

## UNIT No. 151



ADDRESS

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL  
ROSEBURG, OREGON

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PHONE: EPHRATA 646

April 23, 1946

Mr. Bertran D. Smucker  
Hospital Division  
Mennonite Central Committee  
Akron, Pennsylvania

Dear Bert:

The mail this morning brought your letter of April 16. My feeling of guilt grew with every sentence. I intended to write you Saturday but am glad now that I received your letter first. (Never do to-day what can be put off until tomorrow!) Never-the-less I have no legitimate excuse.

The rythm of the unit has been going well beyond my expectations. Relations with other employees and staff members of the hospital as well as the outside public seem to improve rather than remain in one stage. Just yesterday the head attendant came to me for more men wondering whether we might have some men who would volunteer for the morning shift even though they were scheduled to have their day off. We had three volunteers. They will get their time off of course but they did sacrifice an Easter Sunday. A little later the head attendant remarked to me: "I have travelled a lot and been concerned in many business firms but never have I seen such a willing group of men. No G.I. or civilian has ever worked like that in this hospital without back-talk." Statements like these heard quite frequently constitute higher morale which has remained fairly high; of course, the unit is quite new.

With but few exceptions the men have adjusted to their specific duties. We have tried to let them get experience on the different wards and then make their choices as to which they would prefer. This has worked out surprizingly well. Most of the men have a sincere interest in the patients and like to learn just how to take care of each individually. Our unit is performing a "top notch" job here and is also duly recognized for such by other employees.

Our educational program is but small, however, we do have a weekly prayer meeting and a discussion on Mennonite Heritage which I think are very profitable to all attending. Such meetings tend to make for a closer harmony in the group. The other day I had a chat with the chaplin who has been added to the staff of the hospital. He is a Methodist but well acquainted with the Mennonite stand of non-resistance since at one time he served a church near Reedley, California where he became acquainted with Mennonites. Very kindly he has consented to lecture to us in the future. Sundays are spent by the fellows in going to the local churches (of which there are approximately 34) or other churches while on week-ends. Our Library is not extremely well stocked but the books are of good choice. We keep on hand two daily newspapers and ~~and~~ a number of popular weekly and monthly magazines.

Considering the small group we have here the recreational program is quite adequate. The hospital very graciously has opened to us all its facilities to be used whenever they are not in use by patients. Monday and Wednesday mark the evenings for the occupational therapy building in which are located all types of power tools also sewing machines very handy in leather work. On Tuesday (after 8:30), Thursday, and Saturday nights the recreational hall and library are open to us. The recreation/ hall contains tennis tables and pool tables. Outdoor tennis is also a beckoning sport now that the Oregon "dews" have subsided. A very valuable asset to our unit is the record player which we have attached to one of the boys' radio. We have quite a fine record library with the permission to also use records belonging to the Veterans Administration. The player is in use a major part of the day.

By the way, is there a monthly, bi-annual, or annual educational-recreational report to be turned in to the MCC. I would appreciate information on this or do I get that from Martin Schrag? Also just what is the policy of the MCC regarding disbursements of funds for recreational purposes? Do purchases of educational or recreational equipment such as the photographic enlarger deduct from the 75¢ per man per month we are allowed to use for recreation?

A few of the boys are interested in photography and have been occupying their time with that. However, our greatest time-passing element seems to be that of leather craft. I dare say a number of men have become experts at the art.

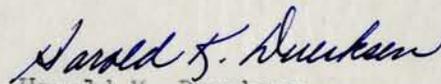
The community offered little or nothing in the way of recreation, however, we have had the privilege attending several good musical concerts <sup>in Roseburg</sup>. The hospital has invited our men to attend the moving pictures every Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday if they wish.

You are interested in the administrative set-up which I am maintaining. Since I have no office clerk I am kept slightly busy, however, not overloaded. The fellows have shown remarkable cooperation with all requests of the office. In some cases differences have come as to days off but a little explanation of policy has always satisfactorily cleared the situation. It is my policy to assign days off and to be pretty "hard boiled" about deviating from this standard. In some units it has been allowed that men made arrangements with their head attendants as to the days they wanted off and thus confusion has resulted in unit records.

On April 15 and 16 Rufus Franz visited this unit. Dr. Melvin had been complaining of the attendant shortage and hinting at the possibility of a request for more CPS Men so Rufus and I met with him on April 16 to discuss the matter. He stated that if in a month the quonset huts were completed he would possibly ask for more men. Dr. Melvin is very pleased with work of our men and would like to see more of them here as attendants. To obtain civilian help is practically impossible now. Instead more attendants are resigning each week. I am enclosing a copy of the letter I sent Rufus prior to his coming here. It will give you a history on the unit if and when it should enlarge. I suppose that Rufus will be conferring with you on these possibilities.

I shall try to keep you informed on the general pulse of the unit from time to time and I hope that this letter will satisfactorily answer some of your questions concerning #151.

Yours Sincerely,

  
Harold K. Duerksen  
Assistant Director

HKD

CC: Rufus Franz