediately following the next event.

As a first step, each department will identify an Employee Disaster Assistance Coordinator (DAC) to be trained to direct affected employees to available County and other support services following a crisis, and to help implement Task Force proposals over the next several months.

One proposal establishes a communication strategy to ensure that employees receive information about facility closures, reporting requirements and other personnel issues. Currently, the Auditor-Controller's wallet-size emergency information card is provided to all department employees listing central phone numbers which, while utilized as business phone lines on a daily basis, are activated with emergency instructions as needed.

The **Digest** will keep you up-to-date on new program developments.

Auditor-Controller Al Sasaki displays emergency information card with its creator, Steve Shirvanian

Employees Campaign to Help Others

"The American tradition of helping one another reaches across people of all ages and pursuits. County employees have tangibly demonstrated their generosity and the belief that providing for the needs of our communities is everyone's responsibility," says Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, campaign chair.

Last year, the County's annual Community Support Campaign raised over two million dollars for programs benefiting our local youth, aged, sick, mentally ill and homeless.

This year's campaign began September 6 and concludes November 18. Campaign partners include the Asian Pacific Community Fund, Brotherhood Crusade, Earth Share of California, Los Angeles Women's Foundation, United Latino Fund and United Way.

County employees are encouraged to voluntarily make a one-time contribution or sign up for the payroll deduction plan. For more information, contact your departmental campaign coordinator.

DIGEST NOTES

Welcome to DIGEST NOTES, a new column featuring short items of interest. Share your ideas with Kristina Balian, Digest Editor, at (213) 974-2449.

Digest Update —

Former LAC+USC Medical Center public relations coordinator Kristina Balian debuts as managing editor of the Digest in this issue. Larry Welsh left County service in June to pursue graduate education at the University of Texas in El Paso, after serving as managing editor for four years. Balian brings 13 years of journalism experience to the position.

That's an Order—

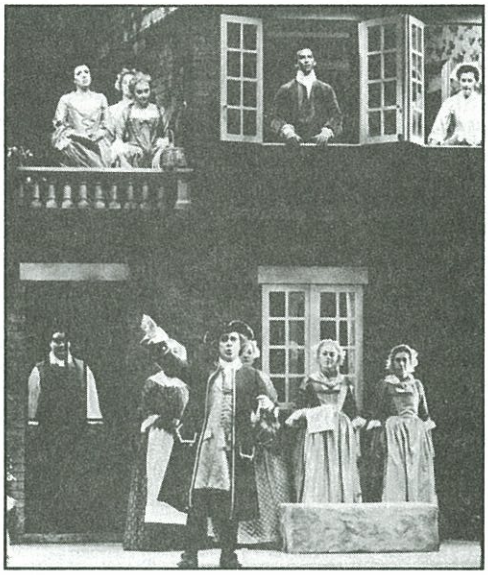
California's not just looking for a few good men and women, but an additional 1,000 veterans from all branches of the military. That's the magic number needed to place the order for 5,000 specialized license plates honoring our state's vets. Proceeds from each $30 set will help provide services for California's 2.9 million veterans, including local expansion of services to LA County vets. Plates will be issued on October 15. To order a set, call the County's Department of Military and Veterans Affairs office at (213) 744-4841.

Quality 2000—

Celebrate National Quality Month by participating in the Quality Forum X, a three-hour teleconference broadcast live over 1,500 locations in North America, part of an annual public awareness campaign focusing on the importance of quality and continuous improvement. Sponsored by AT&T, Ford Motor Company, FORTUNE magazine and the American Society for Quality Control, the conference promises a strong message of quality practices in both the private and public sectors. The broadcast will be shown in downtown Los Angeles at the Department of Health Services auditorium at 313 N. Figueroa on Oct. 25, 10:15 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. **Contact:** Jan Pollard at (213) 267-3101.

Join the new LA Opera County Employees Club

County Night at the Opera is Back!



For just $10, County employees can join the L.A. Opera County Employees Club and receive one ticket to the dress rehearsal of XERXES, a delightful comic opera by George Frideric Handel, along with a special discount ticket offer to George Gershwin's PORGY AND BESS presented in June 1995. For $20, employees will receive two tickets to XERXES, and families can join for $30 and receive four tickets, including the discount to PORGY AND BESS.

Called "engaging" by Newsweek magazine, XERXES will be presented on Wednesday, October 26, 1994, 7:30 p.m., at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. Lorraine Hunt, Gwendolyn Bradley and Brian Asawa lead the billing, fully staged by Stephen Wadsworth, to the music of the Los Angeles Center Opera Orchestra and Chorus, conducted by Roderick Brydon. The opera is sung in English with English supertitles, so you won't miss a word of the delightful story!

For more information, call (213) 972-7219.

Yes, I wish to join the L.A. Opera County Employees Club. I understand that benefits of membership include tickets to the dress rehearsal of XERXES on October 26, 1994, and a discount ticket offer to a performance of PORGY AND BESS. Enclosed is my check or money order made payable to the L.A. Opera for:

Individual Membership(s) x _____ @ $10.00 each = $_____
(Each individual member receives one ticket to Xerxes)
Family Membership(s) x _____ @ $30.00 each = $_____
(Each family membership receives four tickets to Xerxes)
Total Enclosed: $_____

_____ We plan to purchase the buffet dinner for $11 per person in the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion's Grand Hall before the dress rehearsal of XERXES. (This is for catering estimates only and does not constitute a reservation.)

Name_____ Dept._____

Mailing Address_____

City, State, Zip Code_____ Telephone_____

Mail this card and your membership dues to: Los Angeles Opera County Club, Los Angeles Opera Music Center, 135 N. Grand Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90012

Lisa Doyle displays a painting she created in the ABLE/Art from the Heart program.

Art from the Heart —

People with psychiatric disorders are budding into talented artists, thanks to staff at the Department of Mental Health's **ABLE/Art from the Heart** project aiming to help clients cope with life's stresses through art. Using multi-media, clients develop artistic skills, building self-esteem and a mastery of their environment. The ABLE program is the first integrated service program directly operated by the department as a model for managed mental health care. An upcoming art exhibit will unveil a variety of works on Friday, September 30, 2-6 p.m., at Harbor/UCLA Medical Center in Torrance. For more information, contact Belinda Ajili at (310) 222-1648.

County DIGEST

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