

OUR LEADERS OF TOMORROW

By George A. Burns

Name: Lizzie Hatcher

Occupation: Attorney

Aim: "To be the best family law attorney in the nation!"

She's young, gifted, female and black! In fact, she's a rare species of woman indeed. She can consider herself, and in reality she is, one of the rare, young female black lawyers in the Southern Nevada community.

She's Lizzie Hatcher. The upcoming newest addition to the brilliant



legal minds here in the Las Vegas community.

Hatcher, whose legal specialty is that of a family legal counsel, started off her career by working in social programs. It was from that work that she became interested in law.

The attorney has always had a deep and genuine interest in our youths. In fact, one of her ambitions, and a goal of hers is to one day be the sponsor, creator and founder of a counseling center that would deal primarily with youths who feel that they have no other place to go. "At this type

of center," Hatcher explained, "they can come here and get guidance without the fear of being put down and reported to the police. Also, it would be the type of organization that would encourage our young to be just what they want to be."

The young attorney, who is married and the mother of two children, was born in Houston, Tx. She was raised in Homer, La. by her aunt, and went to Grambling University. There she majored in psychology. She's been a resident of Las Vegas since 1975.

After her arrival in Las Vegas, Hatcher worked for T.A.S.C. (Treatment Alternative to Street Crime). There she was a counselor. As her interest in law grew, stemming from her association with the social program, she decided that she would pursue a legal career. She attended Law School at Southern University, located in Baton Rouge, La. She successfully took her Nevada Bar Exam in August of 1982 and was admitted in January of 1983.

As a black female attorney, Hatcher was asked if she incurred special problems in her career. "Well," she explained, "you always have to be super prepared. Many think that being a woman attorney, you're naturally meek, mild, humble and very easy to get along

with. But that's not always the case." Hatcher continued on by saying with a smile, "There's been a time or two when the opposing attorney has told me that he'd never underestimate my female abilities."

The advantages of being a female attorney. She quickly answers, "Well, whenever you walk into a courtroom, everyone knows you're there, plus the attention derived at social functions."

In response to the question as to what she felt to be the "right and wrongs" of our criminal justice system, Hatcher elaborated on the latter. "It seems to be as though the system is extremely slow in prosecuting known criminals." "Also," she continued, "there is a lot of emphasis placed on the sale of drugs. There, as a result of this crackdown, there's a multitude of arrests on street criminals. Now while this is all well and good, and arrests of this nature should be taking place, nothing is done or said of the "real pushers." It stands to reason that if there is an eliminating of drugs coming into the city, then local street pushers are also contained."

As far as the "rights" of our criminal system, Hatcher briefly stated that, "even though the system's not necessarily equally related to certain groups, it is equal to both male/female in regards to criminal justice."

Hatcher noted that her aunt who was the "emotional stronghold" and a major influence in her life, instilled in her qualities such as compassion. She said that her aunt often reaffirmed to her that "with God's help, you can do

Our Criminal Judicial System — What's Right and Wrong With It Part VI

The Criminally Insane

By George A. Burns

Today, lifetime lock-up of the criminally insane is relatively rare. The mental hospital population as a whole stood at 600,000 in 1955; now it totals one-fourth as many — 150,000 — thanks to a massive shift from institutional care to outpatient treatment. The trend toward earlier release was spurred by the discovery that drugs could control aggressive behavior. Further momentum came from lawsuits by inmates seeking freedom at the earliest possible moment.

Does acquittal by reason of insanity or a finding that a person is mentally incompetent to stand trial result in lawbreakers getting off easily? The public clearly

anything." (She noted that her aunt died just 14 days after she graduated from Law School.)

What's Lizzie Hatcher's greatest ambition and goal in life? Politics? "No," she retorts. "Simply to be the best family law attorney in the nation."

Her advice to aspiring future lawyers: "Start studying when in high school, and learn to write." Why is writing so important, she was asked. "To get through it and afterwards, whether one passes his or her bar exam depends upon their ability to write," she says.

When it's all said and done, what would Lizzie Hatcher like it to be said of her and what she was all about. "She was a good person, a loyal friend and an excellent attorney," she concludes.

thinks so. University of Delaware researchers found that 87% of those polled after the Hinckley verdict believed that the insanity defense allows "too many guilty people to go free."

In fact, those who successfully plead insanity rarely avoid a post-trial stay in a mental hospital. Yet, studies suggest that they tend to spend less time in custody than those sent to prison for similar offenses. A New York survey found that lawbreakers sent to mental hospitals remained an average of 533 days — 300 fewer than persons in prison.

Unlike a penitentiary term, the length of a hospital stay depends more on the diagnosis of an inmate's condition than on the crime. In Washington, D.C., those acquitted because of insanity and sent to St. Elizabeths Hospital, where Hinckley is being held, are kept an average of 4½ years. Still, individual terms vary widely. Comments Joseph Henneberry, a hospital administrator: "A postman who abandoned his mailbag ended up here for 18 years, but a woman who killed her husband was released after 18 months. Justice was served in both cases."

Some insist that at least as big a problem as the premature release of dangerous persons is the overlong detention of others who are sick but harmless. The Supreme Court ruled in 1972 that Indiana went too far in holding a man three years as "incompetent" in two robberies involving \$9.00.

The Mystery of Madness
At the root of the difficulty: Psychiatrists cannot reliably measure whether an inmate has overcome a propensity to violence. He might act oddly but never do harm again. Or he might give the appearance of normality and then suddenly erupt into a murderous rage. What's more, legally sane suspects at times have successfully feigned insanity, and some deranged persons are crafty enough to hide their aberrant traits from examiners.

Scholars even disagree about what constitutes mental illness. The most common diseases associated with lawbreakers are schizophrenic, manic depression and paranoia. These people have delusions or mistaken beliefs and many have lost touch with reality, explains psychiatrist Loren Roth of the University of Pittsburgh. Roth says that violent persons known as sociopaths or psychopaths, who "have no regard for other persons and their rights but are coherent and know what they're doing, often are incorrectly classified as mentally ill."

Studies have found that more than one-third of the lawbreakers discharged from mental hospitals are rearrested — a recidivism rate as bad as that for the criminal justice system as a whole. Health officials maintain that only a small fraction of these cases involve serious crimes, but there are enough spectacular cases to bring the system under fire. In one such case a man was released after a short stay in a Massachusetts hospital, only to murder

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