

SEVEN DAYS IN THE MADHOUSE!

'Death Cup' Perils Kankakee Inmates

The ever-increasing problem of caring for the unfortunate insane as wards of the state of Illinois is little known to the public. To ascertain conditions, Frank Smith, TIMES reporter, former college football player and life guard who tips the scale at 200 pounds, was asked to do this series of articles. In addition to interviewing

officials and other persons interested in the problem, he undertook to spend a week as an inmate of the state hospital at Kankakee.

The story of his experiences and the statistics and other data he has secured should prove of interest to every citizen in the state as it is unfolded day-by-day during the next few weeks in the DAILY TIMES.

THE EDITORS.

By Frank Smith

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Common drinking cups—repugnant source of infections and disease—outlawed for a quarter of a century by the Illinois criminal code—shared with drooling-mouth cancer patient and "four plus" syphilitic.

This was one of the nauseous conditions I had to endure during my seven days in the madhouse. It was distasteful, but it was a necessary evil. I had a job to do. Sane, I had to share the fate of the insane. I realized all that, and was prepared to go through with my investigation of reported unsanitary conditions.

That's why I was frantic when I was recognized by an alcoholic patient from my own neighborhood in Chicago. All my planning, all my suffering so far, my whole investigation would come to an inglorious end if my true name were spoken before the assembled attendants and patients.

Florid-faced, dull-eyed, an unmistakable booze fighter, I had seen him innumerable times in neighborhood taverns. What could I do? To whisper a warning was impossible. Already other patients who had witnessed my turbulent entry the day before were gathering around to inspect me.

"What the devil are you doing down here, lad?" he asked me. "I remember you. You used to hang around Joe Bush's place up north. But I can't recall your name."

Reprieve! I was saved, for the time being at least. He didn't recall my name. Lucky break. But I must spar with him.

"Joe Bush's?" I inquired uncertainly. "Yeah. The name sounds sort

of familiar. But I can't place the joint. If it's a saloon, I've probably been there." I'm Johnny Ford. I forget your name."

"My name is D—," he replied. "Bill D—. I'm from up in that neighborhood. They tell me you're a bookie from up around Broadway—"

This was interesting to me. Everybody seemed to know my



(TIMES PHOTO)
Inmates of state hospital for insane at Kankakee are required to carry their own bedding and mattresses to lawn for airing, then return them to their beds.

business already. I was nonplused until I later learned the only identifying thing found in my clothing was a little red-covered notebook, souvenir of a certain northside handbook masking as a cigar store. Besides this, I was found to have dollar bills neatly folded and stuck in various pockets of my coat and vest. Some psychic Sherlock

Holmes probably deduced from this I was fresh from the black jack tables.

Bill D— later became quite friendly with me. He was an old alumnus of the hospital, and had taken "post graduate" work at Kilglin state hospital and at Keeey institute in Dwight, Ill. After a few

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7 DAYS IN THE MADHOUSE

'DEATH CUP' PERILS LIVES OF INMATES

(Continued from page 3)

months as a chronic alcoholic. He would tire of the campus and take "French leave." This was his fourth or fifth enrollment at Kankakee.

Allotted Bed with 11 Others

A bed was allotted me in a 12-bed room, airy and well-lighted. The floor shone from careful "swabbing"; pleasant designs decorated the light walls. The other 11 patients had arrived the day before on the state bus, after commitment by the Cook county court, following a week's observation at the Psychopathic hospital in Chicago.

My new roommates greeted me pleasantly. Most of them seemed rational enough. Down the room an Italian was singing a lullaby, and rocking his arms, pretending to soothe an imaginary child. His technique was faultless, but very inconsistent. Suddenly he would burst into uncontrolled laughter, and, forgetful of his imaginary bambino, grasp the rungs of the iron bed and shake them furiously.

Opposite me, in a bed with sideboards, lay a blond Englishman, whom we will call Fisher. He was doubly helpless. Unable to see, he was also unable to stand on his feet without falling. He was telling of his early life in Merrie England, while an alcoholic Irishman listened sympathetically.

Finds One-Armed Piano Player

In the bed next to Fisher rested Joe Gray, a Negro, who had just returned after making his third escape from the institution. One of his arms was hopelessly paralyzed, twisted into an unnatural position. During the days following, before Gray was transferred back to the ward from which he had escaped, he would at times display a remarkable talent for playing the piano.

Max Savoy and "Denny" Dennison, attendants, came in to look me over and say hello. I seemed to have become an attraction, after my display of "violence" the day before. Patients invented excuses for coming into the room to view me. Such is fame.

Sunlight, flooding the landscaped grounds, taunted me through barred windows. Denny tossed me a suit of pajamas more nearly approximating my measurements. Couldn't I have my clothes, I asked?

'No Clothes Until Monday, Ford'

"You won't get your clothes till Monday, Ford. They're over at the marking house being stencilled." "You mean," I exclaimed, "that I have to stay in bed here until Monday? I feel alright. Can't I go out and lie in the sun?"

Denny's reply was not very reassuring. "Don't you know where you are, Ford? You're in the nut house. You're sick. You've got to get rested up."

"Well, how about me having a smoke?" I hadn't tasted a cigaret since Louie L. had given me a drag of his while I was soaking in the hydro, the night before.

"Sure you can have a smoke. You see Mrs. Ray, when you came in. Go see Mrs. Ray, she'll give you your pack."

Thick Socks Help; But Then----!

I objected then to walking about socked, and was given a pair of thick cotton socks. They were not an ideal foot covering for padding about the floors of a nut house. I sought out Mrs. Ray in the hallway. A pleasant, capable woman, she understood my situation. Her eyes, during the days to follow, I developed a sincere respect for her manner in coping with trou-

DOCTORS' RESIDENCE AT KANKAKEE HOSPITAL



Neat and elaborate as a home in the country is the staff physicians' residence at Kankakee state hospital for insane. Read TIMES Reporter Frank Smith's description of the patients' side of institution.

blesome inmates. After I became acquainted with some of the old timers, I began inquiring about the different attendants and doctors. Mrs. Ray was recommended by one of the "boys" as eminently fair.

"She's swell," he told me, "but, boy, don't ever lie to her. That woman can read your mind."

"Please," I asked her, "can't I get my cigarets? I'm dying for a smoke."

"I guess you can have a smoke, Ford. Your things are all in the clothes room. Come along."

Gets Cigarets, But No Booze

From a cabinet in the clothes room she took a paper bag, containing my cigarets, my keys, dollar bills and small change. She watched me as I counted the money. Every penny was there.

"How do you feel this morning, Ford?"

"I've got the jitters. How's chances of getting a little shot of bourbon?"

"You won't get even a smell of bourbon while you're here. You'll get along without it. You don't know how to use it anyway, that's why you're here," she chuckled.

I tried to look sheepish. Smoking was permitted only in the toilet rooms. I couldn't have any matches, but someone would always have a light.

Before I surrendered my bag, I asked if I could shave myself.

Razors Taboo, Awaits Barber

"I'm sorry, Ford," she said, "but no one is allowed to touch a razor. The attendants will shave you twice a week. But you'll have to wait till Tuesday now. Tell me, do you ever hear voices whispering to you, when there's nobody around?"

"What?" I exploded. "Do I ever hear voices? I'm not that batty."

"Lots of people do, you know. Now, don't be surprised if you hear somebody talking to you during the next few days. You're not out of it altogether yet."

I was dumfounded. So they expected me to break out with the D. T.'s? I'd have to be pretty careful in my snooping around. Surely they'd be keeping a watch on me, to prevent my doing any damage if I were seized with another "violent" fit.

In the lavatory I was given a light from another's cigaret, and promptly when my fresh pack of smokes was seen, I was "bummed" for three fags. The room, crowded with smokers, fell far short of the ideal club lounge. But the first puffs of my smoke left me impervious to my surroundings.

A shrewd, gray-haired man ap-

proached me. "You look familiar, Ford," he said.

Another Buddy? It Gets Painful

"What," I thought, "another old buddy?"

I couldn't remember this one at all.

He identified himself. Worked for eight years as a barber at a Loop hotel. Managed a shop at one time for Joe Baiata, confessed conspirator in the attempted looting of the Amalgamated Trust and Savings bank in Chicago. Joe is serving time in Joliet, and his fellow conspirators, "Long Count Dave" Barry and Atty. Abe Karatz, have recently been convicted. I covered one of their trials. Maybe that's where the barber saw me.

Seeking a drink of water, I came upon one of the most flagrant violations of state law possible under modern sanitary conditions.

Public Drinking Cup Outlawed

The only means of getting a drink of water in ward A-1 of Kankakee State Hospital for the Insane, is by using a common drinking cup. This situation became increasingly repugnant to me as my seven days in a madhouse wore along. Patients who boasted they were "four plus" syphilitics used these cups to gargle out their mouths. One unfortunate inmate, who said he was suffering from mouth cancer, his tongue partly eaten away, was forever slobbering over one of the two cups in the lavatory. Another washed his false teeth in a cup.

Back in June, 1911, more than 24 years ago, an amendment to the Illinois Criminal Code was approved by the legislature.

Chapter 38, paragraph 165, of the Illinois statutes states: "It shall be unlawful for any person, firm or corporation, directly or indirectly, connected in any public or private

school, or in any STATE INSTITUTION . . . to use or permit for use a common drinking cup, glass or other utensil for public drinking purposes."

Paragraph 167, says further, ". . . nor shall any such person or corporation or institution use or have for use in or upon its premises any such drinking cup."

Saved from Cup by Dinner Bell

It was disgusting to me to have to use that same drinking cup. But maybe state laws don't mean anything to state officials.

While I debated with myself how long I could go thirsty before I would be forced to use the common cup, the dinner bell rang announcing lunch time. I returned to my bed, and was served presently by a tray laden "trusty." Hungry as I was, the meal had no appeal.

A tin plate, graced only with a spoon, was dumped onto my bed. A chunk of steamed beef and a starchy mess of unseasoned spaghetti, accompanied by a saucer of raisins, woefully lacking sweetening, were spilled onto the plate.

The meal was a gigantic flop so far as I was concerned, but in the insipid tea I gratefully found a solution for my problem of the repellent common cup. It quenched my thirst.

Repeaters Tell of 'Railroading'

Saturday dragged on endlessly, with a brief examination of my mouth by the dentist to break the monotony. The evening meal was served about 5:30, and having damned the luncheon as unsavory, I was at a loss to describe dinner.

A bowl of barley, which bore faint traces of having come in contact with meat juice, was the main course. Tea and bread and vapid prunes completed the spread. A glass of milk, that tasted like milk,

soothed my throat, still more from being choked during my "revolt" against the attendants the day before.

I lay in bed relaxing, listening to tall tales exchanged by the more lucid of my room mates. A couple of them were "repeaters." They knew all the angles of "Good Old Kankakee State." Somehow the talk turned to so-called "railroading" into sanitariums. As innocently as possible, I asked if it were true that anyone ever really was "railroaded"?

"Well," answered an alcoholic depressive, who looked like he popped out of a comic sheet, "you've seen this guy that was carrying the food in the one that takes care of Mr. Fisher? Oscar H. . . . If ever there was a man railroaded by his wife--there's the man."

Long after the lights went out at 9 p. m. I planned how to investigate Oscar's story.

Tomorrow Frank Smith recounts the story told him by Oscar H. who claimed he was "railroaded" to the madhouse by a scheming wife.

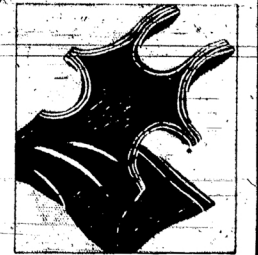
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