January 13, 1987

Dear Referee:

Happy New Year! If you are like me, the year started off with a bang when you saw your first paycheck in 1987. Mine was considerably meatier than the last one for 1986, due to decreased federal income tax withholding. I always knew we should get paid more for working as hard as we do, but I never imagined that a break from Uncle Sam would be the means.

Along with the paycheck came the new "simplified" form W-4 and instructions which take at least 4 times as long to read and understand as the old "complicated" W-4. Working from the theory that, if it looks like I get more money, it can't be right, I double checked my math when I came up with the results showing I should take even more exemptions. Utterly panicked when I reached the same result, I went to the IRS office in Grand Rapids this morning to ask for some help. I show the form and my calculations to the representative of the IRS, and explained why I was worried; the representative agreed that my calculations looked okay, and agreed I was probably worried. I left wondering why I had made the trip. Perhaps there is something about government service to causes us all to look our individual gift horses in the mouth.

I hope that your tax wars are less traumatizing than mine, and on that cheerful note, I give you now:

REFERENTIAL_NOTICE (#7)

BOARD NOTES: The board met on December 2, 1986 and magical Frankenmuth, Michigan, and took the following action:

1. Approved an expenditure of $250.00 to be spent for refreshments at the upcoming Referee Seminar.

2. Authorized the President to inquire of the State Court Administrative office concerning available liability insurance coverages, to express our concern, generally, regarding ethical standards for Referees, and to request guidance in these areas;

3. Approved the addition of Colleen Steinman, Ulysses B. Hamann, Dee VanHorn, and Ron Bockholder to RAM's mailing list;

4. Bid the President to respond to Brenda Wagenknecht-Ivey's
request for seminar ideas (we gave her 4 general areas of interest);

5. We learned from Linda Hallmark and Laura Bernard of their office's plans to train clerical staff here in Grand Rapids in basic law on April 29th thru May 1st. Linda has asked Howard Finkel (President of the Friend of the Court Association) and me to help publicize this conference and the organizers remain open to suggestions on comments respecting the program and speakers. Financial support for the program or hospitality functions will apparently not be refused. Check with Linda Hallmark or Kittie Fairbrother of the Oakland County Friend of the Court office for further details.

Our next board meeting will be on Tuesday, April 7, 1987 in Grand Rapids at 11:30 a.m. with the site to be announced by me at a future date. Please mark your calendars if you think you can attend as you are all cordially invited.

CORRESPONDENCE: The following correspondence may be of interest:

1. I received a really thoughtful thank you card and note from Wanda Raich, for the retirement gift RAM gave her. It read: "such a beautiful crystal vase! Such fond memories I shall recall when I use it for fresh flowers! Thank you all for your thoughtfulness and for your friendship! Fondly, Wanda." The Referee's Association and the Friend of the Court Association will both miss Wanda greatly.

2. I have received lively correspondence from Thomas Shumaker, an attorney who is a part-time Referee in Sturgis, Michigan. Tom is concerned over the lack of a definitive pronouncement on the meaning of a de novo review for his and other courts. He has copied me the letters of his Judge on this subject, as well letters to and from Earl Borrradaile (see Judge Borrradaile's letter in the October, 1986 Michigan "Family Law Journal") and Norm Robins. I have advised Tom that I am sure the topic will come up at the seminar in Battle Creek, and we will look forward to discussion on this continuing problem.

3. Ron Foon received a letter from Perry Bullard, Chairman of the Michigan House Judiciary Committee, requesting RAM's recommendations on an orderly procedure to appeal our decisions, and recommendations in other areas. If you have suggestions for legislative changes that may help a representative, please send them to me or any board member as soon as possible.

I will be traveling to Lansing twice this week, on Tuesday to meet with Catherine Davis of the House Democratic Research Staff to discuss with her, Friends of the Court, and other support professionals the effect of Section 9103 of the Consolidated Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1986 (COBRA), and appropriate state
legislation in response. Briefly, the COBRA section amends the "required procedures" section of the Social Security Act (42 USC 666 (a)), to require state procedures which will make any payment of child support as it becomes due become a Judgment by operation of the law, and make child support not subject to retroactive modification. Under the federal scheme, the state has until April 1, 1987 to pass such legislation, and the failure to do so could mean a reduction of federal funds. On Friday, I will be meeting with personnel of the Office of Child Support, as well as SCAO and other Friends of the Court, to discuss the proposed federal regulations governing interstate cases. The comment period for these regulations is open to February 2, 1987, and anyone interested should certainly comment to HHS.

I miss you all and look forwarding to seeing you in February!

Yours very truly,

[Signature]

Jan T. Ferrier, President
Referees Association of Michigan

JTF/plc