

PEND OREILLE COUNTY DISTRICT COURT

1999 ANNUAL REPORT



THE YEAR IN REVIEW

During 1999, a number of changes were implemented to improve court operations:

- License Restoration Program A license restoration program was started to assist drivers to reinstate suspended licenses while paying fines.
- Judge in the Classroom The judge, a former elementary teacher, and court staff are available to work with educators in the classroom and the courtroom. For example, one class attended a criminal first appearance and small claims hearings after presentations by the judge and prosecutor.
- Courthouse Security At the request of the District Court, the Administrator for the Courts in Olympia provided a security audit of the Hall of Justice. Initial security improvements were implemented. Further improvements are needed.
- Marriage Civil marriage ceremonies are provided in district court without fee during regular court hours.
- Community Information The District Court Criminal Process pamphlet by Judge Van de Veer was made available to the community and published in Watchdogs. A District Court information station was set up at the Newport Library outlining court history and current operations. Judge Van de Veer manned a District Court information booth at the 1999 Pend Oreille County Fair.
- Probation Compliance Defendants on monitored probation are checked with increased frequency for compliance with conditions of probation. A separate probation violation docket was started to review alleged violations and impose suspended sentences when necessary to protect public safety. Show Cause Probation procedures now include initial review by the prosecutor to preserve judicial neutrality.
- Court Schedule The district court schedule was expanded to five days a week. Court forms were updated to comply with state judicial requirements. The customer service window now remains open during the noon hour.
- Jury Selection Jury selection is now done using the more efficient "struck" system. Jurors who appear receive individual thank you letters upon completion of service.
- Warrants All outstanding warrants were reviewed to discover and quash any improper or unnecessary warrants.
- Court Recording/Conference System A conference call system was installed allowing court proceedings with long distance witnesses and attorneys. Also, a new court recording system with high quality microphones was installed. The courtroom furniture was cleaned and refurbished. Cost of all improvements under \$4500.00.

CASELOAD OF THE COURT

District Court caseload increased 31% in 1999 with a total of 3501 criminal, civil and infraction filings. Court filing totals for 1997-1999 are as follows:

CRIMINAL MISDEMEANOR & GROSS MISDEMEANOR

	1997	1998	1999
DUI/PHYSICAL CONTROL.	129	147	167
OTHER TRAFFIC	272	234	372
OTHER MIS-DEMEANORS	473	432	476
FELONY COMPLAINTS	6	15	110
TOTAL CRIMINAL	880	828	1119

CIVIL CASES AND INFRACTIONS

CIVIL CASES	178	139	161
SMALL CLAIMS	49	49	59
TRAFFIC	1658	1550	2107
NONTRAFFIC	7	9	35
PARKING	123	97	14

TOTAL CIVIL/CRIMINAL FILINGS

CIVIL/CRIMINAL	2895	2672	3501
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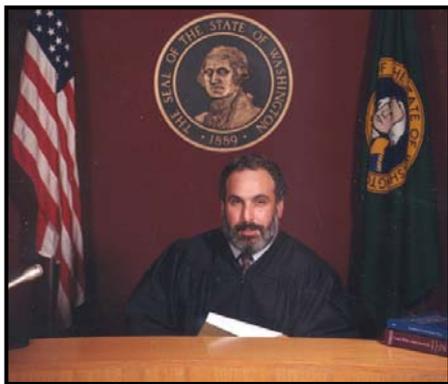
Other Traffic Offenses include DWLS, negligent or reckless driving, hit & run, no valid license.

Other Misdemeanors include assault, resisting, obstruction, disorderly conduct, trespass, malicious mischief, theft, poss. Marijuana/paraphernalia, violation N.C.O., animal cruelty, fish and game violations.

Felony Complaints are now initiated in district court due to judge availability.

VIEW FROM THE BENCH

Judge Philip J. Van de Veer



I began my duties as district court judge under difficult circumstances after the resignation of the former judge for judicial misconduct. My primary objective has been to improve public confidence in the judicial system by conducting court operations in a consistent and open manner.

The year 1999 has seen improvement in court operations without major problems. This was accomplished with tremendous help from Court

Clerk Claudia Krogh and the district court staff as well as cooperation from the local bar and community.

Although I practiced law for a number of years and trained lawyers at Gonzaga School of Law, this was my first judicial appointment. Therefore, I completed the judicial college program for district court judges and for superior court commissioners offered by the Office of the Administrator for the Courts. I have also taken advantage of individual mentoring and support from experienced judges and court administrators around the state. I continue my involvement with the O.A.C. as a member of the Rural Courts Committee with the District and Municipal Court Judges Association.

The primary challenge for 2000 will be handling an increased caseload with a reduced budget. Fortunately, initial budget cuts were accomplished without layoffs. This is important because district court clerk duties have become complex, technical and computerized to meet state data requirements. It takes upwards of two years on the job to fully train a court clerk, and there are no college programs available. The retention of experienced clerks directly benefits all who need the services of the district court.

I would appreciate your written comments on how district court operations can be improved. Send comments and suggestions to Pend Oreille District Court, P.O. Box 5030, Newport, WA 99156. I look forward to serving the citizens of Pend Oreille County in the coming year.