

UNIT No. 144



ADDRESS

HUDSON RIVER STATE HOSPITAL  
POUGHKEEPSIE, NEW YORKDORIE D. MILLER  
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Hospital Section

ROBERT KREIDER  
ROY E. WENGERAKRON, PENNSYLVANIA  
PHONE: EPHRATA 646DR. JOHN R. ROSS  
SUPERINTENDENT AND  
UNIT DIRECTOR  
BERTRAM D. SMUCKER  
ASSISTANT DIRECTORPHONE  
POUGHKEEPSIE 6100Wednesday, May 16  
~~Thursday,~~

MAY 18 1945

Rob't Kreider  
M.C.C.  
Hospital Section  
Akron, Pa.

Dear Bob:

Here's the story: For some time the men of Ryon Hall had been reporting abuse and mistreatment of patients, primarily 4 men on ward being the main offenders. Being new at the game I wracked my brain considerably thinking of the best way to handle the situation. From all I could observe in this hospital authority in various degrees was about the only way to get any kind of satisfactory action. It was my belief that the best way to meet the problem, though, was on the local(ward) level plus a minimum amount of authority. Therefore, I thought that Mr. Faust, Chief Supervisor, and myself could talk to Mr. Morrison, supervisor of ward 70 where the violence had been carried on and perhaps work out some solution. However, Mr. Faust wouldn't even think of such a thing because he said it would entirely antagonize Dr. Ross if he discovered that we had had an interview ~~on~~ concerning actual cases of violence and had not taken him in our confidence. Thus, Mr. Faust hearing of this violence could do nothing else but report to Dr. Ross. Dr. Ross called me in and interviewed me about it and then called up Jim Harnish and Art Smucker and interviewed them completely with a stenographer taking the entire proceedings down in shorthand. Eddie Schrag and Ralph Lehman who work on the ward part time also went through the same routine. After the Dr.'s examined several patients 4 letters of ~~at~~ suspension were sent down to Ryon Hall, a total of 45 minutes had elapsed since the interviews were concluded.

After our several phone conversations last night we as a unit talked over the situation, and concluded that we should ask as you suggested that the 4 men be given another chance. This morning I mentioned this to Dr. Ross and he would hardly give me a hearing; so I put our desires in writing so that we could at least go on record ~~for~~ in favor of this type of action. (Please find carbon copy of this letter to Dr. Ross.) He said he would put it on record and that he appreciated our Christian attitude, but that he wasn't quite that Christian.

So, it appears that they are going to be fired. The men are now going to read over their testimony and then sign it in front of a notary



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- 2 -

As I understand it this process is to protect the hospital and to be evidence in case any of the men contest their dismissal.

The hospital staff officials, especially Dr. Ross, are profoundly grateful to us for doing all of this. However, you can imagine how strained relations are in Ryon Hall now and how the fired boys feel towards us--especially the 230 lb. sadist who says he will bash the guys head in who squealed on him. Also, these four men belonged to the A.F. of L., although I don't see how a union can make a case for violence. Also, two of the men are vets of World War II which might involve the Legion. However, the one man was disgusted with the work and ready to quit anyway. Incidentally, his wife works in Ryon with two of our fellows. Ouch, again!

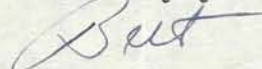
Perhaps we could have handled this in a better way, but eventually it probably would have come to this. The fellows down there felt if they had tried to deal with these fellows in a personal way that if anything it would have stimulated the situation.

However, the deed is done. All we can do is to keep our chins up and face the situation. Something had to be done about it--because the boys working down there were sick of the whole thing.

Needless to say all of us spent a rather restless night last night with visions of attendants dancing through the air.

Well, we'll keep in touch with you about the whole thing. Any and all advice appreciated. I assure you again that a visit from you gentlemen at anytime in the future will be more than welcome.

Faithfully yours,

  
Bertran D. Smucker