

Pawnee County Mental Health group says LSH attacks unfair

(Editor's Note—The following report was prepared by the Pawnee County Mental Health Association. The report seeks to clarify misconceptions that may have arisen from a series of stories written for the Wichita Eagle.)

We are writing in response to the recent articles on the Larned State Hospital in the Wichita Eagle written by Betty Wells. We realize that Miss Wells thought she was writing an expose but she lacked the experience and training to judge what was taking place around her at the hospital.

It is the opinion of this organization that Miss Wells has caused great damage with her articles to the patients in the hospital with an invasion of their privacy, and disruption of treatment, discouragement and fear for those seeking treatment, and for the destruction of the image of the mental health program. Several patients have been removed from the hospital against medical advice and are still sick. Their chances of recovery have been hindered because of these articles and the way they were written. This would be a terrible burden to realize that one person had denied sick people the opportunity for recovery and for a normal life for personal gain and to sell newspapers.

In Miss Wells' article mental illness is not accurately portrayed. Mental illness is not some mysterious malady that suddenly befalls the patient, rather, it is a set of conditions within the environment of an individual with which he cannot cope. This condition can be relieved with medication until the person can learn new ways of coping with the problems facing him. To the uninitiated or uninformed it would appear the patient was over-medicated, but such is not the case. The average person has no conception of the enormity of the patient's problems as they view them. To gain respite and relief requires enough carefully controlled medication to accomplish the task.

THE SAME IS TRUE OF seclusion, which is another phase of treatment, not punishment. This type of treatment allows the patient to escape the pressure of the environment to

regain his perspectives. We feel that the layman has no basis on which to judge the treatment of patients. Treatment should be subject to the judgment of the professionals as they have had years of training in this area and are not acting on the bias of ignorance in making their decisions.

The main purpose of the Larned State Hospital is to treat and return people back into society stronger than they were before they became ill. If you will check the records it will be found that the hospital has been doing an outstanding job in spite of many unnecessary handicaps. Let us not get carried away by sensationalism and opportunism.

One of the primary problems at the hospital is money, not enough of it. We are being penny wise and dollar foolish in one considers what the cost to society will be for ruined lives compared with the cost of treatment. There are at present forty-five to fifty vacancies at the institution due to low starting salaries. The people of the quality needed for these jobs are available if the salaries were realistic.

ON A BUDGET BASIS Larned State Hospital is allowed thirty dollars a day per patient, Osawatimic State Hospital is allowed forty-two dollars per day, and Topeka State Hospital is allowed fifty-two dollars per day for treatment per patient. It is our understanding that Larned State Hospital is treating more patients than were budgeted for and the other institutions are treating fewer patients than were budgeted for.

In addition we are one of the few state institutions that does not have a Director of Training and Research. Until recently the hospital has depended on federal funds for this service and has shared these funds with the Larned Community. It would be a tremendous help to have a state-financed continuing Staff Development Program for the Larned State Hospital.

It would appear that the reporter was merely writing about preconceived ideas about the hospital and wrote only about those things she saw that

would support her preconceptions giving a slanted and narrow view of what she thought she saw. We admit that there are conditions that need to be corrected and the hospital attempts to do this through a continual evaluation program.

In another recent article in the Wichita Eagle Judge Owens makes a reference that the mission of the addiction unit is to cure alcoholics. The goal is rather to have recovered Alcoholics as there is no such thing as a cured alcoholic. Any alcoholic is only one beer away from a life of misery and the only answer is learning to abstain. Larned State Hospital has been doing an outstanding job in this area.

WE FEEL THAT these attacks on the Larned State Hospital and the Larned community are unwarranted as we are very proud of the hospital and its accomplishments. The community of Larned has tried to be supportive of the hospital in various ways such as volunteer services, the establishment of a Halfway House and an employment program for the Alcoholic unit, a social hour for the patients shopping in Larned at the Methodist Church supported by the other churches. This is to name but a few of the things that are being done for patients by citizens of the community.

If these articles are a ploy to discredit Larned State Hospital and the community of Larned in order for Wichita to take this institution or a part of it to Wichita, we of the community should be fighting for the institution to save the investment the community has in the hospital and to save the investment the hospital has in the community. If we were to lose this institution to Wichita the city of Larned could become a ghost town along with the surrounding towns where many of the employees live. Many of the rural people who work at the institution would lose their jobs.

If there are conditions that need correcting at the hospital such as not enough staff pointed out by Miss Wells, we should help in anyway that we can to correct them, but let us not be sold out for the sake of selling newspapers and stealing an

institution from our community that is so much a part of us and so vital to our way of life.

The Larned State Hospital has cared for the community in various ways for many years and now is the time for the community to support the Larned State Hospital.

We are told that an investigating committee has been formed the majority of which are from Sedgwick County. We are very dubious about the outcome of this pending investigation to be conducted by those who may have an axe to grind.

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GREAT BEND TRIBUNE
Great Bend, Kansas
Wednesday, February 27, 1974

WORLD ALMANAC FACTS



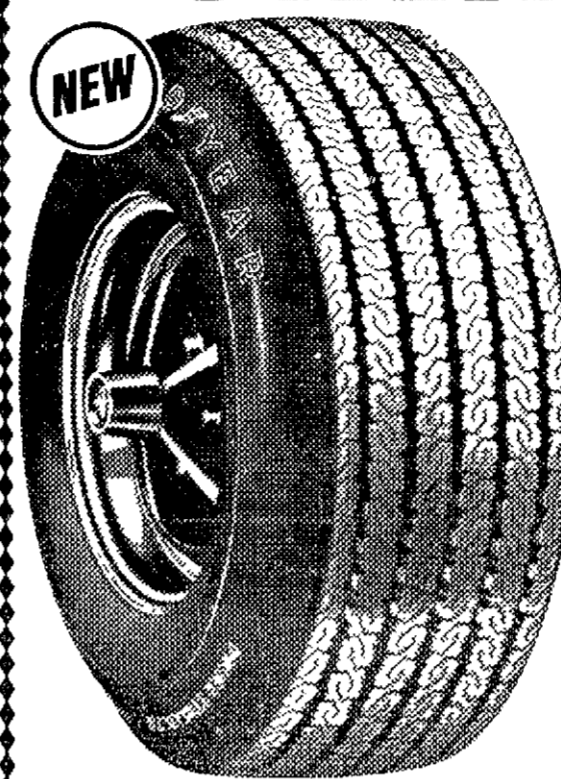
A stalactite is an icicle-like deposit of calcium carbonate which is created by water trickling through cracks in a limestone cavern's roof. The World Almanac says A stalagmite is a cone of calcium carbonate which rises from a cavern's floor under a stalactite. Famous deposits are found in the Luray Caverns, Va.; the Carlsbad Caverns, N.M.; and Mammoth Cave, Ky.

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