

Audit Calls For Improvements in County Jail System

by Jerry Garner

A recent audit done by Multnomah County Auditor Anne Kelly Feeney, of the criminal justice system, reveals what critics of the system have been voicing for some time. That is, the criminal justice system is flawed when it comes to managing the jail's population, and that agencies within the system do not share information adequately with each other. The audit came to the following conclusions:

- The manner in which the criminal justice systems are organized contributes to the inefficiency of jail population management information systems in Multnomah County and is organizationally flawed.
 - The most significant issue concerning the management of jail space is the absence of a single individual or function held responsible for the management of the criminal justice/corrections system. Since it is neither practical nor desirable to have a single person in charge of all aspects of the criminal justice system, other efforts are needed to better coordinate the various system activities.
 - Correction functions are fractured and disjointed with some functions assigned to the Department of Justice Services, and others to the State. The Circuit and District Courts, operating under different procedures, appear to add to the confusion of the programs. Consolidating all County corrections functions under one manager should be evaluated.
- Feeney went on to say in the report that "effective administration of jail space in Multnomah County will worsen unless attention is given to issues discussed in the audit."

The report indicated that some offenders who are admitted and released from the County jail could be diverted into other correction programs; that mentally ill inmates occupying jail space could be treated

at secure treatment facilities other than the jail; some inmates could be diverted into programs while waiting trial, instead of waiting in jail; State prisoners who are held in the County jail could be transferred to State facilities; and that agencies within the correctional system do not share information adequately with each other.

The audit said the County jail space could be better utilized by a general overview of the composition of the in-custody population, which

can provide correction administrators with a framework for managing the jail population. This can be done, the report said, if correctional officials utilize the Corrections Population Management System's computer (CPMS). Saying that CPMS could assist corrections officials in determining what inmates could be released pending trial by providing specific background information on individual inmates.

Furthermore, the report recommends that County officials seek a

change in ORS 144.343. This statute allows state parole violators to be held in County jails. The audit said, "relief from the State in this area could relieve some pressure on the County corrections facilities."

The report also concluded that the orderly processing of offenders through the criminal justice system was delayed because of inefficient flow of information among all agencies. "While efforts have been made to improve communications among all agencies, we believe that

more efforts are needed to unify or network the automated data systems."

There are nine different automated data management systems used by various justice, corrections, and law enforcement agencies in the Portland metropolitan area. These nine agencies are not linked to allow data to be shared, resulting in neither data nor management information being transferred from one system for use by another system or agency.

The audit recommends that the systems be integrated and working before the County courts are added to the State system in 1989; that a justice services data consortium be established to explore the possibilities of interfacing the various criminal justice data systems.

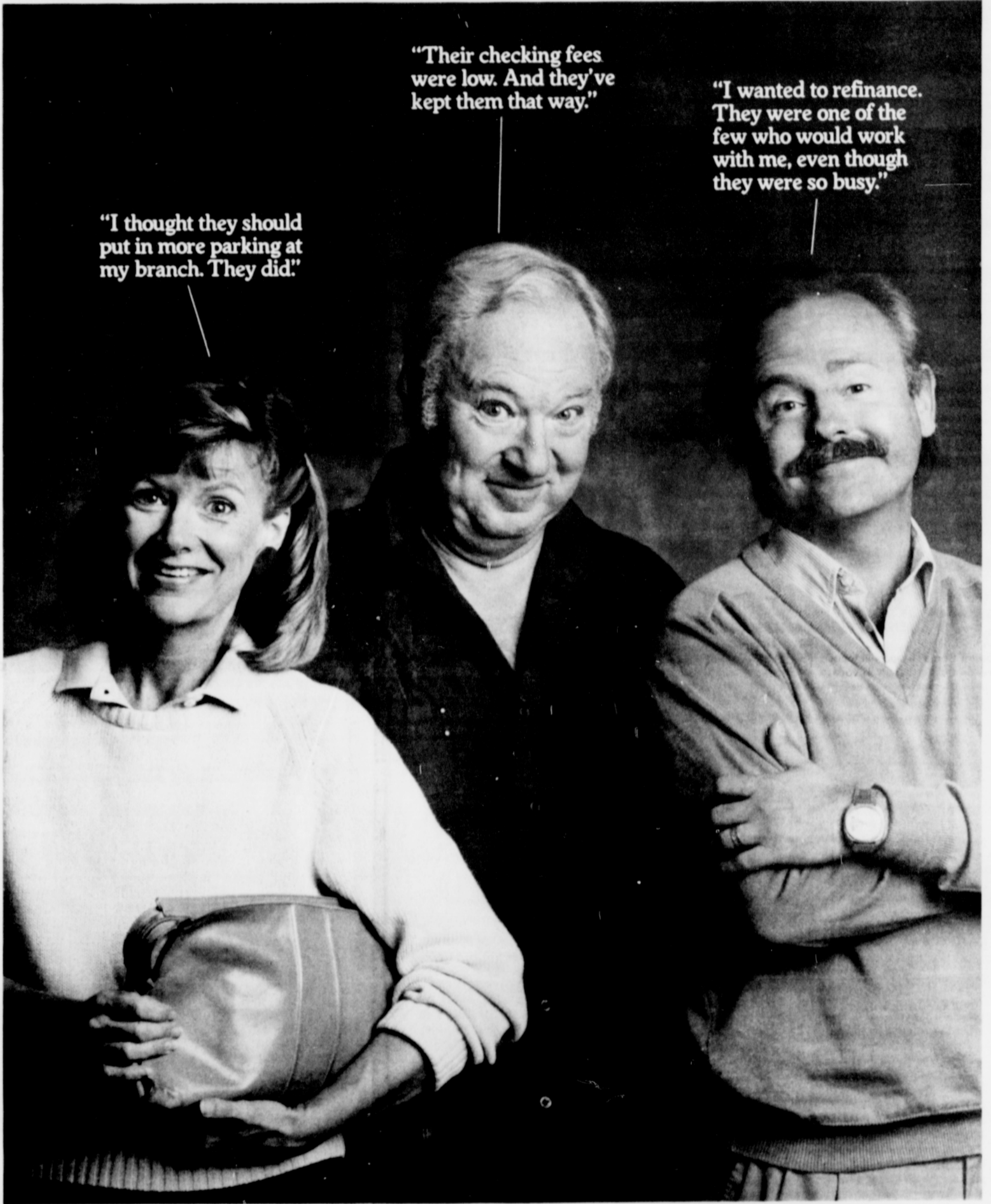
The audit was the first part of an audit the Board of County Commissioners requested by resolution in July, 1985, in an effort to improve the State and County criminal justice information systems.

Brush Up On Fire Safety

October 6-10 is Fire Prevention Week. This is a good time to sit down with your family and devise a fire escape plan. Develop two ways to get out of each room. Part of your escape plan should include a meeting place outside to determine if everyone has gotten out of the house safely. Stage a series of fire drills at home so that you all can practice leaving the house from various exits. Draw your fire escape plan, showing both exits from your bedroom, on a piece of paper. Tape it, and the safety tips below, to the back of your bedroom door for quick reference.

- Do not play with matches; they are not toys.
- Remember to unplug hair dryers, irons and other appliances after you're finished using them.
- Do not use the stove without permission. If you are cooking, make sure potholders, paper towels, or dishcloths are never placed near the flames.
- If you are alone in the house when a fire starts, do not try to call the Fire Department from your home. Get out of the house immediately, go to a neighbor's house, and then call for help.
- In case of fire at night, touch your bedroom door before going out. If it is warm, use the alternate escape exit.
- In case of fire, do not try to take any possessions with you. The most important thing is to get out of the house immediately. Shout to notify other family members if you think there is a chance they don't know about the fire.
- If your clothes ever catch on fire, do not run. Stop, drop to the floor, and roll.
- If you cannot get out of your bedroom or another room due to fire, do not hide. Close the doors to hold back the smoke, then go to a window and call for help. Wait there until a firefighter sees you.

Spray furniture polish over hard-to-clean ashtrays, such as those made of silver or pewter, before using. The ashes dump out without sticking and leave no odor.



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