

SEVEN DAYS IN THE MADHOUSE!

'Railroaded to Kankakee as Insane'

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

(Copyright, 1935, by Times Publishing Corp. Reproduction in whole or in part prohibited)

Raving maniacs . . . suicidal melancholics . . . alcoholic psychopaths . . . 24 hours a day of constant uneasiness in a ward full of madmen . . . stories of alleged "railroading" and illegal detention, one of which I investigated. This is the daily life of an inmate of Kankakee State Hospital for the Insane.

Morning, Sunday morning, dawned bright. Sparrows chirped outside the barred windows of the bed-



(TIMES Photo)

These inmates of state hospital for insane at Kankakee enjoy privileges of ground parole. TIMES Reporter Frank Smith relates how one inmate lost "liberty" when, while on ground parole, he began legal-battle for freedom.

room I shared with 11 other patients. I had slept pretty well, except for a startling awakening when Mr. Fisher, the blind man in the bed across from me, had screamed in the middle of the night!

"Let me out of here! Get me my clothes! I'll pay! Let me go home!"

Allowed to Dress

With morning, I remembered my determination to figure out some way of hearing Oscar's story from his own lips, and investigating it when I left the hospital. Oscar, I had been told by another patient, was a real victim of "railroading."

I determined to cultivate the thin-faced, garrulous little man, who was doing yeoman's duty as an assistant to the attendants, serving food, caring for blind and helpless Mr. Fisher, changing bed linen for untidy patients.

After breakfast of oatmeal, milk, bread, the stuff they use at Kankakee for butter, and a concoction called coffee, a surprise was announced. Our clothes had come back from the marking-room, and those who were able could get out to the laundry room, where I found every garment, even shoes and handkerchiefs, stenciled with the legend, "John C. Ford." This, it was explained, was chiefly to protect the owner, although it also aided in identifying any patient who might wander off the reservation.

Johnny Becomes Satisfied with Lot

My throat was so sore I couldn't button my shirt collar, but I had trousers and shoes to keep my feet off the dirty floor. From the paper bag containing my belongings I was



Frank Smith

(Continued on page 4, col. 2)

7 DAYS IN THE MADHOUSE

'RAILROADED TO KANKAKEE,' REPORTER TOLD

(Continued from page 3)

given money for newspapers and cigars.

The clothes room man, a "ground parole" patient, was a friendly lad. Johnny N. — a Chicagoan from the Far South Side, he was a veteran of four or five commitments to the hospital. Conversation showed that Johnny was becoming satisfied with his lot.

A chronic alcoholic, who was given to raising a little hell when he was lit up, Johnny escaped the first couple of times he was committed. Sooner or later he would wind up in the same predicament, and find himself in Chicago Psychopathic hospital awaiting another trip "down the river."

"You won't catch me walking out of here again," he confided. "What's the use? It's hell to get a job up in Chi now. All there is to do is get plastered again and end up here. I've been behaving this time. They gave me a ground parole, which lets me go out and walk around as much as I please. Of course, I gotta be in by 9 o'clock at night, but you get used to that."

Outside the clothes room I made the acquaintance of "Weepin' Willie." Willie is about 55, a big Swede from a downstate city. As near as my lay mind could figure Willie out, he is a hypochondriac. Life for him is just one ailment after another. But Willie is not the confidential type of sick man. Oh, no! Willie cries for all the world to hear.

"Boo hoo. I'm so sick. I can't eat, boo hoo. I can't sleep, boo hoo. I'm so miserable. Nobody was ever so miserable, boo hoo. Everybody makes fun of me. I can't eat, I can't sleep. My rheumatism is so bad, boo hoo. All I can do is cry, boo hoo."

'Blue Eagle' Emulates Monkey

There was only one thing to do when Willie was around — hasten to the other end of the 150-foot hallway, where you might escape his lamentations.

A paper boy arrived and I had the latest news from Chicago. Numerous requests for "seconds" on the paper greeted my purchase. It was while dividing up the paper that I came in contact with "Blue Eagle."

"Blue Eagle" was a lad occupying a bed across from the lullaby-crooning Italian. He spent most of the day sleeping, or hanging on, monkey fashion, to the rungs at the foot of his bed.

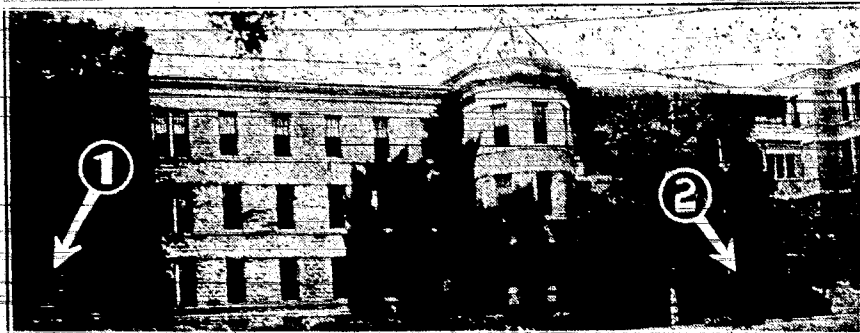
As I passed him this morning, he addressed me for the first time. "What," he asked me, "do you think the Blue Eagle is?"

"What," I repeated, "do I think the Blue Eagle is? Well, I'm not so sure. What would you say it is?"

"I think," he replied, "the Blue Eagle is an electric airplane. Didya ever notice the electricity spouting out of its wing? That's what it is, an electric airplane. That's why I sleep in the day. If I go to sleep at night they turn the electricity on my bedsprings. I fool them. I stay awake all night."

He smiled. He was happy. He was fooling "them." I couldn't help remembering a line I had seen in a book (yes, I read a book). "There is a pleasure sure in being mad, think more but madmen know." I think Dryden wrote that. Maybe he

WHERE TIMES REPORTER WAS HELD IN MADHOUSE



TIMES Reporter Frank Smith was assigned to 12-bed room (1) when he first entered state hospital for insane at Kankakee, then later was transferred to five-room (2), both in A-South ward.

spent a week in a madhouse once. My next trip to the "smoke-house" gave me my opportunity to meet Oscar H. — He was puffing away at a pipe, while he read from a huge book. I stole a look at the volume while he made a penciled entry in a small notebook. "A Racial History of Mankind" read the title.

In classroom tones Oscar explained his study when I inquired about his "heavy" reading. Not only did he launch into an explanation, but he traced my probable lineage from the Cro-Magnon period down through the struggling days of my forebears in Ireland.

I didn't learn much about his alleged "reading" that day, but later we had long talks and I heard his version of what had happened.

Tells of Fight to Leave Asylum

According to Oscar's story, he was illegally committed through the machinations of his wife. Family difficulties, constant bickering, had paved the way, he related. By subterfuge, he said, he was induced to visit a psychiatrist at the University of Chicago. He was subjected to observation with the result that a month later he was ordered into court for a sanity hearing. He said: "I didn't think anything of it. I had to go. BUT what could the judge do except find me sane? I had never had any trouble in my life. For years I had been a clerk in the registry division of the main post office in Chicago. They ought to know if I was crazy."

"My wife swore I was planning to kill her and the children. All I wanted was to be left alone to study and read in the library I had fitted up in my home on the south side. The social service workers aided my wife in getting me put away."

"After the judge, acting on the recommendations of two examining doctors, found me insane, they sent me down here. I've been here since Sept. 28, 1934. The funny thing is that I was given a ground parole shortly after I arrived. I worked in the hospital laboratory. Is that any place to put a crazy man who might want to kill someone? But now since my habeas corpus hearing before Judge Saum, downtown, they have me locked up."

Judge Issues Writ to Seize Oscar

Oscar explained to me his fight to be freed from the madhouse. He told me of the hearing on April 19, 1935, before Judge Claude N. Saum of the Circuit Court of Kankakee. He related for me the testimony of his wife and of the hospital officials who sought to prevent his release. Two local doctors, he said, had examined him and testified that he was sane. Now he was awaiting the return of the judge on the case under advisement.

Every newspaper reporter in the country has heard tales of railroaded newspaper reporters. Probably every newspaper reporter hearing those tales has wished at some time or other that he could uncover such a case, strike a stout blow for justice.

After hearing Oscar's story, I made a silent vow to spare no effort in learning the truth of his assertion. That he was eccentric, bookish, talkative, was unquestioned. That he was insane, I couldn't bring myself to believe.

Following my release from Kankakee, I spent several days tracing the legal steps in Oscar's commitment. On file in the Cook county

clerk's office is the petition of his wife, Mabel, to subject him to a sanity hearing. It was filed Sept. 20, 1934, accompanied by a month-old letter from a University of Chicago doctor stating Oscar was a paranoid with maniac trends, a possible menace to his family, and a nuisance to the community.

A writ of inquisition was issued the same day by a judge sitting in county court, ordering Oscar seized and lodged with the keeper of the department for the insane in Chicago until his court hearing Sept. 27.

A commission of two reputable doctors was later appointed by the court to examine the prisoner, physically and mentally. On the appointed day, the commission reported him to be "insane, a fit person to be sent to a state hospital for the insane."

His disease was diagnosed as "mild schizophrenia." This was crossed off on the commission finding, and "paranoid dementia praecox" was substituted. Oscar was committed to Kankakee on Sept. 28, 1934.

After months of waiting for release, he contacted lawyers and began his fight to "spring" himself on a writ of habeas corpus. On file with Joseph Tolson, the Circuit court clerk of Kankakee, is a petition filed April 17, 1935, on behalf of Oscar by Atty. Noel A. Diamond and Edward Drolet of Kankakee. It sets forth that the petitioner, Oscar H., 56 years old, was committed, restrained and imprisoned in Kankakee State hospital; that prior to his commitment he had always conducted himself in a highly reputable manner, fulfilling positions of trust and supervision for a great number of years; that he was always peaceful and quiet in manner; that his commitment arose chiefly through family difficulties, and controversies with his wife; that his restraint and imprisonment were illegal; that he prayed for a writ of habeas corpus and discharge from the hospital.

Judge Frees Him from Madhouse

Also on file are three affidavits from former fellow clerks at the post office, stating they knew Oscar and worked with him for years, and had visited him at Kankakee during December, 1934, and January, 1935, and believed him sane.

At the hearing two days later, two local doctors testified as to his sanity. The hospital, represented by Dr. Robert Smith, superintendent, and his assistant, Dr. George W. Morrow, and State's Atty. Varnum Parrish, opposed his release, asserting he was insane, a paranoid. Oscar made a good witness for himself, denying mental disorder and mistreatment of his wife. His wife, who was in court, was called to the stand by the judge, but her testimony is not available, but it is reported she expressed a fear of her husband, but admitted there was no love wasted on her part.

A week after I left the madhouse, Judge Saum, following months of consideration, signed an order finding Oscar sane, and ordering him discharged from the hospital.

Interviewed later, Atty. Diamond had this to say:

"We wanted to fight this on the basis of an illegal commitment at the start, but that would entail considerable expense, and difficulty. Our chief concern was freeing him, getting him back into the world. As a matter of expediency we attacked the problem from the question of

his sanity at the current time. The court decided that he was sane and illegally detained, despite the hospital's objections that he was a dangerous paranoid. While the judge had the case under advisement, Oscar's parole was taken away and he was locked up in the receiving ward."

Both doctors who rendered expert testimony for Oscar, told me they considered him sane.

"It was clearly a case of incompetibility," said one of them.

"I saw quite a bit of Oscar," said the second doctor. "He might be considered eccentric. He was metic-

ulous to a fault in the laboratory. Everything must be just so. I examined him after long observation. I considered him sane and sound of mind."

In Chicago, I called on some of his fellow workers, talked to his superiors. None of them seemed to think that Oscar was ever insane.

But enough of Oscar and his troubles for the time. Back in the hospital, I was enjoying my new freedom. Now that I had clothes and shoes, I was able to wander about the ward at will. I was being looked upon as a philanthropist by less fortunate inmates. I was always good for a cigarette. Maybe I was soft. I couldn't help it. It used to spoil my own smoke to see some poor devil scraping stubs off the toilet room floor.

"Regulars" warned me against the ever present danger of the stool pigeon.

"Every other guy is one," they told me.

I promised to be careful. Discussing the frequent escapes from the grounds, one of my new pals said the gentle way to accomplish this was with a master key, opening any door in the institution.

"Keys?" I questioned.

"Sure," answered my Houdini friend. "I'll get you one for a dollar." I put in my order and waited.

Do inmates escape from the overcrowded Kankakee State hospital with master keys, bought for \$1 each? Frank Smith tells you about that gag in Monday's TIMES. Read this dramatic story of the state's wards in the TIMES every day.

FINAL CLEARANCE

Men's Sport Shoes

AT 118 W. VAN BUREN ST.

6,000 PAIR OF O-G SPORTS and GOLF SHOES

Consisting of Incomplete Lines Gathered from Other O-G Stores for

QUICK CLEARANCE CHOICE OF THE STORE



SIZES UP TO 14 ... AA TO 5

PLENTY OF SMALL and SAMPLE SIZES for GROWN BOYS

O'CONNOR & GOLDBERG

118 W. VAN BUREN ST. ... NEAR LA SALLE

OPEN ALL DAY SATURDAY AND SATURDAY EVENING