

MANY STATE HOSPITAL PATIENTS NOW FORGOTTEN

There are nearly 6,200 patients today receiving therapeutic and custodial care at South Carolina's State Hospital in Columbia. Of all these tragic individuals — some almost completely forgotten, others resigned by friends and relatives to live out the remainders of their unfortunate lives there — probably the best known personality is someone whom the superintendent simply calls Peter.

Dr. William S. Hall, hospital head, constantly refers to Peter when he talks of hospital improvements or the shifting and reallocation of facilities. "We'll just have to rob Peter again to pay Paul," he'll say. Every time Dr. Hall discusses some aspect in the operation of the huge hospital the officials there must go to Peter for help.

Not too many years ago hospitals for the mentally ill were considered as horror houses where ranting, raving semi-humans were locked up for the good of society rather than for their own good. Since relatively little was known about mental illness not too long ago, relatively little was done for those so afflicted.

But there were a few states which were considered to be progressive for those times, states which provided care of a sort from public funds in the way of what was thought to be top-rated custodial care. In those "medieval" days custodial care was about all anyone could render: give the mentally sick a place to live where they couldn't harm themselves or others.

South Carolina, in 1821, appropriated its first money for the mentally ill. Six years later it had its first building ready for the custody of those people who were to be its patients. The following year it admitted its first patient. It was the third state to build a hospital specifically for mental patients, and was therefore considered to be very progressive and humane.

But now only the memory of having been the third state in the nation to build a mental hospital is one of the few things which remain to South Carolina of which it can be proud. The state did not hold its lead very long. Other states began to recognize the exigency of mental care and eventually hospitals for the mentally ill sprang up all over the country.

Just about four years ago South Carolina was thirteenth on per capita expenses. Other states were instituting research centers, mental health clinics, larger state appropriations for their state organizations and were training doctors for their own use.

Today South Carolina is forty-third in the nation in care given to mental patients, based on per capita per day expenses.

Because of South Carolina's shameful position, its lack of facilities, trained personnel, and lack of adequate support from the citizenry and legislators, poor Peter is constantly being robbed. And Paul needs help just as badly as Peter for Paul has nothing left to give.

Dr. Hall spends much of his time juggling facilities at the hospital in Columbia. His staff is alerted to the problems of "living on a shoestring," as he says, and is very cooperative in helping him to maintain present—but extremely far below efficient—standards.

A visitor, if he could tour dispassionately through the many buildings, would see, at one place, mattresses for five men placed on the floor of a one-man room. (You can get five mattresses in a one-man room but not five bedsteads.) Then, farther along on the tour the visitor would gape at a kitchen that cost \$1,250.00, equipped with everything from huge electric ovens capable of roasting a ton of meat apiece at one time to a donut machine with a capacity of 450 dozen an hour.

An attendant might call a visitor's attention to one of the buildings on the "campus" that had to be tied together with long steel rods running from wall to wall to keep its sides from buckling from old age. But no attendant would be needed to point out the brand new maximum detention building with modern lighting, radiant heat, and occupational therapy wards.

There are four of those new buildings at State Hospital. Each one is supposed to house 152 patients; but now, so soon after completion, there are about 190 in each—already overcrowded to the extent of about 152 more than there should be. Each building has outside court areas for exercise, and recreation halls. There are even beauty shops for the patients—but no operators.

The new buildings are efficient, well lighted, clean and pleasant as such places can be. Floors are of quarry tile. In special rooms for visiting relatives spaces have been set off for some privacy. Radiant heating and awning type windows add to the comfort, and the kitchens and dining rooms are clean and sparkling. There are also fine handicraft rooms but not enough money to make proper use of them.

It seems incongruous that in spite of such facilities at State Hospital there are several thousand other patients there who must eat and sleep in evil smelling wards and mess halls.

Specifically, there is a mess hall in the women's section of State Hospital that feeds 500 patients at a time. Food is served cafeteria style there with the exception that there is no steam line. All food is brought in from the central kitchen and is served from stock pots.

At meal time the women begin to arrive at the door of the mess hall. They line up in an orderly fashion, pass by the rough wooden counters from which the food is served, receive their trays and seat themselves

at long, 50 year-old tables.

Five hundred women in line waiting to pass one point to receive gelid, cold mashed potatoes or hard and chilled fried eggs is bad enough. But to eat such fare in a nauseating atmosphere of spilled food particles fermenting in the cracks of the cement floor, poor lighting and extreme congestion, is certainly something an ill person should never have to bear.

The women stand in the slowly

moving line and hope it won't rain. There is no overhead protection from the weather while they wait to be served.

Dr. Hall is extremely aware of every single one of the unbearable conditions at the hospital. He knows full well of the overcrowding, the feeding situation, the shortage of competent personnel, the small hopes of sufficiently larger appropriations for improvements—and the apathetic attitude of the general public.

As for overcrowding as one shameful condition at the hospital the recommended space minimum is 70 square feet per patient. (The Veterans Administration and Federal Hospitals like to have a minimum of 80 to 90 square feet.) Yet at State Hospital it is impossible to find a ward or room where maximum capacity is not exceeded. Space is an important factor in treating the mentally ill. Small personality frictions take on larger proportions after days and days of exposure to ordinarily insignificant annoyances. And space is important in the aspect of physical health too. Communicable diseases can run rampant at State Hospital simply because isolation is hardly possible.

Therefore it has become necessary at the hospital to place beds for the never ending stream of incoming patients in day rooms and hallways and even in rooms originally planned for storage of clothing and personal items.

The hospital is particularly fearful of tuberculosis and is fortunate in one small respect in having one of its buildings set aside for the care of a capacity of 200 tuberculosis patients. This building too, needless to say, operates at capacity.

The hospital has a population today equal to that of a town the size of Camden, 6,250. Yet it has proper room for only some 4,000. Admissions last year totaled 2,283 and it is computed that \$12,000,000 is needed to alleviate the overcrowding.

Lack of space, lack of proper facilities, lack of trained personnel—those things all add up to lack of enough money at South Carolina's State Hospital. The shortages actually represent life imprisonment and even death for many patients who

otherwise may have been cured or improved enough to have been returned to their homes and normal lives.

South Carolina's State Hospital has made many improvements in the past four years—even though it was 13th in the nation in money spent on patients and is now 43rd. However, other states are improving mental health conditions faster.

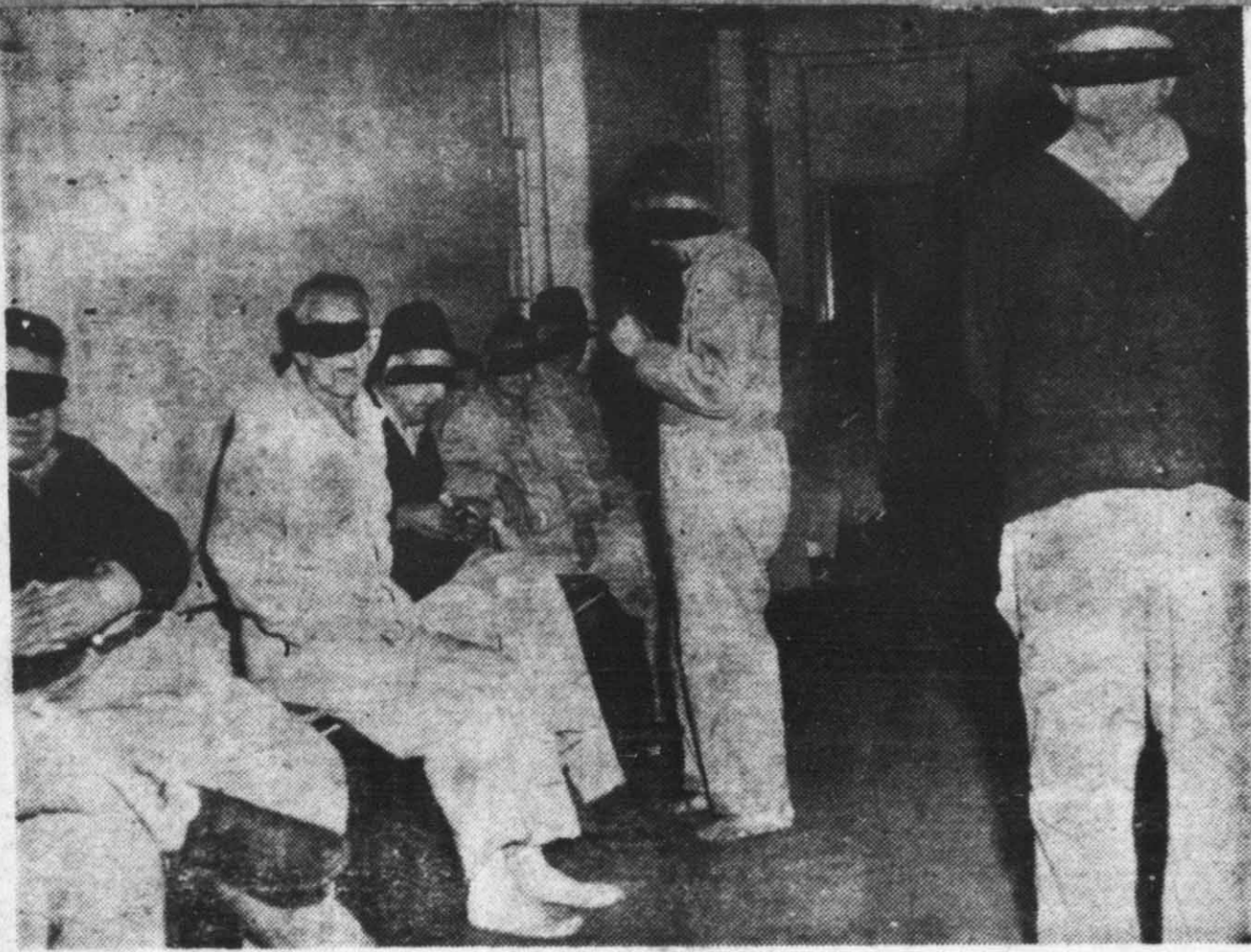
In spite of all of the "lacks" that are so evident to any visitor to the hospital, Dr. Hall maintains, "I don't believe our quality of care and treatment is 43rd. Money is not everything. Our esprit de corps is as high as can be found anywhere. We are very fortunate in that respect.

Dr. Hall was speaking of his staff and nurses and attendants and the general employee at the hospital. They are, indeed, a most peculiar group of people. Certainly working conditions at

State Hospital are far from ideal. Certainly working conditions at State Hospital are woeful! Yet 1,400 employees at the hospital perform their work with a missionary zeal and dedication. At recent ceremonies Dr. Hall showed some of his appreciation for the faithful work of his personnel by presenting emblems and certificates to some 85 employees for loyal service from five to more than 40 years. Dr. Hall initiated this recognition himself in 1955. Dr. Hall has been at State Hospital for 18 years.

These people are the ones who know of the discomfort and squalor of some of the conditions at South Carolina's State Hospital. They, and the doctors, know better than anyone, except the patients themselves, what a disgrace a mental hospital can be when it is neglected by the public and the lawmakers.

The Chester (S.C.) News, May 17, 1956



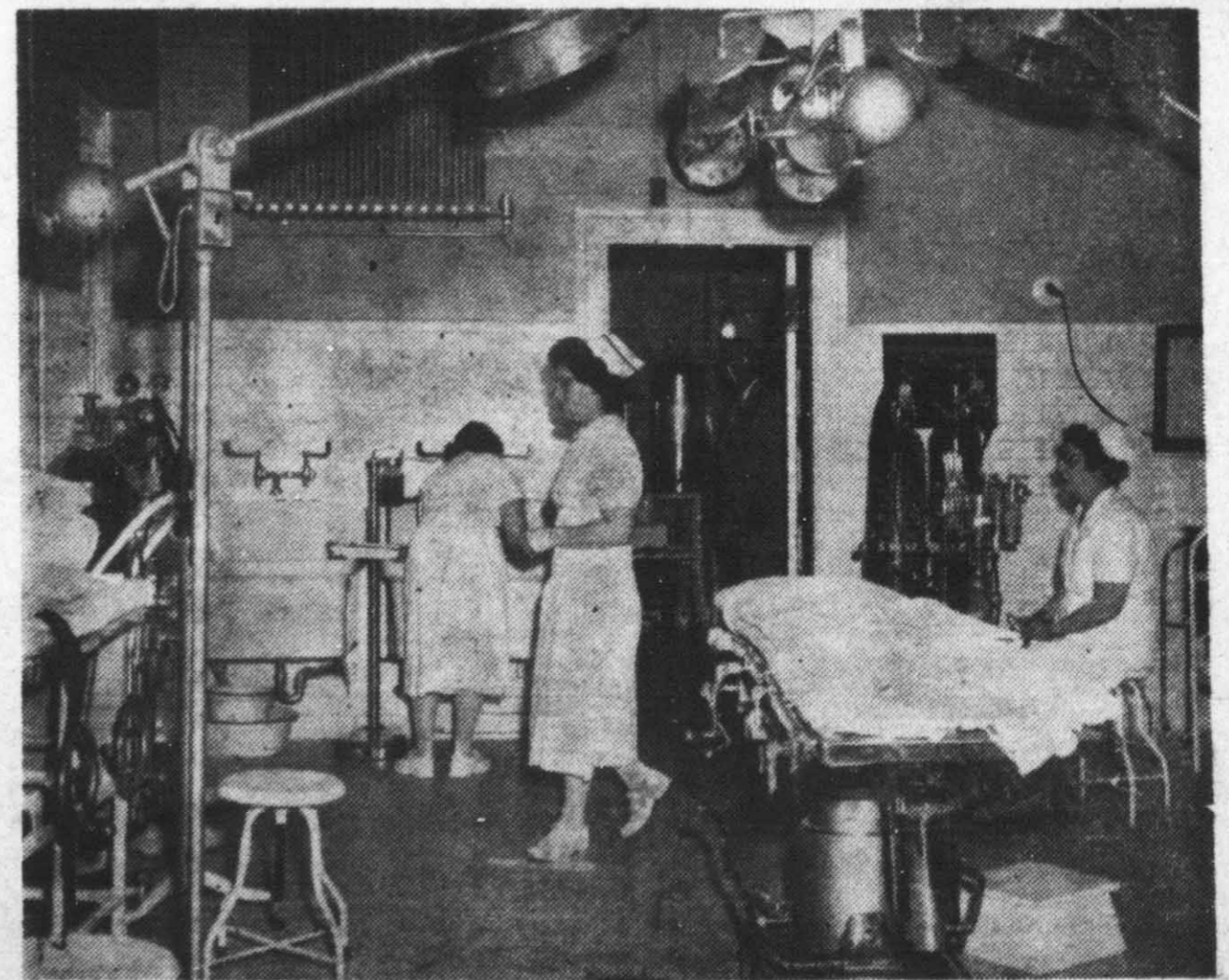
How long is a day? These pictures of a dayroom in one of the men's buildings show how little the patients have to do to occupy long hours. All they can do in rainy weather is sit or stand about the room waiting for meal time or bed time.



If there were a television set in this day room for patients past the age of 65, life might be a little more pleasant for them. When this picture was made these patients were doing exactly what they do all day long, day after day . . . they just sit there.



One small wall cabinet contains all the drugs and medicines for some 200 patients in one building. This room is actually a dispensary where patients are treated for very minor injuries as well as for more serious ones. The cabinet contains the individual's prescriptions.



State Hospital has a rather well equipped operating room, but it has only this one for its population of more than 6,200 people.