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STRICTER EFFORTS TO ENFORCE COLLECTION FOR PATIENTS IN STATE HOSPITALS CAUSING GREAT CONCERN TO MANY FAMILIES HIT BY BILLS FOR THOUSANDS

by Jack Rider

In the past year an understandable concern has hit thousands of North Carolina families who have family members in state hospitals.

This new concern stems from the fact that state hospitals have begun an all-out effort to collect more money from those who have members of their families institutionalized.

It has not been unusual for families to receive bills in excess of \$10,000, backdated to the day of entry of their family member in a state hospital.

A serious effort is now brewing to amend the state laws pertaining to this particular problem. Under the general provisions of existing laws all families with the financial ability to pay for the care of family members are supposed to pay up to \$105 per month for each patient. Bills have ranged from nothing up to this maximum, with the past policy being a realistic appraisal of each family's ability to pay; but now prodding from the higher echelons of the state government is causing a much more strong effort than ever before to extract every possible penny out of every possible family.

This gives rise to a pair of diametrically opposed philosophies in this field:

One which the state is now pursuing, is that everybody who is able to pay ought to pay.

And the other is that nature has been unkind enough in visiting a family with a mentally retarded or mentally sick member and since every family contributes to the overall general taxation such long-term institutional care should be an expense born from general taxation, with no embarrassing harassment of those families who have such bad luck.

In the overall picture of state finances the cost of total hospitalization is not beyond the

reasonable limits of present tax levies. On the basis of budget estimates for this fiscal year the cost would be \$5,012,571 for the state assuming the full responsibility or all such cases.

But if the psychiatric hospitals are taken out of this consideration, because a large part of their patients are short term patients the picture changes greatly.

There are three state hospitals for the mentally retarded, who generally are permanent custodial type patients, and the total cost of the state assuming full responsibility for all patients in these three hospitals would be only \$839,200.

\$464,000 collected at Caswell Training School, \$200,700 collected at the West Carolina Center and \$174,500 collected at O'Berry Center.

In the present fiscal year the cost of keeping a patient in Caswell is \$2,462 per year, and payment for patients whose families are able to pay amounts to \$258 of that total cost, leaving \$2204 to be paid from general taxation.

At West Carolina Center the annual cost per patient for this year is \$3582 and \$240 of that is expected to come from families of patients able to pay, leaving \$3342 to be paid from general taxation.

At O'Berry Center this year the annual cost per patient is \$2335, and families of patients able to pay are expected to pay \$137, leaving \$2198 to be paid from general taxation.

The total budgets of these three institutions for the mentally retarded amounts to \$10,403,213. Which is divided \$4,432,142 at Caswell, \$2,976,771 at O'Berry and \$2,994,300 at Western Carolina. The average daily patient loads of the three are 1800 patients at Caswell, 1275 at O'Berry and 836 at Western Carolina. Of these three institutions . . . much less than 10 per cent.

If the state were to assume

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Ancient Dugout Canoe Found by Contentnea Neck Boys



One result of the prolonged drought this summer was exposure of many sights that normally stay under several feet of water and one such sight discovered by three young Contentnea Neck explorers was this major part of an ancient dugout canoe found in a creek running into Contentnea Creek near Grifton. The trio who found the relic included Reno and Ricky Batchelor, sons of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Batchelor, and Michael Cunningham, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Cunningham, all of Grifton route 2. Shown here with the

canoe remains is Raymond Oaks, next-door neighbor to the Batchelors. One end of the canoe has rotted away but the remaining end is extremely solid. Those who have looked at it so far, including this writer, are not expert enough about such matters to say with any degree of certainty whether the dugout was the work of Indians or early white settlers in this area, but it is a far cry from the speedy fiberglass boats that churn up most local waterways nowadays.

Jones County Woman Suing New Bern Doctor After Operation for \$200,000

A law suit has been filed in Jones County Superior Court by Mrs. Goldie Hill Gray against Dr. John E. Littman of New Bern in which she seeks \$200,000 damages for injuries she claims she suffered because of the poor practices and neglect she suffered at his hands.

The suit alleges that Littman operated on Mrs. Gray on March 30, 1967 to remove a fibroid tumor from the uterus and to do an abdominal hysterectomy.

Following the operation Mrs. Gray says she experienced great pain and during a seven-day period after the operation her condition grew increasingly worse. And during this time she says Littman refused to treat her further and told her she only had gas pains.

Finally Mrs. Gray says members of her family and nurses at Craven County Hospital persuaded her to call in another doctor, and this new doctor immediately recommended another operation to correct the injuries done in the first operation.

And Mrs. Gray said after this second operation she had to return on May 17th for still further corrective surgery for another injury that took place in the first operation performed by Littman.

Mrs. Gray says she accumulated medical bills totaling \$2,717.85 and \$1,334.88 loss of income as the direct result of Littman's poor treatment and improper surgery and she is asking \$100,000 actual damages and \$100,000 punitive damages.

Traffic Charges Account for Most Cases Cleared in Recorder's Court

During the past week pleas of guilty before the clerk or trials before Judge Joe Becton cleared 15 cases from the docket of Jones County Recorder's Court and all but two were traffic indictments.

The non-traffic cases included a public drunkenness charge

against William Britt of Pollocksville who paid \$16 for that mistake and Otis Roberts of Pollocksville was given a choice between 30 days in jail or making restitution for a worthless check and payment of the court costs.

Speeders who paid off included Michael Lee McDonald,

Another Law Suit Filed Over Brown's Little White House in Pollocksville

During the past week one more law suit has been filed —

Charles E. Britt, Harold Appleby and John Fleuret of Camp Lejeune, Clayton Lee McCausley of Warner Robbins Air Base, Georgia, Woodrow Bennett Jr. of New Bern route 4, Robert W. Thorn of Cherry Point, Wallace Earl Moore of Oriental route 1, and Albert Opdecam Jr. of Delhi, Ontario.

A driving without license charge against Charles Lee Sumrell of Kinston was not pressed. William Eubanks of Richmond, Va. paid \$13 for failing to stop at a stop sign. Al Smith Bannerman of Teachey paid \$13 for not having his car inspected and Cullen Hubert Boswell of Stella route 1 paid \$26 for not having a chauffeur license.

hopefully the last about the little white house of Johnny Frank and Mary Belle Brown in Pollocksville.

In this suit brought by the Browns against Contractors Enterprises, Inc. they seek to recover \$14,100 damages; including \$4,100 actual damages and \$10,000 punitive damages.

They allege that on April 29, 1964 they entered into an agreement with representatives of that company to do a \$2,500 job on their home by covering it with aluminum siding.

And they admit signing a blank form for that \$2,500 contract, but they say that the company's representatives fraudulently entered a debt of \$10,425 against their small home.

This fraudulently filed indebtedness was later peddled to a

Cheryl Sasnett Now President of Wyse Forks 4-H Club

At the October meeting of the Wyse Fork 4-H Club officers for the new year were elected and Cheryl Sasnett was named president.

Other officers named to serve with Miss Sasnett were Vice President Melinda Jones, Secretary Sue Moore, Treasurer Joan Davis, Song Leader Beck Sasnett, Devotional Leader Davis Thomas, Reporter Bobby White and Recreation Leader Gerald Davis.

discount house, and that discount house foreclosed on the Browns' Little White House, and they had to buy their own house back for \$6,600, which they point out is \$4,100 more than the agreed cost of the improvement.

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NEXT WEEK BIG WEEK OF JONES COUNTY AGRICULTURAL FAIR. BE SURE TO GO