

Philadelphia Story—

How Experiences of Four Conscientious Objectors at Byberry Resulted in a National Crusade to Aid the Mentally ill

By REX POLIER

THIS IS THE STORY of a national movement to improve the standards of mental institutions and to promote mental health, which had its beginning in the wards of Byberry.

It is the story of four young men who were scarcely aware that mental institutions existed until, as conscientious objectors, they were assigned to those wards as attendants under the Selective Service Act.

The things they saw at Byberry, together with the experience of other conscientious objectors working in mental institutions throughout the country, caused these four to spearhead a movement that today is crystallized in the National Mental Health Foundation, with headquarters at 1520 Race st.

As the result of their efforts, standards of many mental institutions have been so improved since the end of the war as to focus national attention on the Foundation. So much so that the Foundation, together with the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, of New York City, has twice been designated the beneficiary of the contributions by listeners to the "Truth or Consequences" radio show of "Mr. and Mrs. Hush" fame.

The first Hush mystery couple of this series was identified Saturday night by a St. Louis woman as playwright Moss Hart and his wife, the former Kitty Carlisle, whose home is near Lahaska, Bucks County. A new mystery couple was promptly selected for listeners, and the Philadelphia and New York organizations will continue as beneficiaries of the program. Previous beneficiaries of the program, which were organizations aiding polio patients and heart victims, grossed more than a million dollars each.

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PLANNING CONFERENCE—Mrs. Percy C. Madeira, Jr., acting chairman of the National Mental Health Foundation, Inc., discusses with Harold Barton, left, executive secretary, and Willard C. Hetzel, legal director, how the organization can best use funds it will receive from a national radio show. Barton and Hetzel are two of the four founders of the Foundation

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NO ONE IS MORE delighted with the turn of events than Mrs. Percy C. Madeira, Jr., acting chairman of the organization, who has had much to do with strengthening it since the war's end.

"We intend to use the money from the program for a three-fold purpose," she says. "First, for public education directed toward prevention and recovery of the mentally ill, and humane care of those who cannot be cured. Secondly, to improve the quality of ward personnel in our mental institutions, as well as provide decent care of those who can never speak for themselves—and be heard. And thirdly, to continue our study of state mental health laws and administrative practices which will, in time, furnish a firm basis for our proposals for change."

Speaking of the interest of many prominent Philadelphians in the new organization, Mrs. Madeira said: "We feel that the ice of public indifference to the plight of the mentally ill has now been broken and that this neglected field will become as prominent as any other welfare endeavor."

THE FOUR MEN who founded this movement are Harold Barton, 32, of Eugene, Ore., a mining engineer; Willard C. Hetzel, 36, of Toledo, O., an attorney; Philip Steer, 28, of Geneva, N. Y., an educator, and Leonard Edelstein, 30, of Syracuse, N. Y., an attorney. With the exception of Edelstein, who is no longer active in the Foundation, the founders are now Philadelphians and live here with their families.

The story of the Foundation is a Philadelphia story. Owen J.

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A group of 27 prominent Philadelphians is also sponsoring the movement locally. Among them are Mrs. Curtis Bok, Jay Cooke, Judge Gerald F. Flood, Albert M. Greenfield, George D. Widener, Mrs. Francis R. Strawbridge and Judge Nochem S. Winnet.

In addition, Earl G. Harrison, former dean of the University of Pennsylvania Law School, is serving as legal adviser, replacing William Draper Lewis, another Philadelphia attorney, who retired from the post because of ill health, but who was prominent in plotting out the legal aspects of the Foundation.

TODAY, viewing the Foundation's impressive record of achievement and promising future, Barton, Hetzel, Steer and the eight other members of the Foundation staff are more than gratified with the little experiment that grew out of the wards of Byberry.

The main job of the Foundation, as Barton and his staff see it, is to educate the public to an awareness of mental illness and to encourage the public's support of modern psychiatric practices and medicine in the mental institutions of the various states.

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MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK—Alexander Sareyan, Foundation field agent, points out to Richard Hunter, educational director, the locations of various United States radio stations currently broadcasting the Foundation's transcriptions

says Barton. "Our mental hospitals should be centers of education — acquainting the public with its responsibility in helping afflicted persons return to a normal life as soon as possible — instead of serving merely as places of confinement.

"To do this, we must use society's existing institutions — the family, the school, etc. — and through them, apply accepted principles of mental health."

The Foundation is accomplishing its education of the public by means of pamphlets, press and radio.

Three other handbooks are now being published. They deal with overactive patients, activity therapy and the training of aids in the schools for the mentally deficient.

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The pamphlets, many of which are now being translated into Spanish by the Mexican Government, deal broadly with mental institutions and mental health.

On the radio, the Foundation has pioneered with a series of transcriptions which have been broadcast over 300 American stations.

Shortly after the war, the Foundation co-operated with a national magazine in presenting a startling expose of the state of disrepair and inefficiency into which many of our mental institutions had fallen.

Barton and his associates are also publishing the first monthly magazine for mental hospital attendants throughout the country. Started while the four men were at Byberry, the magazine is calculated to make attendants conscious of the important work they are doing.

Another Foundation project, resulting from experiences at Byberry, is a handbook for hospital attendants—or "psychiatric aids," as modern psychiatry prefers they be called—written in easily understandable language and illustrated with cartoons.

Training of aids for mental hospitals, Barton discovered, has always been a haphazard affair, and he feels that they play the most important role in the recovery of mental patients. The handbook was compiled from the experiences of 2,000 conscientious objectors working in mental hospitals.

According to Barton, the handbook is now used in every veterans and Army training center for psychiatric aids and in many state and private mental institu-

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To encourage psychiatric aids' work, the Foundation has established a "Psychiatric Aid of the Year" award of \$500 for the aid in a U. S. mental institution who achieves the most distinguished record.

Other activities of the group include compilation and publication of state laws dealing with mental institutions and patients; spadework in setting up regional conferences to promote better standards for mental hospitals, and preparation of documentary films explaining mental health and institutions.

The psychiatric content of the Foundation's publications and radio programs is reviewed by a staff of professional advisers, including Dr. Earl D. Bond, director of the research institute of the Pennsylvania Hospital; Dr. R. H. Felix, general chief, mental hygiene division, U. S. Public Health Service; Dr. Menninger and Dr. Lauretta Bender, associate professor of psychiatry, New York University. In addition, the Foundation has a staff psychiatrist, Dr. Dallas Pratt, of Columbia University.