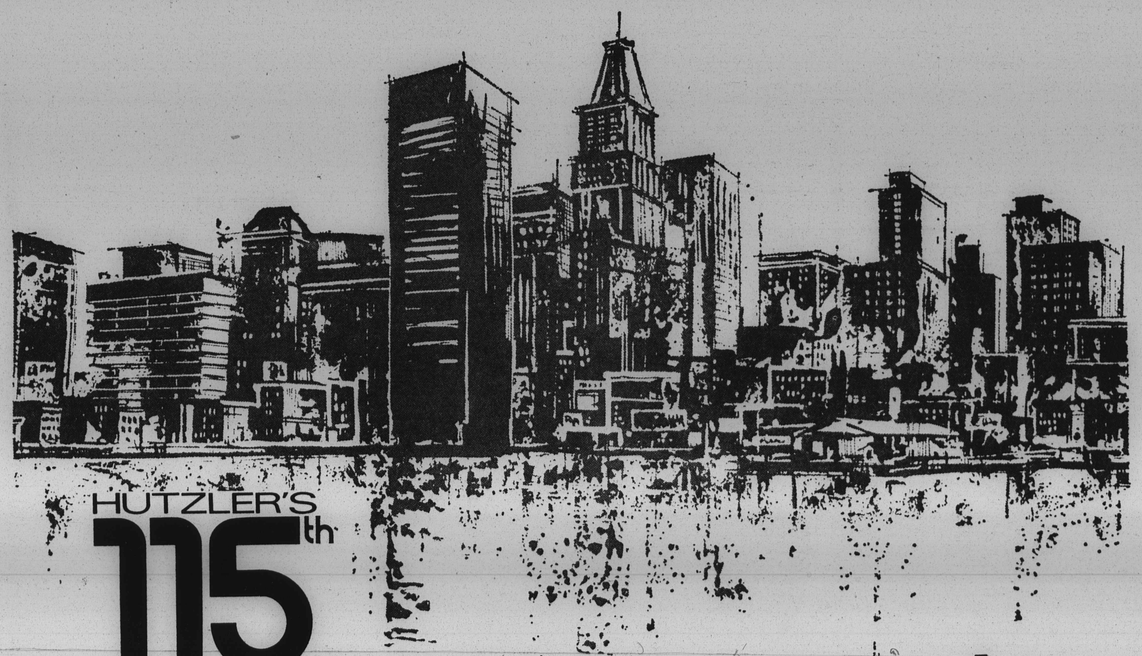

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1858 – 1973 OUR 115TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

MAJOR SPEAKS TO THE PEOPLE

What to do if you need help with a mentally ill person

By
MAJ. JAMES A. WATKINS

Editor's Note: Maj. James A. Watkins is chief of the Police Community Relations Section of the Baltimore City Police Department.

In the past week or so I worked on a problem that was very challenging, even to a twenty three (23) year veteran police officer, that was how to get a suspected mentally ill person committed or even examined by two doctors, as required by Maryland law

During my learning process about "what to do in the case of a suspected mental patient," I found the following procedure to be the best steps to take.

Before a layman (family, friend, etc.) can have a person committed or even examined - after suspecting someone of being mentally ill, one must:

Appear before the court (either a judge or court commissioner) explain why you feel that the person you suspect of being mentally ill should be examined by two doctors - you must show that the person is a danger to other persons or his or herself.

— The judge or court commissioner must have enough evidence to issue a warrant or summons to bring the suspected mental person into court — after which an order is signed for police to transport the suspected mental person to City Hospitals for evaluation.

The above described procedure has caured an untold number of lay people an almost insurmountable amount of frustration. For an example here is a hypothetical situation:

An Army veteran suffers a service connected mental disorder, he is given an honorable discharge and a pension (partial), he later has a relapse and the family takes him to a veteran hospital where the veteran signs for voluntary admission.

The doctors examine and agree that this veteran needs help and should be placed on a locken ward

Two days later the veteran decides that he doesn't want to stay on the locked ward and signs himself out of the hospital — against the wishes of doctors.

By law the hospital staff cannot keep the veteran because he voluntarily signed himself in and can leave anytime he pleases — even if he was a raving maniac — with homicidal tendencies.

The hospital doctors explained that the only way a mental person can be kept against his will is by court order — which leads you back to proving to a judge that the person is a danger to society.

My question is, how can you prove this to a judge, until the suspect commits a crime? FRUSTRATING, ISN'T IT

As a police officer I Am not criticizing the law — the only reason for this column is to try and help the many frustrated people in the community.

I am not promising an absolute solution — only the help of the Police Community Relations Section in solving your problem ...Phone 396-2710 — at night 396-2421 and ask for a Community Relations Officer.

School group holds retreat here

The School Community Council of the Urban/Rural School Development Program is holding a weekend retreat Apr. 27-29 at the Baltimore Hilton Hotel.

Purpose of the retreat is to make plans for council projects which will implement the program's goal: better student achievement through teacher-parent power.

Mrs. Thelma Cox, program manager, and her two assistants, Mrs. Frances F. Jolley and Mrs. Bernice Lewis, are working with a special planning team including Baltimore city staff personnel, as well as parents and community persons.

The planning team includes Mrs. Vivien Trent, Mrs. Florence Bailey, Mrs. Bernice Parker, Mrs. Dorothy Evans, Miss Melvina Griffin, Walter Reed, Mrs. Naomi Cunningham, Mrs. Katie Cottman, and Mrs. Rosa Townes.

Included as participants in this retreat will be a full range of school-oriented persons: teachers, administrators, parents, community personnel, and students.

The four schools involved in the urban-rural area are: Coppin Elementary, Henson Elementary, Lemmel Junior High, and Douglass Senior High.

TURN IN A PUSHER

Do you know a dope pusher? Don't tell us your name. Just call 752-3046 and tell us what you know, where he is.

Mandel signs first women's rights bill

Governor Mandel yesterday (Thursday signed into law a measure designed to lesson discrimination against married and separated women, the first legislation of its kind enacted anywhere in the United States.

Under the provisions of H.B. 119, no seller or financial institutions shall discriminate against any buyer or prospective buyer wishing to establish a retail credit account because of the sex or material status of the buyer.

Further, the new law empowers married and separated women to engage in any business, to contract, to sue upon their contracts and also to sue for the recovery and security or protection of their property as if they were single.

AFRO reporter trial rescheduled for May 10

Scott Ponemone, an AFRO reporter who was arrested April 9, for disorderly conduct at Sinai Hospital, while taking pictures of policemen guarding the room of a man charged with murder was schedule to appear at Northwest District Court for a hearing Wednesday.

Mr. Ponemone stated that he received a call from his lawyer Richard Falcon, on Monday night. "He told me he had talked to Peter Lewis, assistant state's attorney at Northwest district and my case would be nolprossed, that I would not have to come to court."

"Later Tuesday, I called Mr. Lewis so I could get a copy of the court action for my personal records. Mr. Lewis told me he could have issued a bench warrant for my arrest for not appearing in court.

"He said their was some confusion because of what he had told the lawyer the night before. My trial has been rescheduled for May 10, at Northwest.

Mr. Ponemone was taking pictures outside the room of Michael Garland, 23, who is accused of slaying a police officer.

He was charged with disorderly conduct after he took a picture of policemen and a fire department ambulance man outside the hospital room. His photo was published April 10.

Michael Garland remains in City Jail. A date has not been set for his trial.

Dalton on legislature: 'busy fighting as ever'

Calling the 1973 Legislative Session "a warm up for next year's election", Senator Robert L. Dalton (Balto. City, 2nd) explained, "we were as busy fighting for causes and against snakes as ever."

Sen. Dalton takes some personal credit for killing a bill to ban flip top cans. He also succeeded in halting a bill which would have narrowed unemployment insurance benefits.

Four measures introduced by Senator Dalton were approved by the Legislature and are due to be signed into law by the Governor.

These include a bill to allow insurance of a traffic-like summons to residents of Baltimore who fail to keep property in satisfactory sanitary condition.

Sen. Dalton's bill to regulate employment agencies also passed in amended form. As enacted agencies in Baltimore City would be limited to charging no more than 10 per cent of compensation received by an applicant for placement.

The Governor is also expected to sign Senator Dalton's bill to prohibit those engaged in selling real estate from steering prospective buyers to certain areas because of racial patterns.

Senator Dalton's bill to require that banks obtain a signed statement that depositors understand the right of suvivorship when opening joint trust accounts will also become law.

UMBC plans 10th year celebration

"Meet UMBC-73", a 10th anniversary celebration, is Saturday.

Saluting the April 30, 1973, landmark when the legislature passed the act establishing the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, will be many activities beginning at 10 a.m.

It took the signature of then Governor J. Millard Tawes to actually bring the college to life and even then it wasn't until the fall of 1966 when UMBC opened the doors for its first semester.

Each visitor to the campus celebrating its first decade of growth will have the opportunity to tour the grounds, facilities, attend sports events, view demonstrations and workshops and attend sample lectures from 18 of the many disciplines offered at the growing suburban campus.

Saturday's activities have been planned as a sample of the day-to-day occurrences of a growing university with a mid-day lunch break to allow Maryland's former governor, J. Millard Tawes, to speak as honored guest of the day.

Throughout the day, faculty members will bring before the public one aspect of their prospective subjects. Their lectures will include such topics as "American Women Win the Vote" from the psychology department, and "World Population Controversy-Is There a Population Problem?" from the sociology department.

The day will conclude after an exclusive 3 p.m. recital by the university's orchestra conducted by Prof. Robert Gerle, chamber choir, directed by Dr. Terrance Anderson, and dancers choreographed and supervised by Prof. Elizabeth Walton.

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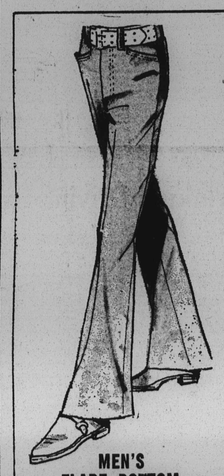

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