

Successful Probation Program Depends on Person's Desire

By JOE COWLEY
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A successful probation program stems from a sincere desire within each person to make good, John Darby, area parole and probation administrator, said last week.

"Probation does not mean leniency," Darby pointed out. "It's a clearly defined program covering each individual placed under our department's supervised program. They receive guidance and counseling so they may gain an insight into their personal problems," he explained.

"The key to the program is the hard-working district parole and probation officer," he noted.

Key To Program

From the standpoint of the courts, the key to the program is selectivity. Each judge must carefully sift through material presented him in requested pre-sentence reports on each man's background. They must then weigh and evaluate these facts to see if the man would make a good probation risk.

Granting probation is considered from the welfare of both the individual and general society, Darby said.

"Many people confuse the terms parole and probation. Probation is a judicial act stemming from the courts which suspend a sentence pending good behavior. The judge is the only person who can take the probation away from an individual.

"Parole is an executive act. It originates with the parole board. A person on parole has spent part of his sentence in a penal institution like the state penitentiary, the Oregon Correctional Institution, or a county jail," Darby said.

Important Social Agency. Darby is a big Irishman and looks like a prize-fighter. His soft, deliberate speech and thoughtful manner seem to contradict this. As administrator for the regional parole and probation office, he is a director of what is becoming an increasingly important social agency.

His office supervises the activities of a district supervisor and eight fieldmen. They in turn keep constant supervision over nearly 500 men and women on probation or parole in Lake, Klamath, Jackson, Josephine, Douglas, Coos and Curry counties.

Darby's office is one of four such regional offices in the state. Others are located at Pendleton, Portland and Salem. Salem has the central parole and probation office. H. M. Randall is state-wide director. The regional offices are further subdivided into district offices.

Too often the parole and probation officer is characterized as a tough, hard-boiled person who is just waiting for the parolee or probationer to slip so he can push him into prison.

Former Occupations. This is not true. The staff of the state board of parole and probation, for instance, may consist of a wide cross-section of former occupations such as school teachers, social workers, and policemen, to mention a few. They are schooled in modern approaches and treatment techniques.

These men refer to their charges as "clients." They use unmarked cars when calling on them, and are careful not to approach their clients when other than the immediate family is around. The goal of the parole and probation officer is to get his assigned case-load through their respective programs and to prevent further crimes against the community.

Like the early-day FBI agents, they never carry guns. Often exposed to certain physical dangers, they are capable of handling themselves in tight situations.

Referring back to his explanation of probation, Darby emphasized that the Jackson county courts all "do a generally excellent job" in deciding who should or should not be on probation. In fact, this is the rule for southern Oregon courts, he added.

"Most of our probationers are a social problem rather than a true criminal problem," Darby continued. "They may be socially disorganized, immature and emotionally maladjusted in many areas of their community living. We call on all the community agencies and resources to aid in this. It's everyone's responsibility to help rehabilitate the community's offenders."

What happens when a man goes on probation?

Often the probation officer takes charge of the probationer, usually at the county jail, and brings him to the local office. Then he is assigned a probation officer. All records and the resulting interviews are kept confidential.

"It's important for us to get

to know each individual's limitations—to get a personality profile—to learn how he may react under specific conditions. We explain the conditions of his supervision.

"These conditions of probation are not for punishment. They serve merely as a guide and are conducive to average living," the regional supervisor explained. "Probation is a two-edged knife. It cuts for the individual and for the community."

"While a man is on probation he is contacted in his home and he reports to the parole and probation office. If the probation officer places a man in a job the officer will confer with the employer too. Otherwise, he is not interfered with while on the job. In most cases employers are understanding and helpful.

"There is a terrific emotional aspect to probation. It's not just one person we all have to deal with. We also consider mothers, wives, children and various members of the family who usually suffer the most from the misdeeds of the offender. All these people help the probationer to become re-

established in his community and assume his responsibilities as a good citizen, husband and father," he said.

Darby explained that probationers are treated as individuals. The strong and weak point of each are considered and the probation program shaped to fit. Some individuals with a comparatively low intelligence undergo a more intensive program. This requires constant reviewing on basic points, the need to complete a successful probation period and be a useful citizen.

"We don't expect the same degree of success from everyone. But each man must help himself. He must be willing to pull himself up. We can't work with a man who sits back, folds his arms and seems to say 'make me! Straighten me out!'" Darby noted.

"This is more than just a job to the probation officer. He puts in as a rule extremely long hours. He wants his clients to make good. This type of service is not motivated from just a job standpoint," Darby said.

How successful is this program?

Official figures show 85 per cent of the probationers successfully complete their probation periods. Many of the 15 per cent who fail default on technical violations, they fail to follow the terms of their probation and choose not to respond to the probation officer's counsel.

No Official Figures

No official figures are available on how many again become a threat to the community and are returned to court for sentencing, but Darby feels the total is relatively small.

To the taxpayer this means considerable saving. It costs about \$1,400 a year to keep a man in a penitentiary. Supervision costs are about \$200 a year per individual.

"And remember this," Darby declared, "only the parole and probation failures make the headlines. We can't tell about our successes, the citizens who have returned to their rightful places in the community. Even though we would like to shout them from the house-tops."

Southern Oregon Police Officers Help Washingtonian With Problem

Picture yourself in this predicament:

You and your four children are driving from the state of Washington to California. It is late at night. You have just pulled up to the California Fruit Inspection station, and suddenly discover that you have lost your wallet or purse, containing all your money and gasoline credit cards.

You haven't the slightest idea where you lost it—you aren't even sure in what town you lost it.

You have no money for gas or lodging. You are hundreds of miles away from the nearest friend or relative.

Where do you turn?

Mrs. Billie Dett Williamson of Seattle, Wash., found herself in this predicament Wednesday night, and she turned to the Medford police department for help.

She picked a busy night, but they didn't let her down.

Mrs. Williamson walked

into the police station about 9:30 p.m. and said that an hour earlier she had discovered at the California state line that her purse was missing. She was nearly out of gas and was desperate.

She said she thought she lost the purse at a gas station in Medford, but after looking around the city, she couldn't be sure.

Police determined that the woman had probably lost the purse in Grants Pass, rather than Medford, but the woman hadn't enough gas left to get there.

Neither could the woman remember what kind of gas station it was, since she had stopped only to let her children go to the restroom.

Medford police, who are often accused of being heartless, bent a sympathetic ear, and the night desk officer got on the police teletype and asked the Grants Pass police department to check with the filling stations in their city to see if the purse had been left at any one of them.

Grants Pass police obliged

and not only contacted the open ones, but when they found nothing at these, they also contacted several closed filling stations, in some cases getting the operators out of bed.

Finally they found the right one, a Richfield station. Sure enough, the purse was there, with all the money and credit cards intact. Grants Pass police advised Medford police that they had it, and wanted to know what to do with it.

Medford police then called state police and again related the woman's story. State police too, were sympathetic to the situation and agreed to have one of their officers pick up the purse in Grants Pass and return it to the woman in Medford.

This was done, and about 2:20 a.m. the woman again had her purse in hand and resumed her trip, thanks to some southern Oregon police officers who were willing to do just a little bit more than their jobs called for.

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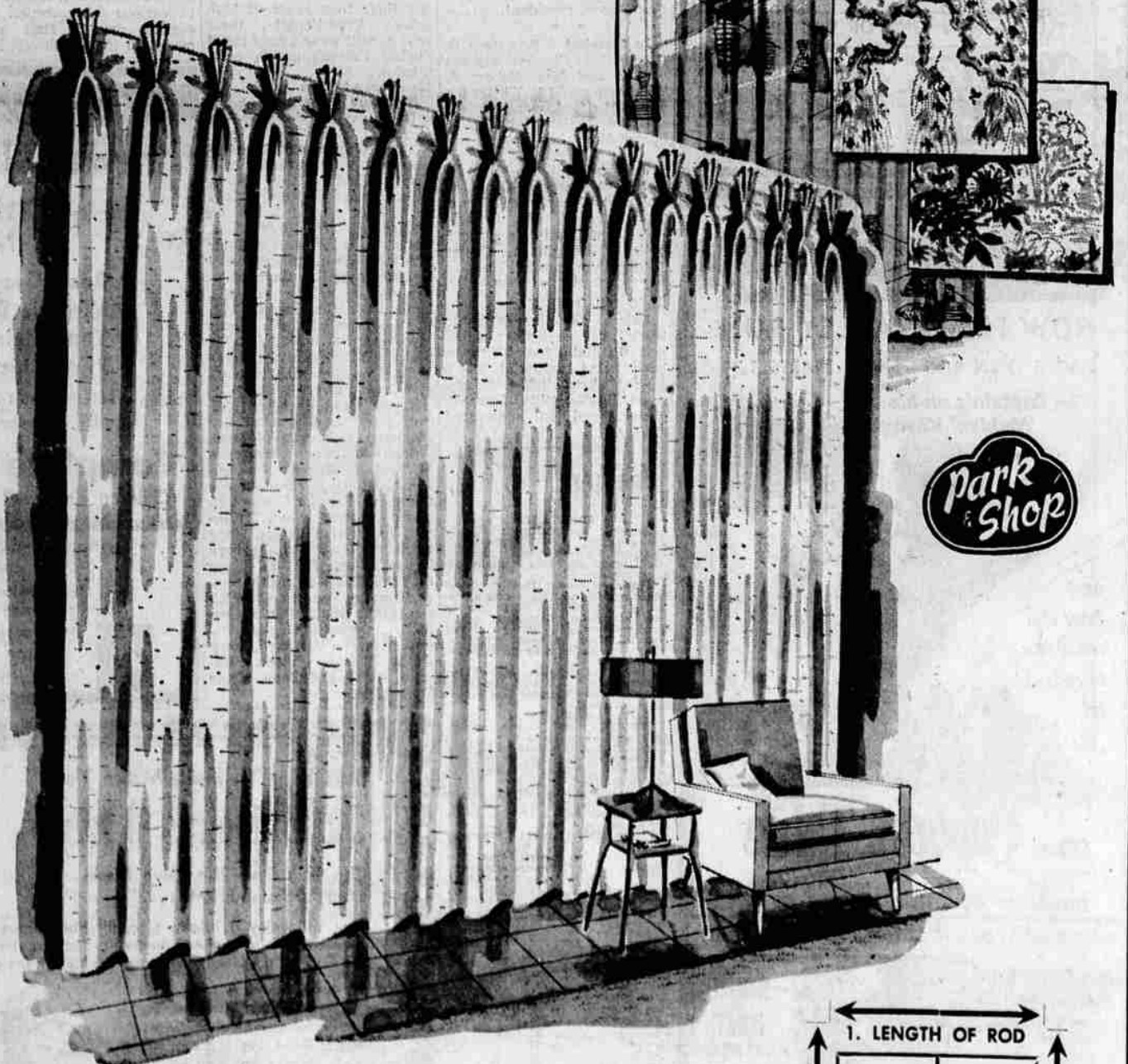
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