An Equal Opportunity Official's Job Is About

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The phone rings in a Housing and Urban Development Equal Opportunity office and an official takes the call.

The caller says:

"My wife and I need an apartment. We've tried a dozen listings given us by our housing officer. Each place the result is the same — nothing. The apartment has just been rented. Or our credit rating is questioned. Always something!"

OFFICIAL COMPLAINT

The caller is an army captain, just back from Vietnam, on a training assignment in Washington before going to a new post. He has a wife and three children who have been waiting for his return for nearly two years.

He is Black.

The Equal Opportunity official takes down the information on the man's experience and registers it as an official complaint of housing discrimination prohibited under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968.

PRESSING PROBLEM

The most pressing problem is to help the family find housing.

A call is made to the HUD regional office or a FHA insuring office, with contacts in the locality, to help the man break through the color barrier and find a place to live.

Beyond that, the Equal Opportunity Office investigates the facts, and where a violation is shown, takes action against the landlord or owner.

HOUSING MARKET

It may be that the apartment really has been rented, or that the rent was too high for the man to afford.

But usually repeated turndowns in such cases mean run-arounds that violate the law. Time-honored prejudices and discriminatory practices persist in the housing market.

However, HUD's Equal Opportunity program is interested in changing attitudes and practices, not merely punishing violations.

CONCILIATION PROCESS

It not only investigates the facts, but undertakes to convince or persuade the landlord or owner to change his ways.

This is the conciliation process called for under the law.

If this fails, court action may be taken either by the complainant, or if a violation under federal law is found, by the Department of Justice.

ENFORCEMENT OFFICES

While many complaints go directly to state or local fair housing enforcement offices, complaints filed with HUD have steadily increased as its services become better known.

Nearly 1,000 complaints have been filed and reviewed by HUD.

More than 600 have been or are being investigated, with the others either referred to a state or local agency or found not to be covered by the law.

COURT ACTION

Conciliation efforts have been successful in almost 100 cases, and are still being processed in a number of others.

Sixteen of these complaints have been referred by HUD to the Department of Justice for court action because a pattern or practice of discrimination was found to exist.

In addition, some 27 individuals have taken their cases to court.

EQUAL HOUSING

HUD does not expect to be able to eliminate quickly racial discrimination, embedded in the housing market.

Equal housing opportunity is not only the law. National policy now recognizes that free choice of housing is an essential part of every citizen's rights in a democracy.

The 1968 Civil Rights Act became fully effective in January. One rule now applies to all. There is no longer an advantage to be gained by one developer over another by restrictions based on color or race.

GOOD HOUSING

Seeing that citizens rights under the Fair Housing laws are observed is only one part of the Equal Opportunity Administration's work.

It is also concerned with expanding the total supply of good housing through the Department's programs so that there will be enough of the types needed to make free choice a reality for everyone.

This calls for positive actions and policies to bring all resources, including those of minorities, to bear on meeting housing needs.

ALL PHASES

It means advancing equal opportunity in all phases of the programs that HUD administers, including equal employment and participation in housing and urban development.

In practical terms, equal opportunity means that a poor man should not be forced to live in the ghetto because there is no other dwelling open to him.

It means that a minority citizen should not find himself automatically excluded from a long list of jobs.

URBAN AREA

It means that the minority businessman should be supported and helped to invest and participate in the development of the urban area where he lives.

It means that the inner city resident should have the right to follow his job to the suburbs where many industries are going — be he white, Mexican-American or black — and be able to find a place to live near his new job site.

In addition to this responsibility, the Office of Equal Opportunity is structured to meet both the program responsibilities of HUD and to carry out the provisions of non-discrimination statutes.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT

In the central office, its Office of Housing Opportunities includes the Fair Housing operations.

An Office of Contract Compliance and Employment Opportunity enforces equal employment statutes and helps to develop minority job and business opportunities.

Special staffs are concerned with the application of the Civil Rights Act to HUD's various program activities.

SHORT SUPPLY

All these program offices are repeated in the regional offices under an assistant regional administrator for equal opportunity.

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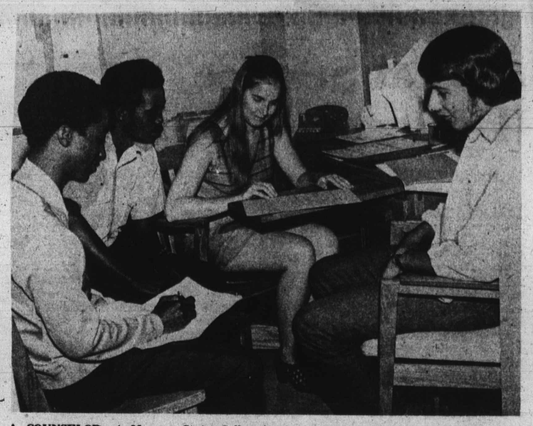

A COUNSELOR at Morgan State College, Baltimore, Md., discusses new program of-ferings at the institution with first-year students. Under the administrative direction of its new president, Dr. King V. Cheek, Morgan State is taking a good, hard look at its freshman program and proposing a new plan of education that will take a multilinear approach to the problems of undergraduate education.

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Former Enlisted Man Makes LCDR in Medical Service Corps.

OAKLAND, Calif. — An atmosphere of service-oriented informality, mutual respect and friendship prevails in the Oakland Naval Hospital Outpatient Service Administrative Office, where Lt. Com. Allen L. Woods, Medical Service Corps, U.S. Navy, supervises a staff of 30 military and civilian personnel.

LCDR Woods reported to the hospital in July 1968 as an administrative resident, rotating through the various divisions, to satisfy the requirements for his master's degree in health care administration at George Washington University where he had studied for two years under the Navy's auspices.

He received his degree June 8, 1969.

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Since then he has served as administrative assistant to the chief of the outpatient service, where 29,000. men, women and children are seen in an average month.

Interpreting Navy regulations and policies, counseling naval personnel and their dependents concerning government medical insurance programs and helping people resolve their health care problems are the commander's major tasks.

"Dealing with people, having the opportunity to help them and frequently to see the results of that help, make my job a most gratifying one," said the soft-spoken, yet forceful 37-year-old officer.

NOTHING NEGATIVE

"I have never liked to say 'No,' and there's nothing negative about this job. We let the problem dictate the action, but in almost every case, I am able to help people get the help they need."

In a small conference room adjoining his office, LCDR. Woods may be observed talking with a mother and her children about the dental care they may obtain through CHAMPUS, the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services.

Al Woods had graduated from high school in his birthplace, Saline, Mich., and completed three years of premed study at the University of Michigan before he enlisted in the Navy as a seaman recruit in 1954.

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

One of eight children of a Ford assembly plant worker, he had had a wealth of practical experience.

As a boy, he delivered newspapers. As a young man, he worked summers as truck driver, salesman, and delivery man for Saline Mercantile Co.

He also washed cars and worked as general handyman for Weldman's Ford Garage in Saline.

WORKED PART TIME

During his years at the university he worked part time at Ypsilanti State Hospital, overseeing working patients in general cleaning and food services.

His Navy career began with Boot Camp at Great Lakes, Ill., and Hospital Corps School in Portsmouth, Va.

From his first duty assignment at Naval Hospital, Key West, Fla., he went to Okinawa with the Third Marine Division, to the Naval Dispensary at Camp Pendleton, thence to Naval Hospital, San Diego, for Laboratory Assistant School.

FIRST ASSIGNMENT

His next tour of duty was in the California desert at the Station Hospital, Marine Base, 29 Palms. Another tour at Camp Pendleton followed.

It was in 1963 while serving aboard the destroyer USS PURVIS that Hospital Corpsman First Class Woods was commissioned in the Medical Service Corps.

His first assignment after commissioning was as administrative officer in the neuropsychiatry service at Naval Hospital, Philadelphia.

NAVY COMMENDATION

Versatility is a must in the Medical Service Corps, and so it was no great surprise to Al Woods when he was ordered to Vietnam as medical supply officer for the Third Marine Division.

For his performance of duty there he received the Secretary of the Navy Commendation for Achievement.

"With resourcefulness and ingenuity, LCDR. Woods supervised conversion of six Viet buildings into warehouses and offices.

ASTUTE GUIDANCE

"Under his astute guidance, the accounting for and requisitioning of supplies was mechanized, using procedures compatible with the Marine Corps Supply System," the commendation read.

"Uncommon foresight, outstanding initiative, professional skill, and selfless devotion to duty," were phrases used to describe Woods' handling of his Vietnam assignment.

Returning stateside, LCDR. Woods entered the Naval School of Health Care Administration, Bethesda, Md., and the studies leading to his master's degree.

LCDR ALLEN L. WOODS counsels a servicman at the Oakland (Calif.) Naval Hospital Out-patient Service Administrative Office. The Lieutenant Commander, Medical Service Corps, U.S. Navy, is supervisor of the administrative office of the Oakland Hospital's outpatient service.

—Equal Opportunity

(Continued from P. 56)

Construction workers of all kinds — electricians, plumbers, iron workers, pipefitters, operating engineers — are in desperately short supply.

Millions more will be needed over the next 10 years if the nation is to meet its 24 million housing goal.

COMPLIANCE REVIEWS

Operating under executive order 11246, which calls for equal employment opportunity in Federal and Federally-assisted programs, Equal Opportunity officers consult with contractors who are seeking HUD-assisted construction contracts to develop affirmative action plans for the employment of minority craftsmen.

EO then periodically conducts compliance reviews to determine whether or not the contractor is living up to his plan.

Recognizing that compliance activities alone cannot dramatically increase the trained labor supply, Equal Opportunity has recently launched a Jobs and Business Development program for area residents in HUD-aided projects.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The goal of this program is to implement Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968 to give residents the fullest possible opportunity and training for employment and business participation in the development of federally-aided projects.

The program is designed to provide training opportunities for thousands of low-income area residents who are eager to enter the building trades but have been denied the opportunity.

Similarly, HUD business development specialist are designing programs to assist the small entrepreneurs.

KNOW-HOW NEEDED

There programs will help them obtain the management skills and contracting opportunities they need to mature into contractors, architects, planners, real estate brokers and housing managers — the kind of know-how needed to develop and manage the millions of housing units the U.S. must build.

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