

Via Air Mail



Mr. Elmer Key Sanders  
2002 - Holcomb Drive  
Houston  
Texas

V.A. Hospital

Souder  
2745 Buks Rd  
Birmingham  
Ala.



Mrs. T.E. Piazza

May 15, 1950

Dear Mother & Papa -

Happy Mother's Day yesterday  
I hope you both had a big  
day - big enough to partially repay  
you for all the fun you gave us.

We had a beautiful day here.  
Our first warm, sunny Sunday  
in ages. Tom got in Sat. night  
about 10 after a 10 day trip through  
Mexico & Texas & was exhausted.  
So he sat on his little tractor-  
mower & soaked in the sun.  
He had a nice evening with  
Sandy while in Houston and

said he looked well & seemed to feel wonderful.

We have had such a run of trouble lately that I am sure once it is all cleared away we will have smooth sailing for many months to come. The furnace and the pump both went wrong Mon. morning before Tom left. So he lined up the workmen & went off confident that all would be well. The furnace was fixed by Tues. night, but it took until Sat. afternoon to get the pump working. What a time we had. I'd have never lived through it except for Miriam De Sylva's help. I took the children there for baths, did my laundry there.

carried drinking water from there.  
What an experience. And of course  
on top of it all the children got  
colds & Maria needed a couple  
pages customs for a pageant at  
school. Things are under control  
now if I can get Tommy's cold  
cleared up.

Rusta's visit was postponed.  
Since the lakes in Canada are  
not thawed so Bill will go later  
& she will come then. I guess it  
is better this way - if she had  
arrived last Tues., I would  
have gone to bed & left her  
with house, children et al.

The Sales Conference at Shelburne  
opens tomorrow, and that is a  
hectic week for men & wives.

The men are busy all ~~night~~<sup>day</sup>, entertain-  
ing all night & exhausted by  
the end of the week. The wives  
are not usually involved, but  
feel the strain to some extent.

Just resigned from all but  
one of my clubs and I feel so  
free. My part in the activities  
always came at an inconvenient  
time and made such a burden.

Mary plans to work at Benny's  
on ~~Fridays~~<sup>Sat.</sup> this summer and for  
me on ~~Fridays~~. Which is fine  
with me. She graduates from  
high school this June and  
has promised to come out and  
live here for six weeks ~~or~~<sup>or</sup>  
so in Sept., but I feel that  
even though she is very loyal,

her days with us are numbered.  
She doesn't really want to do  
housework for always and will  
probably keep her eyes open for  
any opportunity to better herself &  
I can't blame her. I <sup>feel</sup> sure of her  
help in Sept. & can't really worry  
about the other until it happens.

Miriam tells me her cleaning  
woman wanted a raise to \$1 an  
hour! So she & Oscar decided to  
devote Sat. to cleaning the house &  
put the money into a dishwasher.

It's time to get Maria now.  
I'm sorry that the children being  
ill prevented me from getting  
your remembrance off on time.

I have much love to all  
Just written  
Idene - D. 12. 9 Idene

# V. A. Hospitals' Growth Laid To Non-Service Disabilities

## Chaos Seen as Round-Robin of Empty Beds Goes On—Staff Shaken by Economy Cuts

By HOWARD A. RUSK, M. D.

Two months ago, the Administrator of Veterans Affairs sent dismissal notices to 7,828 employes, of whom 4,768 were in the medical service, partly to meet an anticipated deficit of \$30,000,000 for the fiscal year ending in June.

The order dismissing the medical employes has now been temporarily stayed, but the Bureau of the Budget has taken no action on the V. A.'s request for \$2,000,000 of additional funds to keep these employes for the next fiscal year, nor the additional \$23,000,000 needed to staff the new hospitals that will be completed next year.

Two weeks ago, however, the House passed H. R. 5965 directing the Administrator of Veterans Affairs to proceed with the construction of facilities for 16,000 additional beds at a cost of \$279,000,000, and a yearly operating cost of \$150,000,000. These 16,000 new beds are in addition to the 32,000 new beds in fifty-seven new V. A. hospitals already provided for by Congressional action, fifty-four of which will be under construction within a year.

Further complicating the picture is the fact that the V. A. now has 8,000 beds that are unoccupied because of inability to recruit medical personnel. Most of these beds are in poorly situated, outlying hospitals in remote areas.

### "Operation Confusion"

To the average taxpaying citizen, this situation just doesn't make sense. To dismiss almost 8,000 employes when facing a 32,000 bed expansion, and then to add 16,000 more beds, adds up to "Operation Confusion." The Veterans Administration has said on many occasions that it cannot adequately staff more than 120,000 beds and provide top medical service. Congress has now said, "You will staff 147,300 beds, 48,000 more than you are now operating."

It should be remembered, when trying to evaluate this turbulent situation, that approximately two-thirds of all V. A. hospital beds are occupied by veterans with non-service connected disabilities, for the rule of admission in V. A. hospitals for veterans with non-service connected disabilities is the old elastic yardstick, "If the patient states he cannot pay for medical care and if a bed is available \* \* \*." So goes the round-robin—fill up the bed, and then put on the pressure for more beds to care for more non-service connected cases.

In announcing the recently proposed precipitous personnel cuts in the face of an obvious need for even more personnel in the near future, V. A. Administrator Carl Gray said the reasons were purely budgetary. This, however, must

have been foreseeable for a good many months, and yet no attempt was made by the V. A., until pressure was applied, to get a deficiency appropriation to avert them.

### Blow Dealt to Morale

If the dismissals had to be made because of lack of money, a systematic and orderly cut over a period of months could have been accomplished on a selective basis, and would not have had the serious effect on morale that it has had, an effect that, regardless of the stay of the order, will continue to go unhealed. Although the blood-flow has been stopped, the abrupt and ruthless fall of the axe presents a healing problem that is far from solved, and the deep scars remain.

Typical remarks have been: "It is the same old story—no security"; "I made a great mistake when I decided to cast my life and lot with the V. A.; I should have stayed in private practice."

H. R. 5695 has now been sent to the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee, where, interestingly, no action was taken pending the return to the capital of Senator Claude Pepper, foremost Senate advocate of the expansion of V. A. hospitals, from his campaign for renomination, in which he was defeated.

### Veto Urged, If Needed

If the Senate, like the House, puts political considerations above the practicalities of the situation, and passes the bill, it is to be hoped that President Truman will courageously veto it as he did last year. This, however, will have only a temporary effect.

If order is to come out of the present chaos of Government hospitalization, it will probably result only from a top-level, nonpartisan committee that has the power to evaluate and coordinate the total governmental hospital program. Ironically, the Federal Hospital Council does this for civilian hospitals, which are receiving Federal grants-in-aid under the Hospital Construction and Survey Act, but there is no similar effective group for coordination of Federal hospital construction.

Without some topside, long-range planning, there apparently will be no end to the use of the "elastic yardstick" in the future, which means that there will be no end in sight as to the number of beds built or dollars spent.

**Make your bath a shower and take it as quickly as possible. Turn the water on only for rinsing. Turn it off for soaping. This process takes only five to seven gallons of water and makes possible a drastically needed saving. Water is precious. Conserve it.**





**MARRIED SATURDAY**—In an afternoon ceremony at Independent Presbyterian Church, Miss Elizabeth Rouzer became the bride of Lt. Comdr. William Francis Heavey, Jr., United States Navy. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. I. W. Rouzer. After a wedding trip to Sea Island, New Orleans and Houston, the couple will be at home in Sumter, S. C., where Comdr. Heavey is stationed with the U. S. Naval Air Corps.