

Some Nursing Homes Jeer at Law

BY WILLIAM JONES
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Substandard nursing homes in the Chicago area have a remarkable survival record.

Despite long lists of public health violations reported by state and city health inspectors, they continue to have their licenses renewed each year, even after they have ignored second, third and fourth warnings to clean up their operations.

In other cases, where en-

Task Force Report

forcement action has been taken, the nursing home owners have gone to court and continued to operate for years while family complaints and health charges awaited a hearing before a judge.

One south suburban home

was given 10 followup inspections in an effort to get a passing mark from health inspectors. Its license finally was revoked, and it lost its status as a nursing home. One month later, the license was reinstated—with no record that the owner had corrected a single violation.

Find Dozens of Cases

THE TRIBUNE Task Force, working in cooperation with the Better Government Association, uncovered dozens of such examples in city and state health records.

The case histories of two nursing homes like these underscore the problems faced by health enforcement agencies and those inspectors who are making an effort to upgrade homes for the elderly.

State public health records

show that Largent's Convalescent Home, 4323 W. 147th St., Midlothian, first came under criticism from health inspectors in 1950. For the next 10 years, state files show that the home was repeatedly in violation of nursing home codes. In recent years, the home has had the following series of run-ins with inspectors.

Food Violations Reported

March 3, 1967—A county inspector listed 14 food service violations and recommended that the home not be re-licensed. The inspector noted: "This home has continued to deteriorate during the past year . . . there is a strong odor of urine, a lack of organization and qualified personnel and a lack of respect for human dignity."

May 4, 1967—The owner, Mrs. Fern Largent, was told by the state public health office to correct the violations. She also

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Some Nursing Homes Seem to Laugh at the Law

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was ordered to hire an administrator.

July 7, 1967—The home hired an administrator, but there is no record that any of the violations were corrected. The home was relicensed by the state.

Question Staff Size

March 14, 1968—A county inspector noted that despite her confinement to a wheel chair, Mrs. Largent continued to act as director of nursing. Apparently in an effort to show a larger staff, employee lists carried one person twice, and another who had quit. The home was not recommended for relicensing.

June 3, 1968—A reinspection showed that all violations had been corrected. The home was relicensed.

April 10, 1969—A county inspection indicated that the administrator hired in 1967 was not a high school graduate and therefore in violation of the nursing home code. Nine additional nursing care violations were found, and an inspector again recommended that the license not be renewed.

Orders Correction

May 1, 1969—Mrs. Largent was notified that she must correct the violations.

June 10, 1969—A followup inspection revealed 10 violations and the Medicare division of the County Health Department refused to grant a license. The same month, another inspection by the county concluded with an eight-page report of violations in all areas. A recommendation was made that the license not be renewed.

Nov. 12, 1969—An inspector noted in his report that the home had been operating since

June, 1969, despite nine inspections and reinspections. Mrs. Largent was given a 10th warning to comply.

Dec. 24, 1969—The state fire marshal discovered several fire violations.

Find Nutrition Faults

June 7, 1970—A county inspector noted numerous nutrition violations and recommended that a new license not be issued. There is no record that a 1969 license ever was issued. This report also shows that on last March 25 and May 11, the home failed its sanitation and nursing inspections and in both cases the inspector recommended that the license not be renewed.

July 10, 1970—The home was again instructed to correct its deficiencies. The owner also was encouraged to send her unqualified administrator to nursing home administration seminars.

Reduced in Status

Dec. 13 1970—A report from another inspector informed the Health Department that the home had failed its nursing inspection two years in a row. It also had failed its building inspection, and the home was ordered reduced from a skilled care facility to a shelter care home.

Jan. 11, 1971—The state fire marshal listed 17 fire violations described as "hazardous and dangerous."

Conditions Unchanged

Jan. 21, 1971—Six weeks after it was ordered to stop accepting skilled care patients, Largent's again was relicensed as a skilled care facility. There is no record that any of its nursing, building, fire or nutrition violations have been corrected.

William Hood, a B. G. A.

investigator, worked undercover in the nursing home in February and reported that conditions have not improved. Three dogs and four cats, all pets of the owner, have the run of the building and Hood found rodent manure in open food boxes in the kitchen storeroom.

One old man who can't control his body functions was yanked from his chair by a nurse's aide who stripped off his clothing in front of five other patients as the elderly man clung to his walker.

The case of the Ridge Manor Convalescent Home, 5883 N. Ridge Av., followed a different pattern.

Home Changes Name

Two license revocation actions and nearly four years of complaints, hearings and court actions have failed to close its doors. It is still operating, under the name Senn Park Nursing Center. The case began in January, 1968, when the complaint of a Northwest Side woman was brought before the license revocation board of the Chicago Board of Health.

Mrs. Jean Dimpfl, 4454 N. Central Park Av., testified that her father, Rice C. Cambo, 83, died in Grant Hospital as a result of the treatment he received at the nursing home. She also charged that her father had been moved from the home without family approval by Dr. William Becker.

Guiltily on Another Charge

Becker, who regularly treated patients in the home at the time, was suspended as a nursing home inspector in 1956 when the State Public Aid Department charged him with receiving thousands of dollars in kickbacks from drugs sold to

the state for use in nursing homes.

Becker also pleaded guilty last year in Federal District Court to seven counts of fraud in an ambulance-chasing racket and was placed on two years' probation.

Testimony by witnesses airing the Board of Health hearing indicated that Mrs. Dimpfl's father was thrown against a wall by a nurse's aide after he attempted to leave his room to get a cup of coffee. He was knocked unconscious, and within a few days an arm became swollen and infected, according to the testimony.

Mrs. Dimpfl said she then made arrangements to transfer her father to a hospital, but before she could act, Dr. Becker moved him to another hospital.

Their Efforts Fail

Finally, Mrs. Dimpfl succeeded in getting her father into her preferred hospital, where her family physician prescribed massive intravenous feedings in an effort to restore his health. Cambo died Dec. 30, 1967.

The family physician later testified at the hearing that he watched Cambo undergo a personality change while living in the nursing home, from a "high-spirited little man" to one who was frightened, withdrawn and often hysterical. Ten months after Cambo died, the Board of Health revoked Ridge Manor's license.

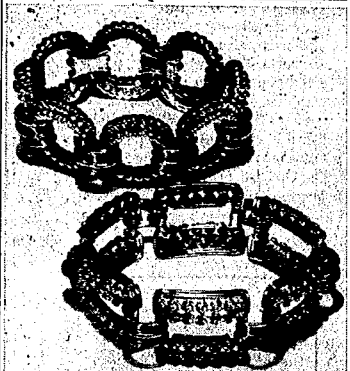
Approximately six weeks after it lost its license, the home appealed and received permission to continue operat-

ing while the appeal was continued for seven months in the courts. In March, 1969, Circuit Court Judge Edward F. Healy reversed the board's decision and restored the home's license.

Loses License Again
Mrs. Dimpfl, with the cooperation of the city corpora-

tion counsel appealed Healy's decision. Her appeal has received numerous continuances and is still pending.

While the appeal was pending, the home lost its license a second time for failing to report a serious case of infectious disease which had struck one of its patients.



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