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ACROSS THE ISLAND

Sherwood Hospital Is Unique In Canada

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FEW PEOPLE know it , perhaps, but we have a comfy, home-like children's hospital here that is unique in this country. The Sherwood Hospital is unique in Canada, Nurse Administrator Mrs Ella Wood told me a few days ago as I talked with her. It is the first cottage type hospital in Canada for mentally retarded children and is a combination of a hospital, home and school.

But, I gathered, the home atmosphere is stressed most of all, although neither of the other two functions is neglected. The effort is to make it in so far as is possible, a home for children who cannot be in their own homes, and some of them have no homes of their own and never will have unless a miracle of healing is available which is not visible on today's medical horizon.

AS MOST of you know, I've travelled this province from North Point to East Cape hunting for interesting and unusual stories for this column. Yet here is a most unusual type of human-interest story a couple of miles from this office, and I have to thank Jack MacAndrew, CBC for telling me about it. Jack who is in charge of outside broadcasts for this region, told me about it a few weeks ago when he was here shooting a film sequence which will be seen on the television program "20-20" this coming Sunday afternoon at 5:30 o'clock.

After talking with Mr. MacAndrew and with some of the hospital staff, and seeing for myself some of the children who are being helped, I earnestly suggest you take the time to watch the late Sunday afternoon program.

Hospital director is Dr. M.N. Beck, and Dr. J.H. O'Hanley and Dr. K. Ross Parker are available as consultants. All admissions and discharges are handled by a board. All of the 21 beds are filled, some children come in for a day care program and a few of the children attend city classes for slow learners.

"We Love The Children"

THE DOMINATING note I found in the hospital is one of happiness and enthusiasm on the part of the staff. "We love the children" was the observation I heard most often from people to whom I talked. And, I was assured, those children are lovable. They are unusually affectionate.

The home atmosphere is based on the "House Parents" plan and four couples look after this part of the program. They include Mr. and Mrs Arthur Paynter who farmed at French River and looked after a light house at Tryon Point, before coming to Charlottetown. Others are Mr. and Mrs. Wellington MacKay who came from Midgell,

Mr. and Mrs. Ambrose MacKinnon, Parkdale and Mr. and Mrs. Harold Coffin, Cherry Hill.

I TALKED with Mrs. Paynter this week - her husband was out at the time - because, they are the ones you will see in the TV show whose subtitle is "The diary of two house parents". Our talk confirmed that the husband-wife team are happy in their work, they are fond of the children and absorbed in the goal, expressed by Mrs. Wood of "giving the children as close to a good home environment as we possibly can" and to "develop the children to their greatest possible potential".

The term "institution" is avoided like the plague. That's one reason why the employees do not wear uniforms.

Based On American School

THE COTTAGE Hospital is based on what Mrs. Wood saw of the South Barry training school in Connecticut, but I gathered that new ideas have been added in the effort to make the program as helpful as possible.

Several of the children came from Riverside Hospital. Indeed, before the Sherwood Hospital was built, there was no other place to send one of these children. Unfortunately there is an age limit and children cannot be kept at Sherwood after their 19th birthday. There is hope that another hospital-home may be developed to care for older retarded persons.

I'm purposely avoiding details, but I was told by all of the people to whom I talked that a great deal of improvement has been seen in most of the children, and the staff members are "very happy" about that.

No child is kept in isolation and there are no locks on the doors. No child has ever run away, I was told.

LIKE THE other house parents, the Paynters spend eight hours a day with the children and the Sunday program will show them helping the children at meals, at play and preparing for bed. Mr. Paynter will tell you in the film that at first he had pity for the children but soon realized that is what they need the least. They are "some of the happiest kids I have ever come in contact with and they appreciate every little thing we do for them."

There are "no major medical break-throughs" at Sherwood Hospital; however sometimes a day brings a small miracle tremendously important in itself. There is, for example, the 16-year old boy who finally learned to lace and tie his own shoes after six months of effort, much of it on shoes fastened to a plastic doll, later on his own shoes. Another child was on massive medication for seven years and now finds it unnecessary after a year at the hospital home.

These are just two examples of a wonderful job that is being done right here in our own province and for our own children.

WHILE DIRECTOR Dr. Beck and his staff guide and advise the house parents, they are constantly encouraged to use their own initiative. This is an experience in kind and loving care as well as in child psychiatry. It's one of the most gripping and heartening stories I've found in my travels "Across the Island".

Horrible Monster At Miminegash

THEY HAD a sea monster on Prince Edward Island 85 years ago and it was based near Miminegash, I find in a scrap book in our library with tales from "Old Charlottetown and P.E.I."

It was August 16, 1879 and Matthew MacDonald and James Doyle were hauling their trawls when "they observed an unusual commotion on the water near them". Suddenly the line MacDonald was hauling was jolted violently and torn through his hands, and "a huge form arose from the sea full 20 feet out of the water."

The pair set all sail to get the boat away from there with all possible speed, but the monster of the deep gave chase. And what a monster it was. Listen to this. The pair described the fish as a sort of snake, striped yellow and white, with a mouth as large as the open end of a puncheon - some snake eh? - "and each time it raised out of the water it uttered a roar like the bellowing of a bull".

MacDONALD TRIED tossing hake to the monster from the load in the boat, in an attempt to pacify it, but the thing greedily devoured the hake and kept coming.

MacDonald appears to have been doing most of the work with the pursuing monster, and he fashioned a weapon from a long knife which he fastened securely to the end of an oar blade. When the pursuer closed the gap and came close to the boat, he rammed the improvised harpoon into the monster's eye, driving the knife clear to the handle or end of the oar blade. The knife broke in the wound. With a roar of pain the monster sank out of sight, the old story relates "reddening the water around with its blood".

Doyle who was watching the performance said he "counted 12 sharp fins on it, each surmounted with a sort of horn, and both men say the fish was 200 feet long".

NEXT DAY while repairing their broken line they took from one of the hooks a large tuft of yellow hair, attached to a piece of skin resembling pigskin. The two men worked for E.G.Fuller and, the story said, this tuft of hair and skin, "could be seen at his establishment."

An incredible yarn for sure, and yet it was told as a true story, with the tuft of hair and skin to prove it. The old timers may have missed many things we enjoy today but they surely did have some colorful tales. I'm wondering if any reader has a clipping describing the monster that inhabited the "bottomless lake" at Portage. I read it in one of the scrapbooks a year ago or more, but cannot find it now.

Harold Botts Is Correct Name

LAST WEEK'S colorful story on fox prices, fur trapping, etc., should have been credited to Harold Botts, Fortune Cove. Frank Weeks tells me I had his name spelled incorrectly in last week's column.