

Senate Interior Committee Studies Measure For New Setup for Alaska's Mentally Ill

BY LEVERETT RICHARDS
Staff Writer, The Oregonian

Pictures on Facing Page

Portland's most intimate — and least advertised — link with Alaska may be broken by a bill now under consideration in the senate.

The bill, H. R. 8009, which passed the house, is now in Senator Guy Cordon's interior committee for senate action. The bill would provide a modernized system for dealing with Alaska's mental cases — including possibility of hospitalization within the territory.

All the territory's mental patients are now cared for at Morningside hospital in Portland, a private institution owned and operated by the Sanitarium company at 10008 S. E. Stark street.

Son Now in Charge

Dr. Henry Waldo Coe, pioneer Portland psychiatrist, first contracted with the federal government to care for Alaska's mentally ill 50 years ago. Morningside, now managed by Wayne Coe, Dr. Coe's son, has won the contract with the interior department ever since.

Alaskan Care Asked

As Alaska developed and new population poured in, especially since World War II, demand has grown for an Alaskan institution, just like other "states." While H. R. 8009 does not provide for the construction of such an institution it would give the territory permission to examine and treat its mental patients in any hospital that could be made available without any cost to the federal government above the \$798,600 now being appropriated annually by congress for the care of the territory's mental patients.

Psychiatric facilities for about 20 patients have been provided in the new Alaska Native Service hospital at Anchorage. Under the bill it would be possible for the territory to start admitting, diagnosing and treating



Dr. William Thompson, devoted, progressive resident psychiatrist at Morningside, practices most of his medicine in informal conferences like this with patients in his office.

new mental patients there, although Morningside has a contract for another four years.

About 70 are admitted each year, and about the same number are discharged, paroled or transferred to other institutions, leaving a year-round roster of about 350 to 360 patients in residence. The incurable or physically infirm patients remain until they die of natural causes. About 120 are women.

Whether hospitalization in Alaska would be better for the mental patient or not has long been argued in medical and governmental circles. Alaskans like Delegate E. L. Bartlett and ex-Governor Ernest Gruening demanded a "home town" hospital as a matter of political pride. They argued that it was un-

fair to Alaskans to have to send their mentally ill friends and relatives 1500 miles away to another state. It branded Alaska as a colony. Others argued that it was cruel to deprive patients and relatives of the opportunity to visit together conveniently.

Relatives Often Harmful

Many physicians, including some Alaskan doctors, say, however, that relatives may do more harm than good to the majority of mental cases. To be cured they may benefit by escape from the environment in which their illness occurred, the doctors point out. Hospital records show less than half the patients have known relatives living in Alaska, however.

Doctors and laymen alike agree that Morningside does an outstanding job of caring for—and curing—its patients. "The care here is equal to that found in any public institution of its kind," according to Dr. George F. Keller, medical officer who supervises the interior department's contract with the hospital. Dr. Keller, a psychiatrist of long experience, approves all admissions and discharges and sets general standards for the institution.

"Our rate of cure compares favorably with any public or private institution of this kind," Henry Coe, assistant to his father, Wayne Coe, manager of the hospital, declared. "Our costs are about half the cost of similar care in a federal hospital in the states and about a fourth the cost of similar care in Alaska, even if it could be obtained there," Coe said.

Visiting a ward where new, often disturbed, cases are received, is like visiting a club lounge.

The nursery where about 20 children live is no different from any modern nursery school. The dining room is being remodeled to provide space for individual tables and to provide the most cheerful, homelike atmosphere possible.

Outside Doctors Assist

In addition to Dr. Keller, Morningside has a fulltime resident psychiatrist, Dr. William W. Thompson, in charge, and a full-time assistant, plus 21 consulting specialists from downtown Portland.

"Actually this is more than the total number of doctors in Anchorage, Alaska's largest city," Coe pointed out.

"There are not enough doctors in most districts of Alaska to permit medical examination of persons suspected of mental illness as proposed by the new Alaskan mental health bill.

"There is only one psychiatrist in the territory," he added.

Aside from Alaska patients a few custodial cases are accepted from the city, county, state and other governmental agencies pending commitment or transportation elsewhere.

Morningside hospital does not accept private cases, but conducts a contract business only. Complete care is provided for the Alaskan patients and also those placed in the hospital by the United States public health service.

Custodial care is given city of Portland and Multnomah county cases on a temporary basis.

Under the present laws patients are held in jails and tried before the nearest federal commissioner where no doctors or hospitals are available. They are then transported to Portland by federal marshals—at the expense of the justice department. Transportation costs do not compare with increased costs of care in Alaska, thanks to costs of living, which run about 50 per cent higher in Alaska than on the mainland.

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Morningside's contract for care of Alaska's mental cases averages about \$800,000 a year, varying with the cost of living index and the number of patients. That averages about \$7 per day per patient.

Surroundings Pleasant

Morningside is not a "hospital" in the usual sense of the word and has none of the appearance of an "institution." It is a 100-acre country club and farm with fine flower gardens, lawns, hedges, fruit and ornamental trees and rambling buildings. A few of the oldest buildings still have heavy screens over the windows, but no one is kept behind bars. There are no screens on the windows of the new buildings. There are no padded cells, no strait jackets, no restraint in evidence, although train-

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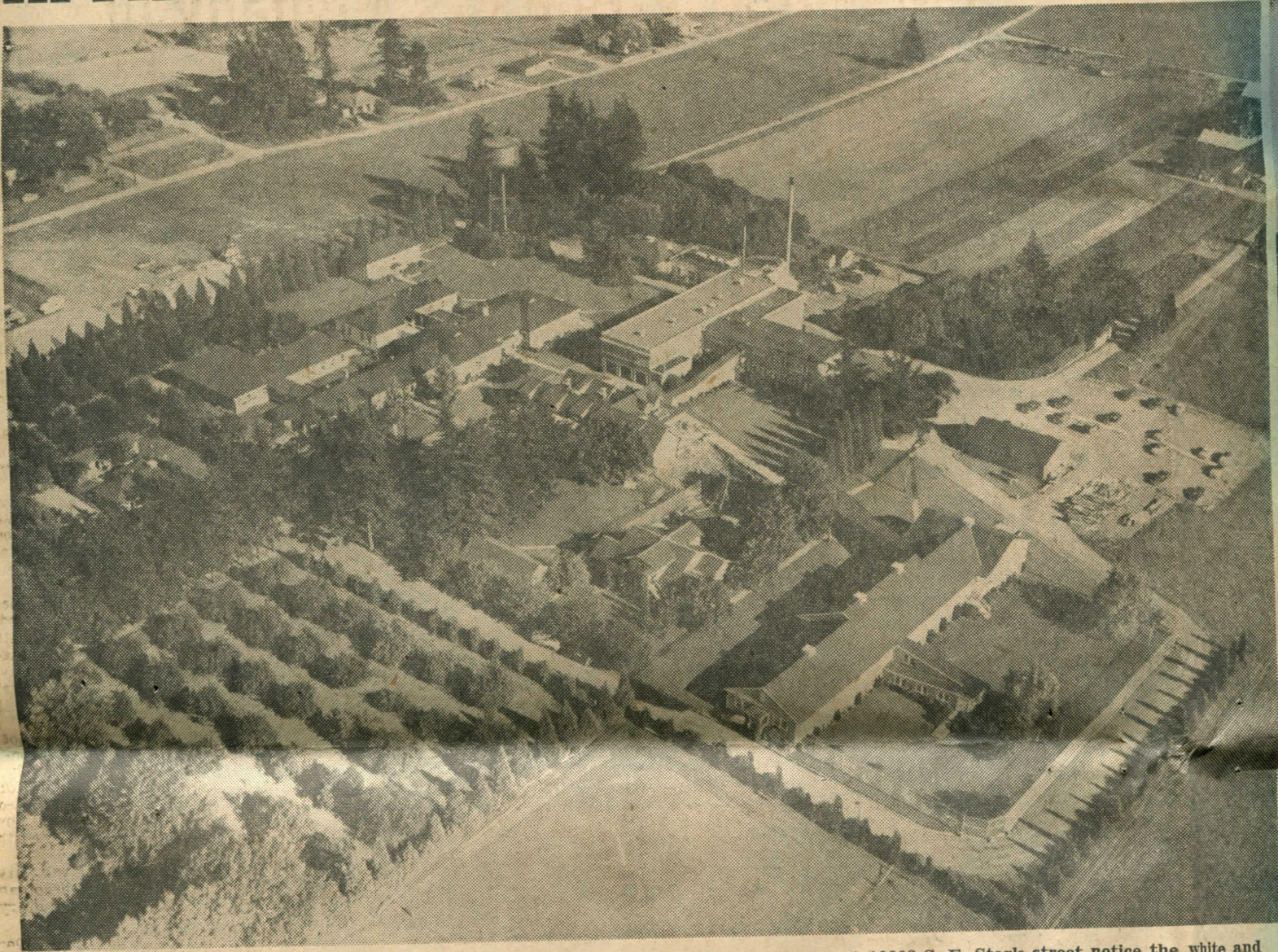
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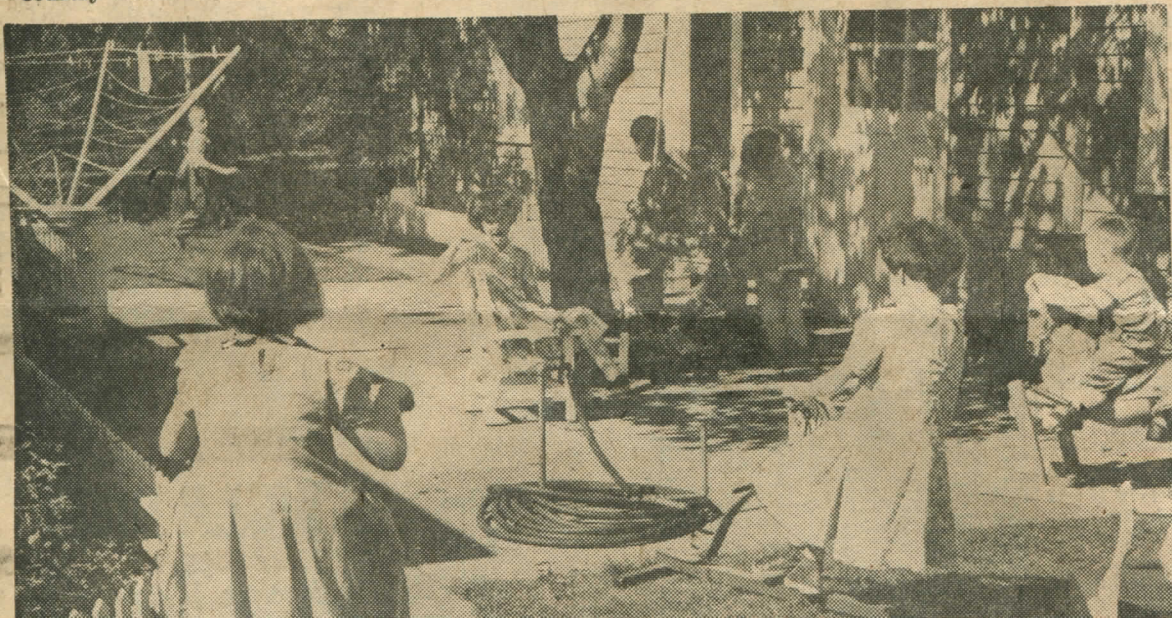
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Ill Alaskans Get Enlightened, Cheer



MORNINGSIDE Few Portlanders who pass Morningside's unobtrusive entrance at 10008 S. E. Stark street notice the white and gray buildings nestled among trees and surrounded by shrubs and flowers. A casual visitor would take it for a country club rather than a mental hospital, as this Oregonian aerial picture by Allan de Lay shows. The grounds cover 100 acres.



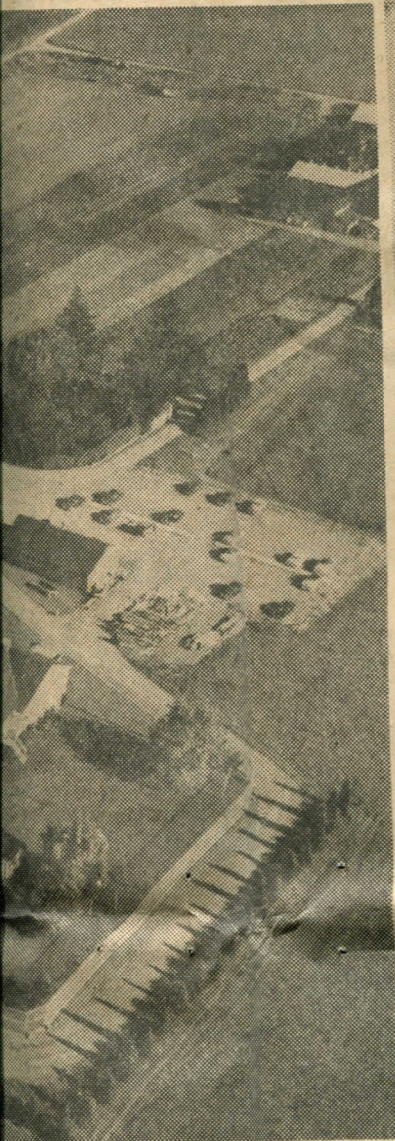
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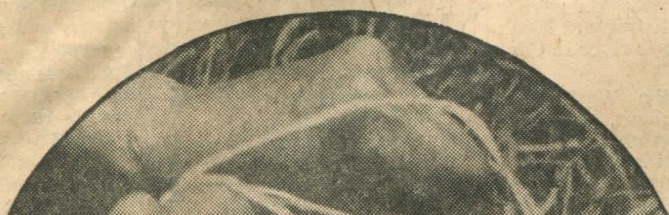
MODERN New building for women, typical of construction continually under way, is built without bars or screens on windows. Patient in foreground has been helping himself to the cherries growing in orchards surrounding part of plant. Many patients are allowed freedom of grounds.

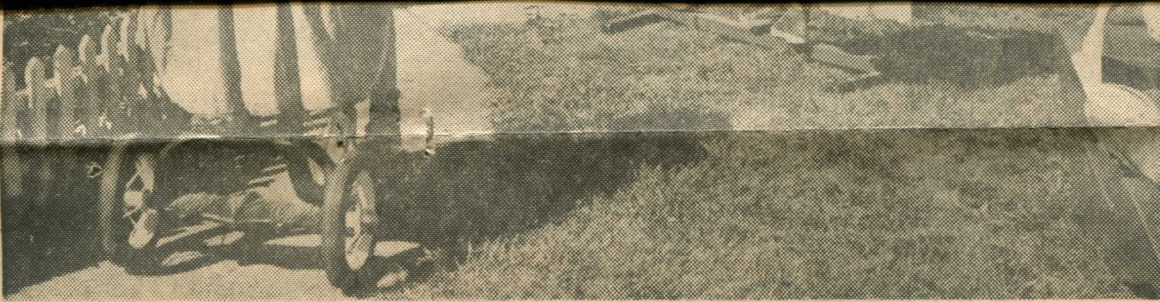
First thing the chechako hears when he sets foot in Alaska is this: There are three sides to the territory—Inside, Outside, and Morningside.

Morningside is the name of the privately owned hospital in Portland which has cared for Alaska's mentally ill and mentally deficient for the past 50 years. How well that job has been done is shown here for the first time.

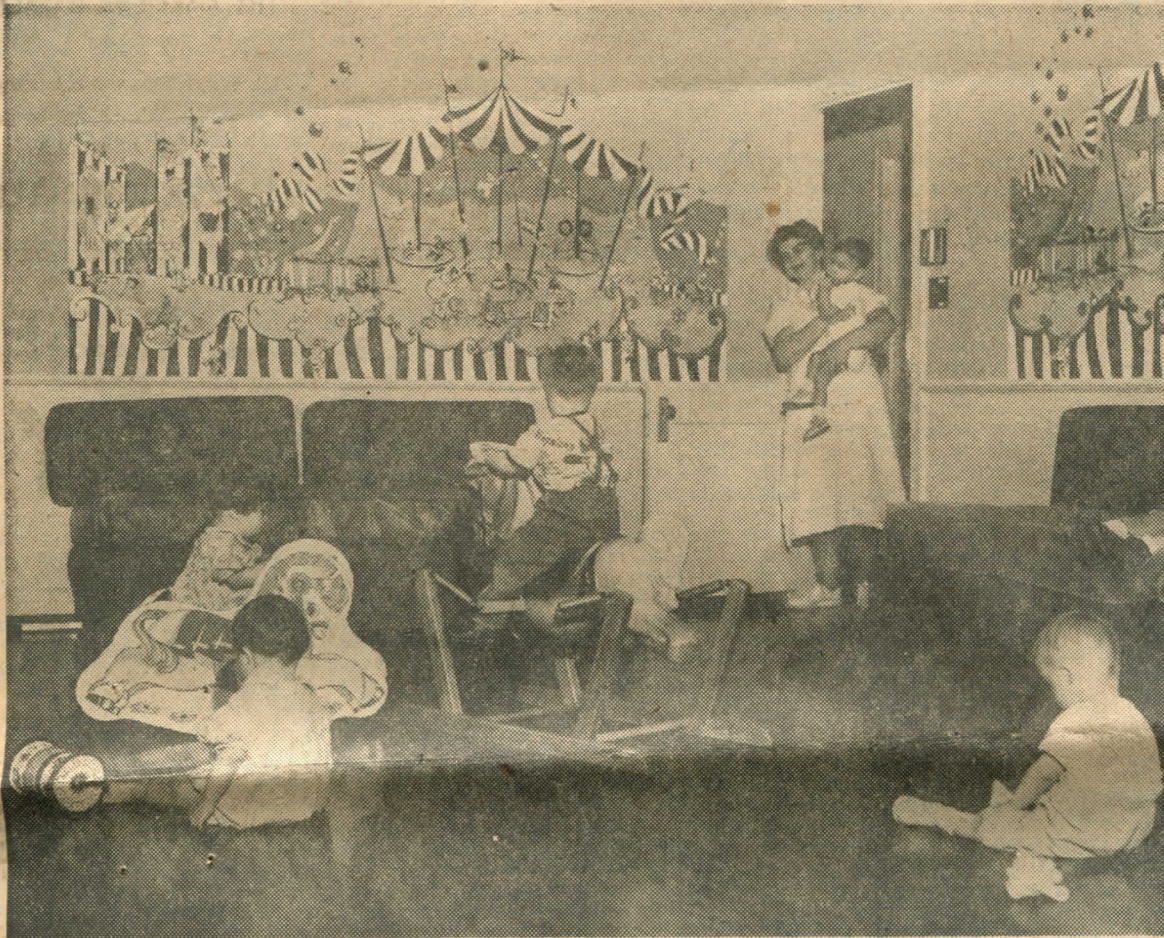
For details of bill now before congress which may replace Morningside see story on opposite page.

All photos by Allan de Lay

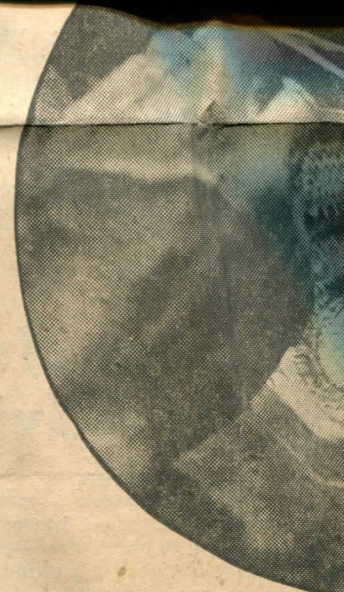




CHILDREN About 20 children are among latest additions to population of Morningside. They are encouraged to play outside on pleasant days. Many, mentally deficient from birth may spend their lives here, apparently as happy with others of their kind as normal children.



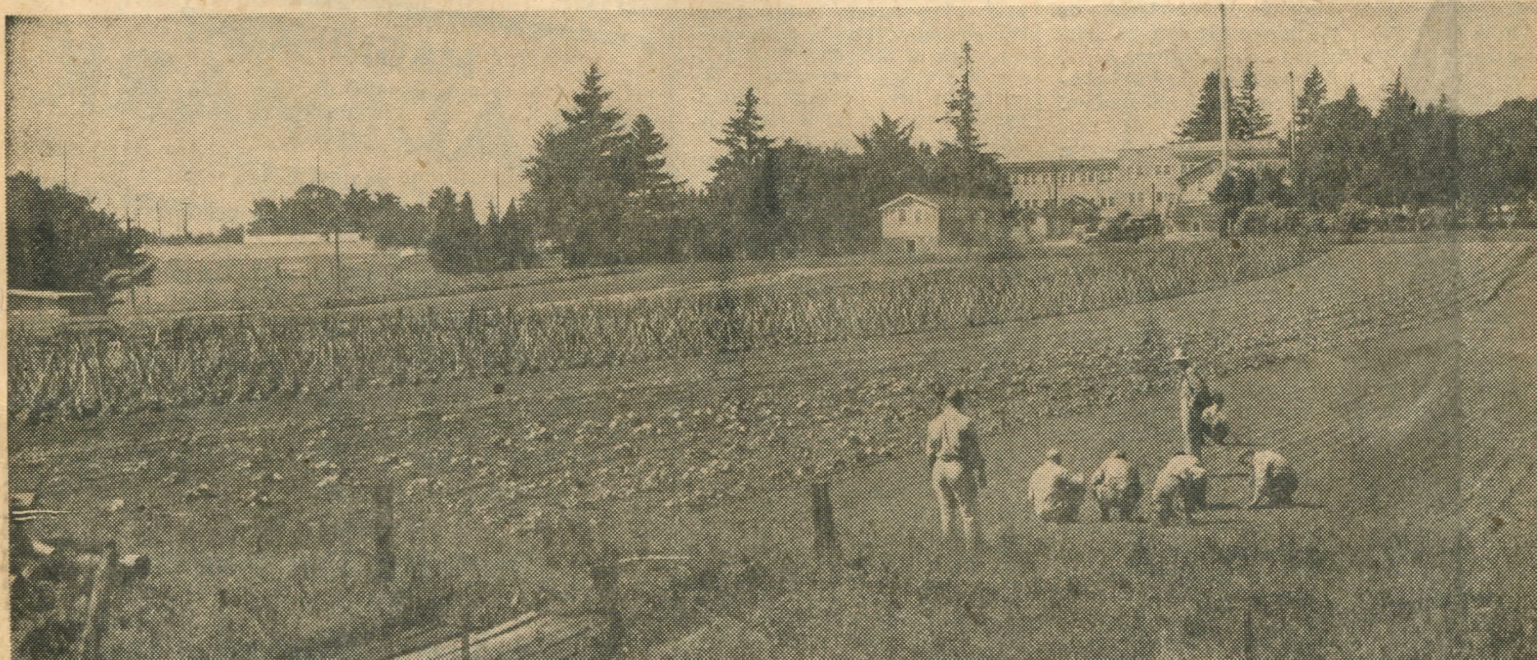
NURSERY Nursery where dozen or so youngest kiddies are raised is bright with circus wallpaper, instead of expected institutional pattern. Morningside's Dr. William Thompson believes such touches brighten children's lives, help promote such development as is possible.

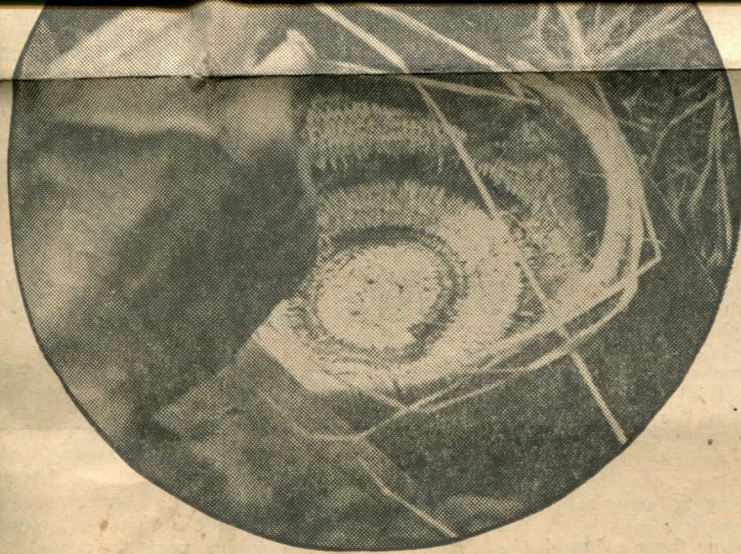


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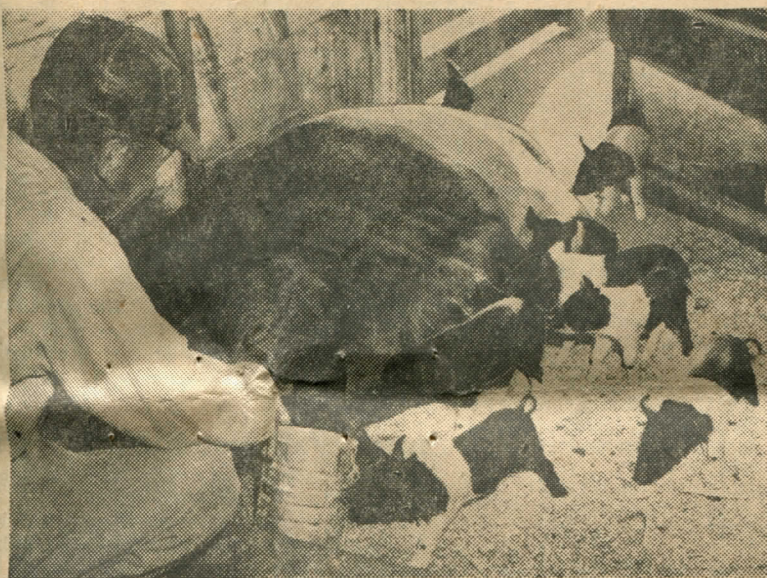


PIGGERY Patient here piglets nuzzling of jobs is provided to give they make progress toward r





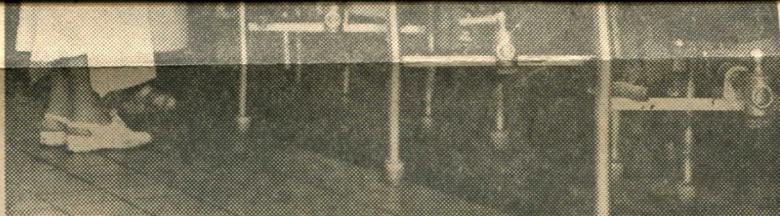
DIOMEDE With a skill learned long ago on Little Diomedé island, this Eskimo works swiftly on native basket. Patients are encouraged to take pride in their handiwork and may keep the money they make from sales to occasional visitors.



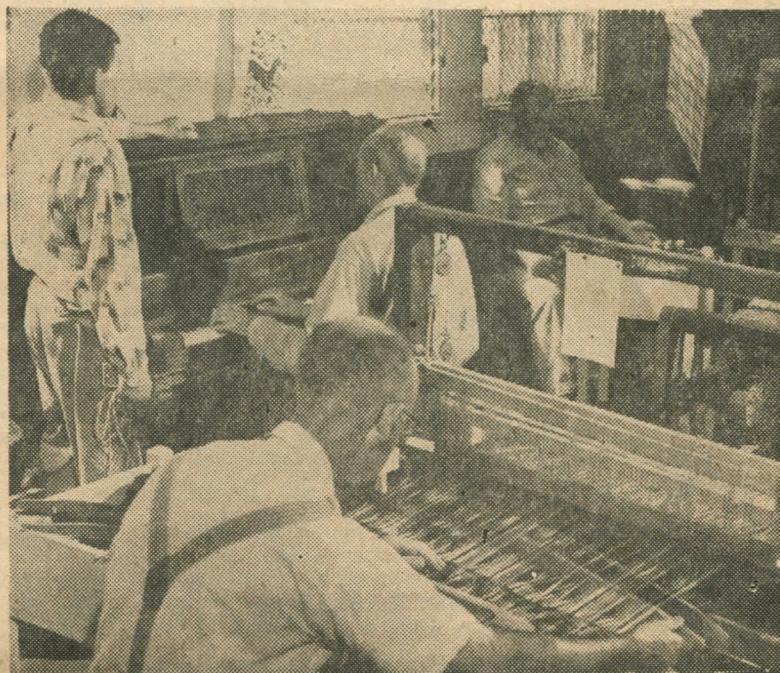
PIGGERY Patient here takes intimate pride in contented piglets nuzzling mother in modern piggery. Variety of jobs is provided to give patients increasing responsibility as they make progress toward recovery, under constant supervision.



Other patients operate machines. Patients also help in cannery and laun-



SOUP'S ON Two women cooks prepare meals for hospital's 345 patients in modern kitchen, with aid of patients. Staff includes 110 employees, about one for every three patients. All are trained to help the patients toward recovery.



THERAPY "Occupational therapy" includes work on hand looms, other types of weaving and braiding. Man in background is encouraged to take interest in music, while lad standing by piano keeps time to music as he works on plastic belt.



BERRIES Native patient took pride in quality of raspberries she was picking for canning, made present of box to Oregonian Photographer Allan de Lay. All patients are Alaska