

# SEVEN DAYS IN THE MADHOUSE!

## Reporter's Night of Terror at Kankakee

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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Release from a tub of muddy river water.

Release after 15 hours.

Release—with gibbering lunatics for my companions.

Release—with the next thing a babbling madman running his fingers through my hair.

They loosened the canvas tub covering which had harnessed me during my soaking at Kankakee



(TIMES Photo) TIMES Reporter Frank Smith, in role of John C. Ford, spent hours looking through barred window of his room at state hospital for insane at Kankakee, a sane man living among the insane.

state hospital for the insane. They lifted me—weak, shaking and waterlogged—onto the floor. I shuddered with apprehension of what was to come.

Only a few minutes before, I had seen a diminutive patient knocked flat and kicked by an attendant for resisting a "wet pack." If a wasted human derelict got such treatment, what could I expect after pushing attendants around the day before?

My deliverer was a lank, thin-faced attendant about 40 years old.

"Well, Ford, we're going to let you up, and see how you behave. How do you feel?"

"I feel weak and shaky," I told him. "Don't worry about my behavior. I haven't an argument left in my system."

My legs were unsteady as I hit the floor. The ill-fitting pajamas they had pulled on me when I entered the hospital the previous day, clung like a bank shroud to my body. My hands were tender and shriveled from their long immersion. They were a sickly gray. I held them away from my body.

### Gets First Glimpse of Hammock Prison

For the first time, I had a glimpse of the hammock and water in which I had been soaking. The hammock was khaki-colored, scarcely visible in the muddy bath.

The dripping pajamas stuck clammy to my body, were pulled off and was guided under a narrow board. All the hammock water had poured to me during the 15 hours I had been in the hammock. I saw in my eyes the hammock water, which I had seen in the hammock. I had seen in the hammock water, which I had seen in the hammock.

# 7 DAYS IN THE MADHOUSE!

## REPORTER'S SLEEP BROKEN BY MADMAN

(Continued from page 3)

The attendant saw me examining them.

"Where'd you get those, boy?" he said.

"I don't know; maybe in the tub."

He lifted my arms to see the bruises, and exclaimed:

"You never got anything like that in the tub. Somebody must have been holding you down."

"I guess I was having some trouble with the guards yesterday," I replied. "How about putting something on this hand?"

### Lacerated Hand Is Still a Worry

The cut on my left hand, jagged reminder of my struggle with attendants the day before, appeared ugly and dangerous after the night's soaking in dirty water. Earlier I had asked another attendant for an antiseptic, but my request had been forgotten.

"That hand will be alright," the attendant assured me.

"Here, dry yourself with this sheet and we'll find a bed for you. You ought to be able to sleep now."

Drying myself was a painful process. I felt chilled and every fiber in my body ached. My throat throbbled from the thumb marks of the guard who tamed me when I became violent and was put into the hydro-ward. I discovered that both elbows were skinned, and I had a cut on my right hand. I carry scars of those wounds today, although my wounds later responded to daily doses of iodine during my stay in Ward A-1.

### Guards Believe It's Easiest Way

Some time after leaving the hospital, I discussed with an experienced attendant the proper method of putting a violent patient into the tub. Choking is quite general practice, he told me, but it usually is done with a wet towel. Then he added:

"That's the easiest and safest way to get relaxation" (his words).

"But a patient being put into the tub should be greased or talloved. That's the approved method designed to keep them from getting waterlogged."

I felt thoroughly waterlogged as I pulled on my asylum knee-length nightgown. I felt that nothing short of an oven baking would ever dry me out.

Tottering with weakness, I followed the attendant in his search for a bed. We were in the hall I had been looking at through the longest night in my life. As I had guessed, rooms opened on either side. All the beds were filled with tossing, jabbering wrecks of humanity.

### Put to Sleep in Four-Bed Room

Finally we stopped near the end of the corridor. I was motioned to an empty bed in a four-bed room. An alcove would be a more descriptive name, for it was walled only on three sides, open to the corridor.

I toppled over. The sheets were washed, but I was past caring. I was still half-conscious when the attendant babbling filled the air. A nurse from the next ward, with a monologist, who rewarded his

## INMATES OF KANKAKEE GO FOR STROLL



Ill-clad in loose-fitting garments, women inmates of state hospital for insane at Kankakee stroll about the grounds. TIMES Reporter Frank Smith, who spent seven days in the madhouse, tells of his experiences as an inmate.

own unintelligible chatter with his own shrill laughter. He was playing some sort of vocal solitaire. Evidently he didn't always approve of his own arguments. Now and then he'd burst into scolding.

### Practice Makes Technique Perfect

Then, spitting defiantly at the ceiling, he'd pull his sheet over his head and lapse into deep and contented chuckles. Invariably, he missed his mark on the ceiling, and after observing the symptoms that preceded his target practice, I learned to pull my sheet up at the proper moment, and stay under cover until the liquid bombardment had subsided.

The foot of my bed touched the head of another in which a Negro slumbered. Across the hall, another Negro was engaged in a queer game with a British-accented gentleman called Hubert. Both would pull the sheets over their heads and feign sleep for two or three minutes. Then Hubert would come to life, hop out of bed, lean over his dark-skinned partner and remark:

"I guess its time to change now."

### Hubert Has His Pillow Slip Joke

The Negro would jump to the floor, exchange beds with Hubert, pull the sheets over his head and look for all the world like a fired man deep in slumber. This farce continued for eight or 10 exchanges, when Hubert suddenly lost interest.

A new problem caught his fancy. About this time, many of the untidy patients were being led out for showers. Trusties changed the soiled linen on their beds. Hubert followed the bed-makers, and as neatly as a crochety housewife handling her best linen, removed each pillow case, folded it carefully, and hid it under the pillow.

"To my right a marathon speller was warming up.

"I've got three guns," he shouted. "My three guns shoot backward. Henry Ford has one gun. Henry Ford's gun can't shoot backward. My three guns are better than Henry Ford's one gun. My guns shoot backward."

I smothered a plea for him to use one of his backward shooting guns on himself, and to be sure he was back of it. What was the use?

Gradually I became inured to the raving. I had stopped shivering and I began to relax. Sleep almost claimed me, when the "swabbers" began their action.

### Polish Floors for Exercise

These were patients in short nightgowns like my own, or in abbreviated pajamas. They pushed and pulled at their swabbling machines—boxes filled with bricks. The long handles swung back and forth and the bottoms were covered with felt.

The object, of course, seemed to be to polish the waxed floors. Later I was told the chief purpose was to exercise the patients. One of the polishers developed a strange interest in me. Every time he passed our alcove, I could feel him staring at me, his eyes popping out above his wondrous maniacs.

Mr. Walrus, as I identified him, later gave me one of the latest

thrills of my short career as a bug-house inmate.

Fatigue finally won the decision over distractions, and eased me into a troubled sleep. I must have been turning over in my subconscious mind some of the horrors I had seen and experienced. I know I wasn't really sound asleep, when I awoke with a startled scream. Someone was running his fingers through my hair.

### Mr. Walrus Give Him Clammy Thrill

I jumped up, fending off the nightmarish shape in front of me. Suddenly I was wide awake. Beside my bed stood Mr. Walrus, his hands still extended toward my head, his eyes bulging.

"Young man," he thundered, "do you really believe you have your right mind? Well, young man, I'm sorry to say I don't believe you have a mind at all. Your head doesn't feel like it."

When my heart stopped its pounding and my breath ceased, I realized I had experienced an acute case of fright. The place was beginning to get me before I had spent a day in it.

### City Room Talk Cows Mr. Walrus

Still panting, I told Mr. Walrus off in city room language.

"Get out of here you so-and-so before I toss you through the brick wall."

"Just as I thought," he mourned, "just as I thought. Young man, you have no mind at all."

Mr. Walrus retired, sadly shaking his head.

Sleep was impossible after that. I was jittery. The "miseries" or the heebie-jeebies had descended upon me. Sitting up in bed, I decided to watch Hubert. He had a torn piece of nightgown in his hand and was polishing a spot about the size of a quarter, under a steam radiator. After vigorous rubbing, he would retreat half a dozen feet, survey his work from every angle into which he could bend his meager form, then return and begin polishing the same spot over and over again.

### So It's Back Again to A-1

One certainty forced itself upon me: Hubert and Mr. Walrus were certainly getting a lot more kick out of life at the moment than I

Presently my name and attendant stood at the alcove entrance.

"Come on, Ford, you're going back to A-1."

He didn't have to coax. Distasteful as it was to travel barefoot over the dirty floors, through the hydro-ward, I was happy to be going anywhere to escape the nerve-wracking "drivel" of my late neighbors.

The attendant, who a few hours before had knocked a patient down,

and kicked him as he fell, gave me this sage advice:

### Acquaintance Perils Adventure

"Listen, Ford. You seem like a pretty decent sort. This is a lot better place you're going to. Watch your step, behave yourself, and they won't be sending you back here."

Doors were unlocked, and I found myself back in Ward A-1, where all my troubles had started the day before. As I stood while Mrs. Ray, the ward supervisor, searched for a bed, my blood turned to brine—the ice-making kind of brine.

Down the hallway came a face and figure I had seen dozens of times in my own neighborhood in Chicago. The name didn't come to me, but the face was unmistakable. Many, many times I had seen it leaning over the mahogany in my favorite beer bar.

I tried to turn my head, looked for a place to hide. I was sunk. He couldn't help noticing me. After all, I had gone through during the night and morning to be recognized now—to have my name spoken—would ruin everything.

He passed me, turned to look back. He tapped me on the shoulder. "What are you doing down here, lad?"

I gulped a weak, "Hyah."

Frank Smith has a close call, but he skins through even when he is recognized, and he makes a new friend in Kankakee out of an old friend in Chicago. Read tomorrow what he learns from his one-time beer-drinking acquaintance about conditions in the state's over-crowded institution where 4,000 persons are subjected to intolerable conditions.

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