

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
DIVISION OF TERRITORIES AND ISLAND POSSESSIONS
WASHINGTON

*See page 2106
U.S. Code*

Portland, Oregon
December 16, 1936

The Honorable Ernest Greuning, Director
Division of Territories & Island Possessions
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C.

Re: Frank Richards

Sir:

I am forwarding to you an abstract of the history of one Frank Richards who was admitted to this institution July 21, 1935, and am also enclosing three letters, one which we have written to the United States Attorney of Juneau, his reply and his letter of enclosure to the Attorney General.

This man is classified at the present, and has been classified, as a case of Manic Depressive Psychosis. From the two former admissions he recovered and may be classified as recovered from psychosis at the present time.

There seems to be no question but that this man, during his manic episodes, is hyper-active and quite a typical manic and there seems to be no question but that he did strike the jailor with a stick and this blow, at least, was contributory to the death of the jailor. While Richards' blow caused the man's death, it seems that if one were properly trained in the handling of insane patients he certainly would not have stepped up to Richards when he knew Richards had a stick in his hand. In other words, an attendant trained in the care of the insane would have taken reasonable precaution in the handling of this man. Richards was very disturbed at the time and probably had no idea of inflicting serious damage to the jailor. It was a regrettable incident but injuries to attendants and injuries to patients will occur when insane individuals are cared for in a jail as they are at Juneau.

The point of the present discussion is this: Richards, at the present time, may be classified as recovered and it is not felt that a man who is not psychotic should be retained in a mental institution. A letter was written to the United States Attorney in Alaska requesting information as to whether or not he desired Richards to be returned to Alaska for trial for murder. Evidently he does not. The question now is, what shall we do with this man?

The patient has no desire to return to Alaska; his brother in California has a position for him and can give him supervision and care for him. This matter was taken up with the Department in order that a disposition might be rendered for if we discharged the man, although he is sane at present, we might be subject to criticism from the Attorney General's Department.

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It is a fact there may be another psychotic episode within a year, or it may be five years before there is another episode. It is customary for most mental institutions to discharge a manic when he is recovered although it is well known that there may be a recurrence of the psychotic episode.

May we have a decision as to the desire and procedure in this case? The delay in presenting this case has been due to the fact that we have been in communication with the Colorado authorities regarding transfer of this man to Colorado, where he is legally a resident. They have failed to cooperate. Also, there was a delay of six weeks in a reply from Alaska.

Respectfully,

John L. Haskins
John L. Haskins, M.D.
Medical Supervisor

JLH.F
4 enclosures

(COPY - No. 1)

MORNINGSIDE HOSPITAL

PORTLAND, Oregon

October 22, 1936

George W. Folta,
Asst. United States Attorney
Juneau, Alaska

Re: Frank Richards

Dear Sir:

We are again writing you relative to the above patient who was admitted to this institution July 1, 1935. We have had former correspondence with you in September, 1935 relative to this patient.

This man's diagnosis, as you undoubtedly know, is Manic Depressive Psychosis, Manic type. This is a recurrent psychosis from which the patient recovers and may be entirely normal for a period of from six months to ten years. At the present time this patient shows no evidence of psychosis and must be classified as Recovered and, regardless of past evidence of psychosis, it is impossible for a hospital for the insane to retain a patient who is recovered and can be classified as not psychotic.

This brings us up to the question as to what is your desire relative to this man. Do you want him returned to Alaska to stand trial for the crime which he committed previous to admission?

Some disposition must be made of this case in the very near future and we would be very pleased to hear from you as to your decision.

Yours very truly,

John L. Haskins, M.D.
Medical Supervisor

JLH.F

FRANK RICHARDS, white, male, age 29, born in Nebraska. Citizen, Single.
Admitted to Morningside Hospital, Portland, July 21, 1935 from Juneau, Alaska.

FAMILY HISTORY:

One sister is psychotic and is in the Lincoln State Hospital, Nebraska, with a diagnosis of Epilepsy. Father died quite young of ulcer of the stomach; mother died at the age of 64 of cancer. Has one brother in California; one sister married in Nebraska, apparently normal, and one sister was killed in a railroad accident in 1930.

PERSONAL HISTORY:

He was born in Beaver City, Nebraska, July 31, 1906. Father was a farmer, lived on a farm through childhood. Nothing is known of birth or early development. Said to have been rather healthy. Had pneumonia as a child and also had the usual childhood diseases. The family moved to Colorado in 1917. He finished high school and entered Peru State Normal School of Peru, Nebraska. He evidently did not adjust there and left after six weeks or so. He then worked in mines for a time and road construction, and in April 1925 went to Alaska; worked as a miner in Alaska until March 1927 when he and his brother returned to the states and stayed until the fall of 1928, most of the time in Colorado. He returned to Alaska in the fall of 1928 and again began working in the mines; remained there until the spring of 1930.

We know nothing of his personality except as has been observed in the hospital. He seems to be frankly of the extrovert type; admits alcohol to excess and is much interested in the opposite sex, having been rather promiscuous, and engaged a number of times. Seems to have been unable to stay in one place for any length of time.

PSYCHOSIS:

Late in 1929 he began to be quite hyper-active, developed some rather grandiose ideas about starting an air port near Juneau; showed rather poor judgment; began drinking quite heavily during the winter, finally became argumentative and was arrested in May 1930. He slept poorly, was unstable, and was committed to Morningside Hospital on May 29, 1930. At that time he was rather hyper-active, ugly and suspicious.

Physical examination, including blood and spinal Wassermann were negative.

During his residence he was unstable, in restraint a considerable part of the time. Delusions or hallucinations were never listed. He gradually quieted down, made an excellent adjustment and was discharged August 8, 1930. Diagnosis Manic Depressive Psychosis, Manic phase, condition recovered. - - -

Intervening History

After leaving the hospital he went to Nebraska, worked on road construction, cement gangs, and went to Victor, Colorado where he worked in the mine until May of 1933, having voted there in 1932 and is probably still properly classified as a resident of Colorado. He returned to Alaska in May, 1933, again worked in the mines at Chichagof. About this time his mother died, which apparently worried him and he again began drinking. He became over-active and talkative.

(Frank Richards, continued)

He was re-admitted to Morningside April 28, 1934. This time he was hyper-active, talkative, meddlesome and mischievous, teased the attendants and other patients and annoyed them; was bumptious and impertinent.

Physical examination was essentially negative.

There were no hallucinations; some elevation of mood, euphoria and flight of ideas. He gradually quieted down and was discharged on June 2, 1934. The diagnosis Manic Depressive Psychosis, Manic phase, condition recovered.

Intervening History

He went to El Paso to visit a brother for a short time; spent a short time in Nebraska, and in June 1934 he returned to Alaska. He worked in a mine for some time; began to drink to a considerable extent and finally his arrest was precipitated by his getting up at a meeting in a social hall in Cordova while he was nude. While under arrest and in jail, on June 20, 1935 he was apparently hyper-active, restless, disturbed, and when the jailor, who was a man of advanced age, put his head near the bars of the cell in which Richards was confined, Richards struck him with a small stick which was used to pound on the bars to attract the jailor's attention. The jailor died a short time afterward. Cause of death being indicated as a skull fracture due to the blow from Richards' stick.

He was re-admitted to Morningside Hospital July 21, 1935. On admission there was elevation of mood, were no delusions nor hallucinations, there was psychomotor activity, flight of ideas, was teasing, aggressive and meddlesome.

Physical examination negative except for marks and bruises from restraint which had been placed on him.

He had only vague ideas of what happened to him and what he had done in Alaska. He gradually quieted down and for some months has been showing no signs of psychosis. The Diagnosis of Manic Depressive, Manic type, has been retained and at the present time he may be classified as recovered.

December 16, 1936

John L. Haskins
John L. Haskins, M.D.
Medical Supervisor
Morningside Hospital
Portland, Oregon

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY

First Division, District of Alaska
JUNEAU

December 8, 1936

John L. Haskins, M.D.
Medical Supervisor
Morningside Hospital
Montavilla Station
Portland, Oregon

Re: Frank W. Richards, Insane

Dear Sir:

Answering your letter under date of October 22nd, will state that I have read the same carefully and given the same deepest consideration.

I can hardly see how it is possible, in view of your statement that this type of insanity is recurrent and it is possible that the normal condition might remain for a period of from six months to ten years, that it can be said that he is cured. Surely no one is cured to such a degree that it can be said he is safe to be at large, especially one afflicted as this man is of so violent a type.

In view of the trouble we have had in this Division with this particular patient, and the practical impossibility of convicting this man of murder or any other charge, I must again most respectfully protest his dismissal from your institution at this time. At least hold the idea of releasing him in abeyance until I can get an answer to my letter directed to the Attorney General of the United States requesting action in the matter, a copy of which I herewith enclose for your information.

As stated in previous letters directed from this office, it was not the intention then nor is it the intention now, to instruct your institution just how you should handle your cases, but being fully aware of the trouble we have had with this patient heretofore and the feeling in this community against him because of the killing of old man Childs, and my own personal opinion that this man is unfit to be at large, I would feel that I was derelict in my duty to the Government, the people and the patient did I agree to allow this man to be dismissed and replaced in society without a protest.

I hope you fully appreciate my position, and will hold this man until we have further communication from Washington.

Very truly yours,
Wm. A. Holzheimer
United States Attorney

The Attorney General
Washington, D. C.

Re: Frank W. Richards, Insane

Sir:

Enclosed find copy of correspondence in my file in the matter of Frank W. Richards now confined at Morningside Hospital for the insane at Portland, Oregon, wherein the insane are committed from the Territory of Alaska, together with the previous record of this patient along the same lines. The United States Marshal also informs me that he has seen letters in the possession of the patient Richards wherein there was disclosed information that certain members of his family were similarly effected. Be this true, his insanity is evidently of the heredity type.

A short statement of the facts in this particular case is as follows: The patient was taken off a boat, while in port, because of his irrational and violent actions, being immediately taken to the Federal jail. Within the hour after his confinement, in some manner he got hold of a piece of broomstick and hit the guard, whose name was Childs, a rather elderly man, over the head and Childs died within a few minutes thereafter. While we filed a charge of murder against Richards, at the same time we had him brought in before the U. S. Commissioner to try him for his sanity, the verdict of the jury based upon the facts and the expert testimony of the doctor, being that he was insane. He was thereupon committed to Morningside.

From the facts in possession of this office and the circumstances surrounding the case you can readily see that it would be impossible to convict this man of murder, or any other charge, then or now, as his insanity at the time was of the most violent type, and a jury would never convict even though he may have now a lucid interval. Expert alienists would put the Government out of business in no time at all. However, I need not discuss these particulars with you because it is self-evident.

The thing that exasperates me is why should a man of this type be turned loose? There is no question but that he is dangerous to be at large. If the testimony of the doctors is to be believed his insanity is of the recurrent type. They say that the patient may be normal for a period of from six months to ten years. You cannot say from that statement that he is cured; there is no telling just when he may have another outbreak, even though it be not before six months to ten years; just why should public safety be endangered under such a possibility. It would seem to me that life is too precious to take any such chances, which follows it certainly would be. From past experiences and his record in this community we certainly do not want him running around at large. From his record you will see that this is the third time he has been sent out from this Division, and we certainly have been fortunate indeed that on previous occasions no one was killed.

The care and custody of the insane of Alaska is vested in the Interior Department, and I would respectfully request that the Department take up this matter with them with a view of having such department instruct the officers of the institution wherein Richards is confined, to-wit, Morningside Hospital, Portland, Oregon,

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that they not release such patient because of the menace he will constitute to society.

I am writing the officers in charge of Morningside Hospital protesting Richards' release and advising them that I am taking up this matter with the department, and requesting them to detain the patient, Richards, at least until I can receive a reply from the Department of Justice directing my further action.

In view of the urgency of this matter, respectfully request prompt action from the Department so I can govern myself accordingly.

Yours very truly,

Wm. A. Holzheimer,
United States Attorney

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF FIRST ASSISTANT SECRETARY
WASHINGTON

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JAN 15 1937

*9-1-10
General*

The Honorable,

The Attorney General. — *in ltr*

My dear Mr. Attorney General:

The letter of December 22 (File BM 95-4-21) from the Assistant Attorney General to the Director, Division of Territories transmitting papers relating to the case of Frank Richards, an inmate of Morningside Hospital, has been given careful consideration and the Medical Supervisor at Morningside, Dr. John L. Haskins, has been instructed not to release Mr. Richards except upon order of the court after habeas corpus proceedings.

Sincerely yours,

(Sgd.) OSCAR L. CHAPMAN
First Assistant Secretary.

COPY FOR THE DIVISION OF TERRITORIES