

## Nina Ridenour papers

### Section 88, Pages 2611 - 2640

Nina Ridenour's papers consist of correspondence; press releases and other publicity materials; book reviews (both those for her own books and reviews written by her); manuscripts and draft versions, sometimes with annotations and corrections; comments and critiques; biographical data; bibliographies; reading and research notes; reference materials; a grant application; outlines and lecture notes; invitations; newspaper clippings; scripts; books, pamphlets, and other publications; and other related materials. Some correspondents include Menninger family members and Menninger Clinic staff, Aldous Huxley, Clara Beers (Clifford Beers' widow), and Abraham and Bertha Maslow, among others.

Topics in these materials include publications and publishing (especially Ridenour's books *Mental Health in the United States--a 50-Year History*, *Mental Health Education: Principles in the Effective Use of Materials*, and *Health Supervision for Young Children*); mental health education; the play "My Name is Legion" (based off Clifford Beers' autobiography and co-written by Ridenour and Nora B. Stirling); the American Theatre Wing's community plays, for which Ridenour wrote numerous discussion guides; children's mental health; term papers Ridenour wrote while in school; professional organizations and professional positions with which Ridenour was associated, especially the Ittelson Family Foundation; consciousness; extra sensory perception (ESP)/parapsychology; and other related topics.

The materials span Ridenour's career, though the bulk come from the 1950s and 1960s and provide an excellent overview of her work and professional interests and concerns.

Creator: Ridenour, Nina

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Comments on Dain's Biography of Beers  
by Nina Ridenour

Clifford Whittingham Beers: a Biography, by Norman Dain.  
Manuscript dated November 1975. Pp. 997.

(Review copy received from William T. Beaty II, Secretary,  
American Foundation for Mental Hygiene.)

### Topics

Overall Reaction  
Beers and the Work  
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Miscellany  
A Personal Note



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### Comments on Dain MS

#### Overall Reaction

I began the MS with admiration for the skill with which the author was handling large amounts of source material. I continued it with admiration for his skill as a portraitist. I regret to say, however, that I finished it with strong feelings of regret and concern that such a book is about to be put before the public.

As a whole, the MS is lacking in balance and perspective. It is unnecessarily negative and destructive. Throughout it shows disregard for the record of accomplishment in the mental health movement and betrays a lack of orientation in the subject of mental illness indefensible in a book of this type. Certain details are out and out unethical. The entire book raises important questions of moral responsibility on the part of all concerned: author, publisher, critics and members of the American Foundation for Mental Hygiene, individually and collectively.

#### Beers and the Work

The complexities of Beers' personality are well delineated. The picture is remarkably vivid, and as far as can be judged from the source material quoted, is accurate. Beers comes through as a flawed human being with great gifts, powerfully motivated and with phenomenal energy. With one exception, to be discussed later, I have little fault to find with the author's description and interpretation of Beers' character.

With this favorable reaction to the portrayal of Beers as a person, one might wonder why my over-all criticism is as harsh as it is. Before proceeding with my objections let me say that I am well aware of the author's problems in deciding what to put in and what to leave out, in view of the great quantities of material at his disposal. I do not intend to criticize the book he did not write instead of the one he did write. I also realize that his charge was to produce a biography of a person, not of an organization or a movement. An argument can be made that if a biographer presents a competent portrait of his subject, that is all that should be expected of him--and that might be true with many biographers.

In this case, however, Clifford Beers' work, the organization he founded, and the movement that grew out of his efforts, are all so inextricably intertwined with his personality, his life goals, his dreams, his reason for being, that no biography of him can be either fair or accurate unless the account of the organization and the movement is also fair and accurate--and it is not.



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There are two principal faults:

- (1) The excessive emphasis on the behind-the-scenes bickering, in-fighting, personality clashes, differences of opinion between Beers and a few of the other leaders, and on all the less admirable aspects of Beers' character, along with extensive derogation of many of his associates.
- (2) The omission of anything remotely resembling an objective evaluation, or even minimal descriptive reporting of the actual achievements of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene and the mental hygiene movement.

A great deal--a very great deal--was accomplished during the period covered in the MS. It's all in the record. Mr. Dain has chosen to ignore the record.

### Tone of MS

Much of the time this manuscript seems to be one long litany of quarrels, disagreements, charges of incompetence, snide appraisals, gratuitous derogatory comments about various people living and dead, and endless analyses of the character defects of practically everybody mentioned, the whole sprinkled with debatable assumptions, the political and philosophical convictions of the author, and his personal interpretations and speculations.

The author seems to feel free to violate confidentiality --perhaps not in the legal but in the ethical sense. An example is Dr. Alan Gregg's casual comment about Dr. George Stevenson, quoted from Dr. Gregg's "Diary." Dr. Gregg was a generous, kindly, decent man, consistently positive in his approach. His comment was entirely appropriate in a "Diary" --the type of assessment a foundation executive must make constantly. But I cannot help think how grieved Dr. Gregg himself would be, to see his Diary remark now spread on the record to hurt a still living person, knowing the hurt it would bring to that person. In addition there is the unfairness in quoting only one comment, and it a derogatory one, about a person who was as much in the middle of the mental hygiene movement as Dr. Stevenson. Presumably the author was given official access to Dr. Gregg's Diary. I cannot believe, however, that Dr. Gregg would ever have agreed to this use of it. There are many other such examples in the book.

I do not know Mr. Dain's background, but assume he must be a journalist, because of the skill with which he uses traditional journalistic techniques, sanctioned by the profession: "Probe for weakness--find fault--tear down." In the profession's own words, "Good news is dull news"--interpreted here--"If any person or any organization does anything



worth while--ignore it. Seek out the criticisms, the disagreements, the deficiencies. You can always find some."

Beers is painted here "warts and all." And that is proper. It is an obligation of the biographer. But it does seem rather too bad that this author finds it necessary also to paint all the warts of everybody who was so unfortunate as to come in contact with Beers.

There is a concept gaining acceptance these days which advances the thesis that the "value-free science" of our time may yet destroy our culture, and quite possibly all civilization and the habitability of the planet. "Value-free science" has a couple of corollaries. One is "value-free journalism": you spread it on the record heedless of any ethical or moral considerations, no matter how destructive, no matter who is damaged, and regardless of whether it serves any conceivably good or useful purpose. Another corollary is "the scholarship of trivia": you record it however inconsequential, if you can quote a source (the more sources quoted the more "scholarly") no matter how subjective, biased, or uninformed the quoted source may be, and no matter what the other side of the picture may be. Then add to this the cherished journalistic principle that only the negative constitutes news, and the outcome is apt to be little but a showy masquerade of scholarliness.

In addition to his obvious skill in denigration techniques, the author is also master of the art of put-down in more subtle ways. His gratuitous and arrogant smears of people and activities are sprinkled generously throughout the MS. The effect is cumulative. Had I known my final reaction was going to be as negative as it is, I would have taken more complete notes from the beginning. In order fully to illustrate all my criticisms, I would have to go back and re-read the entire 997 pages--and that I am not about to do. But here are just two typical examples:

p. 633 "The Rockefeller Foundation was not unique among foundations in avoiding social activism and concentrating on medical research; it was safer and uncontroversial." (NR comment: the foundations would have been wiser to support the type of "social activism" Dain admires? Medical research and education are not good fields to support? Foundations choose their programs only to be "safe"?)

p. 744 ". . . The propensity of American millionaires to do something useful with their excess money during the 1910's and 1920's, made the cause of mental hygiene attractive to people searching for a comparatively harmless way to ameliorate social conditions and for an unthreatening explanation of human misery." (NR comment: typical of my point that you can find a nasty motive for almost anything--if you try.)





There are many more examples, some of them less explicit and more by implication. They are notable for the brevity and casualness with which the author in a single phrase or parenthetical comment downgrades activities which most thoughtful people would regard as laudable and constructive.

## National Committee for Mental Hygiene

I am well acquainted with the criticisms of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, from the late 1920's through the '40's and into the '50's I was among the critics. So were many of my professional associates. (I also know that when the harshest of the critics got into the saddle--that's when things really fell apart.)

Most of the time, those of us who cared about the work were criticizing NCMH--not for what it did do--but for what it did not do. That was because we all felt keenly about the vastness of the job to be done, though we often had insufficient awareness of the hurdles to be overcome. Our hopes were high, our ideals outran not only other people's achievement-potential, but--as later events proved--our own as well. Perhaps it is my regret over the "abstract idealism" we all shared, and my more mature awareness of the ways we were led down the garden path by our dreams, that makes me deplore so strongly the downgrading of the achievements of the period, and desirous of seeing credit given where credit is due.

On top of this--and much more important--is the matter of historical accuracy. The author's assessments and interpretations are full of holes. His omissions are egregious. For example, the research in schizophrenia financed by the Scottish Rite Masons and administered by NCMH gets five lines in parenthesis. Child guidance clinics, an integral part of the mental hygiene movement in that period gets part of one sentence, with no reference to the National Committee's Division on Community Clinics and its long and close relation with the Commonwealth Fund.

The long paragraph on page 825 is an outstanding example of the author's penchant for making something sound like nothing. He begins with a description of the low estate to which NCMH had fallen by 1933: "The professional staff (exclusive of persons on special projects) . . . reduced to three persons. . . . Its general operating budget . . . pared down to \$30,000, which it did not have, and its activities limited." Then--next sentence--he enumerates those "limited" activities: "By then it was engaged primarily in promotion, psychiatric education, running (NR comment: "running" is an inaccurate word here) demonstration clinics (still financed by the Commonwealth Fund), conducting a special project in teacher education, a research project on dementia precox (NR comment: "conducting" also inaccurate here); providing con-





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sultation services for national, state, and community organizations; publishing Mental Hygiene quarterly, and acting as an information clearing house on all aspects of mental illness and mental health." I submit that that is a creditable list of activities. With a staff of three? No way. The entire page gives a distorted picture of the facts, reflecting the author's lack of understanding about how voluntary organizations are administered and financed, about the relation between general budget and special projects, about the definition of professional and non-professional--as well as other confusions not worth the words to describe further here.

Nowhere in the MS does the author try to show the relation between Beers' efforts and the achievements of NCMH and the movement. True, Beers himself was not involved in many of the good things that were happening, but directly or indirectly, many of them represented facets of his contribution. Care, treatment, prevention, research, professional training, education of the public: every one of these was part of Beers' concept, and there was at least some achievement in every one of them, many of them not mentioned at all in the MS or dismissed parenthetically--while irrelevant trivia are belabored endlessly. If the author could devote 86 pages to the quarrels between Beers and Meyer, couldn't he have devoted an occasional full paragraph to describing what was actually being accomplished?

The nearest approximation to summaries of achievements are a few desultory enumerations such as the one cited above from page 825. There is another on p. 941 referring to NCMH as "still the center of mental hygiene activity, training, information gathering and dissemination of public education in psychiatry and mental hygiene in the U.S." On page 951 there is another 4-line summary of activities; and on the last page an 8-line summary of Beers' contribution. It's too bad some of this could not have been spelled out with some elucidation of their significance.

Another regrettable detail of the MS is the short shrift given to Dr. George S. Stevenson, who for so many years was the center of all that happened at NCMH. He is mentioned only once as a person and that derogatorily, and 2 or 3 times in references to publications. Those of us who knew Stevenson from the '20's to the '60's know the role he played--important, constructive, often crucial--and we know he was working against great odds. He emerges here as a non-person: a travesty of the story this biography purports to tell. But this is not the place for defense of Stevenson. It's all in the record.

### Last Chapter: "Conclusions" (pp. 982-997)

This is an important chapter partly because people who read little else in the book may read this. The first time I read it, it left a sour taste. A week later, I read





it again. The taste was worse. So I read it a third time -- and concluded that the whole chapter is distorted and destructive.

Substantively, the chapter falls into two categories: the summaries describing Beers as a person; and the author's personal views on various matters.

As long as the author sticks to the summaries of Beers, the chapter holds up reasonably well, with the one exception discussed below. In general, and as I have said before, most of his descriptions of Beers are acceptable--though some of the summaries of summaries, already summarized and re-summarized are getting a little monotonous by now, and some of the warts are pretty dessicated after nearly a thousand pages of exposure.

The other parts of the chapter are a melange of the author's political and social philosophy, his own brand of psychoanalytic-type interpretation of Beers' unconscious, several personal "postulations," a few literary flights, a dash of moralizing, some debatable appraisals, and another bunch of put-downs. The following are examples.

P. 982. What the author calls his "postulations" about the possibility of a genetic factor in mental illness are remarkably jejune. Some comment on genetic factors would be appropriate in view of the Beers family history of five boys out of five, and possibly other relatives and ancestors. But it should be handled--not as the author's personal "postulations," or as what he calls "hints" from the Beers family --but in a context of present-day authoritative opinion on the question of the probable role of genetic factors in mental illness, based on recorded professional observation and research.

Pp. 984-986. The author says: "The great leaders of industry and finance . . . though considered by social critics as socially and morally evil. . . ." This is what I mean by an example of the author's social and political views. Such a statement as this takes on added significance when noted in conjunction with previous derogatory comments about "millionaires," philanthropists, foundations, etc. and some of his further political views as expressed on p. 996: ". . . When society is . . . individualistic and competitive rather than communitarian . . . when power over resources is concentrated rather than dispersed, people who are strange, who are unable to function well, who are anti-social and unlovable will suffer. Clifford Beers . . . never went this far in his thinking. Very few others have either." (NR questions: "Strange" and "unlovable" people suffer less in that fine "communitarian" society--Russia? How far is "this far"? To what extent are expressions of the author's political philosophy and moralizing appropriate in a biography?)





P. 986. "It is easy to join the psychiatric experts . . . and deprecate the contribution of a former mental patient. . . ." (Look who's talking!)

Same page: ". . . The National Committee, the founder-  
ing and later to be absorbed by (*italics mine*) another organ-  
ization. . . ." This is a totally erroneous statement and  
should be changed. Continuing the same comment, ". . . and  
some of its functions assumed by the federal governemnt."  
Here is one more example of how, by the turn of a phrase, this  
author can make success sound like failure.

Same page: sentence referring to "the innovative  
mental health care programs undertaken in the U.S. under the  
National Institute of Mental Health in the '60's." This sounds  
as if there were no "innovative programs" under NCMH or until  
the 1960's. Doubtless I am hypersensitive by now, but as I  
said, the effects of Dain's put-downs are cumulative. I might  
mention that child guidance clinics were "innovative" in their  
day; and shock therapy; and Board certification; and teacher  
training; and hospital inspection and standardized reporting  
and nomenclature; and Selective Service; and a score of other  
projects that NCMH had a finger in. Moreover, "innovative"  
is not necessarily a synonym for good or effective or desirable,  
as implied here; and some of the "innovative programs" of  
NIMH in the '60's are causing tribulation for mental patients  
and their families in the '70's.

P. 991. This is another regrettable page. The  
author has already made it crystal clear that Beers was not  
an admirable person in many ways. In some of the earlier  
descriptions, Beers' character defects are balanced by fair  
analyses of his strengths. Not so on this page. Here at last  
Dain seems unwilling to leave Beers one final shred of simple,  
decent, humanitarian motives. He finally strips him naked.  
A pity.

I find this whole chapter objectionable, and I should  
think the National Association for Mental Health and all mental  
health organizations, both voluntary and governmental, would  
take a dim view of it--and in fact of the entire book. As  
a litany of bungling, incompetence, disagreement, non-achieve-  
ment, self-serving motives and character defects among the  
leaders, such a book is unlikely to inspire confidence in the  
mental health movement or desire to support any of its activities.

## Details of Style

Identification of speaker. Frequently, especially  
in the early chapters, it is unclear who is speaking following  
a direct quotation. Again and again I found it necessary to  
re-read a passage in order to figure out whether the comment  
after a quotation was an extension of the continuing thought





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of the person being quoted, or whether it was an editorial comment by the author.

Use of dates. The author frequently cites day of the month, when the year would be more helpful to the reader, especially if the event marked a turning point. Examples:

- p. 46. Clifford's jump from window. Year?
- p. 78. George's visit. Year? Clifford went home "September 10." Year?
- p. 757. Opening sentence of of Chapter 15 re International Congress "held May 5-10." Year? Place?

Capitalization. "Foundation," "Fund," "Committee," should be capitalized, when referring to a specific organization with the word as part of its corporate title.

Vocabulary. Many psychiatric terms are used loosely, in a manner not conforming to accepted usage, either at that date, or currently, or both. Examples:

Psychiatrist (check date of reference. "Alienist" used earlier.)  
Manic; demented (Not acceptable unless being quoted)  
Moral treatment (Meaning unclear)  
Crazy (Used much too often)  
Sane, insane, insanity; lunacy and lunatic asylum; custodialism; padded cell; feeble-minded (Check each in context for appropriateness; use more professionally acceptable terms and less vernacular)

Use of quotation marks. The author seems to use quotation marks--not for clarity or emphasis, as is usual--but apologetically, rather as an expression of his own uncertainty and lack of familiarity with professional terms. This is frequent throughout the MS, but especially notable in the last chapter. Here are examples of words he put in quotation marks in the last chapter, some of them several times (though not quoting another source): normal, abnormality, sane, crazy, manic, excessively, aberration, balanced, big, small, better.

Readability. On the whole the style flows easily, though some of the long sentences with multiple clauses are a little hard to wade through. Also, I wondered constantly how an unoriented reader would react to the length, repetitiveness, and prevailing negativism.

### Clara Beers and the Beers Home

Apparently Clara gave Clifford a lot of help on



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drafts of "Mind." She told me many times that he used to call her the "Great Eliminator." She took such pride in the phrase that it would be rather nice if it could be worked in as a courtesy to her. I think I suggested this to Mr. Dain. Incidentally, the first edition of "Mind" contained some 50 or so pages more than subsequent editions--unless this was accounted for by difference in size of type-face. It would be interesting to analyze the omissions. If I recall correctly--(I no longer have a copy of the first edition to check my memory)--it was copyright 1908, published 1909. (See p. 598 of MS)

Page 387, referring to Clara says, "She had graduated from Smith College in 1898." She did not graduate. She entered with the class of '98, called herself that, ~~title out of loyalty~~, but I think she attended Smith no more than a year or a year and a half. I suspect that her not finishing college was connected with the "stomach and nerves" mentioned in the MS, p. 528.

Page 746, reference to the Buick that was second hand in 1928. I drove that Buick for 5 or 6 summers in the 1950's. Each summer Clara would tell me that it was in her will to go to a nephew. She had little conception of value, except for the sentimental.

Page. 891, re CWB's drawings. During the period we lived in the house summers, there were two large cartons of Clifford's drawings--several hundred of them. Clara gave them to a niece, who destroyed them. Many of them were on the backs of Holly Hotel menus. They varied widely in quality. Some were little more than doodles. Others were brilliant.

Page 904, the Englewood home, described here as "conventional middle-class style." That may have been the general effect, but some of their antique furniture would grace the finest homes today. Clara had inherited a number of excellent pieces from her grandmother--highboy, blanket chest, chairs, a pair of cut-glass oil lamps (late 18th and early 19th century). There were some good oriental rugs, one fine oriental picture, a number of good Victorian pieces; quantities of sterling, including a sterling plate engraved as a wedding gift from the William James family. If those things and the house had been put on the market, Clara need not have died in the poverty she did.

Clara's death. There is somehow a macabre significance in the fact that Clara died a mental patient in New York Hospital, Westchester Division, the old Bloomingdale that had already figured in some of the Beers' family tragedy. It was due to the kindness of Emily Martin and Bill Beaty, and their willingness to take responsibility when others failed to do so, that she was finally admitted to the hospital with a "scholarship" bed. Though miserably unhappy, she was well taken care of.



Miscellany

Page 53. It is meaningless and misleading to report "recovery rates" in this manner, because reporting had not yet been standardized. For instance, a patient admitted 6 times, discharged 5 times, might appear in the records as "5 recoveries."

Page 825. Name of journal was "Mental Hygiene"---not "Mental Hygiene Quarterly."

Pages 971-977. Banay--not Bonay.

Meyer is referred to a number of times as "leading American psychiatrist." (Was he an American Citizen?) Opinions about Meyer's status and contributions were by no means as unanimous among his peers, both then and now, as implied here.

"Collapse" seems a harsh word in the title of Chapter 20. Any number of other words could convey the correct idea and not sound as unfeeling. (Lloyd Thompson agrees with me completely.) This is just one more among scores of examples indicating the author's lack of empathy with his subject.

Page 973. ". . . He had paranoid tendencies, a consequence of (italics mine) a childhood lacking in warmth and affection." Such a statement is never justified--another instance of the combination of the author's lack of orientation in the field plus his inclination to toss in casual personal "opinions" phrased to sound factual.

Page 987. Dorothea Dix described as "difficult and selfish." Dain and I have apparently read different biographies. (Does he spare no one?)

Last chapter and elsewhere: examples of unfortunate phraseology and vocabulary: p. 990 "psychology became stylish;" p. 997, "the disability of mental hygiene as a popular cause; Beers described as "crazy" (in quotes) but "sane" (in quotes) people were "willing to work with him."

About the reference to "My Name Is Legion" (p. ?) and the comment that Beers never wanted "Mind" to be dramatized, but it was anyway: this is not the way I understood it. Stevenson told me Beers never wanted himself to be dramatized. Therefore, the first thing I did, after the initial outline, was go to see Clara and ask her. She confirmed Stevenson's statement, saying that Clifford did not want himself portrayed. And he wasn't. She was enthusiastic about "Legion" from the beginning and throughout the 3 or 4 years of the project, and thoroughly cooperative, as were several of Clifford's old friends--some of whom commented that he would have liked the play. It was produced for three seasons with Broadway





casts, bookings handled in the National office under a special grant, sponsored in each community by the local or regional mental health association. It was conceived as a combination of fund-raising, public relations, and education--consistent with Beers' own uses of the book.

National Committee and International Committee. The author handles these as if they were two independent and comparable organizations. The International was a paper organization. It was incorporated separately, but functionally it could not have existed without the National during Beers' day. To the best of my knowledge it never had any paid staff except at the time of the two Congresses held during Beers' life. It never had a program beyond those Congresses, and some desultory "keeping in touch" with people in other countries, much of which was also carried by the National office. The first Congress in Washington in 1930 could not have been achieved without the National, and the same could probably be said about the second one in Paris in 1937. Here is one more example of what the National Committee did for which it receives no credit in this MS.

Authorities cited in the textbook category include Paton, Rosanoff, de Fursac (who dat?), Kraepelin, Defendorf, and a few others. Most of these were written around the early 1900's, some earlier. Many theories about mental illness have changed radically since then. One gets the impression that Dain may have derived most of his own orientation in the subject of mental illness from these early texts. For instance, on page 191, referring to Beers' reading of Stearns, he says ". . . He (Beers) learned that insanity is on the increase as a result (italics mine) of growing mental activity produced by the forces of civilization. . . ." a statement totally unacceptable today although the phrasing sounds as if Dain is accepting it as factual. There are other examples like this.

Sickerman. I was surprised to see this author rely so heavily on Barbara Sickerman's unpublished dissertation as a reference. It is cited some 15 or 20 times (pp. 324-357, and 502-590). I read that MS at the request of a University press, and would not have expected to see it quoted in any work with a pretense at scholarship.

Beers' interpretations. Beers had many theories and convictions about himself and about mental illness that were reasonable enough under the circumstances but could not be substantiated. For instance he was sure that if, in the hospital, he had been treated as he wished to be treated, he would have gotten well sooner. Maybe so, maybe not.

One assumes that it is correct, as the author states, that he "usually faithfully described" what happened in the hospital. But there are times when one is justified in ques-



tioning the accuracy of his reporting (or sometimes of other peoples). For instance, p. 49, there is a reference to the "Dr. Cheney" who "did not recognize that his trouble was psychological." A physician whose patient is suicidal, withdrawn, mute, hallucinated, fails to recognize "psychological factors"? That is hard to swallow.

Someplace there is a comment about "the lack of insanity in Beers' family." I've lost track of whether this was Beers' or the author's comment, but the point is the same. It is almost surely an inaccurate statement, because there is considerable evidence to the effect that there may have been quite a lot of mental disorder in the Beers family, both his immediate family, and his ancestors.

Throughout the manuscript I think the distinction should be sharpened between what Beers or some other individual thought, what the known facts are, and the author's editorial comment.

## A Personal Note

Personally, I found the MS of interest throughout, even in those sections where I was bored by the repetitiousness and angered by the unfairness. I had been in the middle of so much of what is reported here--so many of my friends are mentioned--I had dreamed the same dreams Clifford Beers had dreamed about helping people who suffered mentally--had experienced the same disappointments--shared the same satisfactions. I first read "Mind . . ." in 1923 when I was 18--and caught fire. I first knew Stevenson and NCMH in 1928, in my own early days in a child guidance clinic. I attended the 1930 International Congress, thrilled with every moment of it. Then for many years after that, I attended many of the annual meetings of NCMH, not to mention countless other related professional meetings. My devotion to the National Committee and the mental hygiene movement covered more than 20 years of the period covered in this biography (and as many more years after Beers' death).

During those years, the National Committee was a major, usually the primary, sometimes the only spokesman for the mental health movement. It was an imperfect organization--administered by imperfect people--like every other organization in the world. But it accomplished a great deal. It deserves a fair shake. It does not get one here. Nor does the movement. Nor does Beers' work and the constructive things that happened, either directly or indirectly, as a result of Beers' "innovative" efforts.

Dr. Lloyd J. Thompson read parts of this MS. Dr. Thompson who lives in Chapel Hill, is a psychiatrist, age 82; during WWII was chief of psychiatry for the European Theatre; he lived in New Haven many years, knew Beers and the Beers



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family; and as a mental hospital administrator was actively involved in the mental health movement for more than 50 years. Dr. Thompson expressed my thoughts in a single sentence when he commented that nobody who was not there would have any idea of what went on from reading this manuscript.

The more obvious inaccuracies in the MS can be corrected. Not so the deficiencies in perspective, in balance, in orientation, and the generally negative and destructive approach. Having read this MS, I now understand why I felt so uncomfortable during the brief and unsatisfactory conference I had with Dain in 1966.

I hope this MS is being critically read by some thoughtful and experienced psychiatrists who will be able to correct and supplement the author's lack of background. And I hope it will be read by some of the old timers who were not hostile to NCMH during the period covered.

Personally, I consider this book a travesty of both history and biography. When I think that it is going out into the world as the official story of the life and work of the founder of the mental health movement--well--to those of us who knew and cared--"tragedy" is not too strong a word.

Do not think it has given me any pleasure to write so harsh a criticism. It has been a disturbing experience. Had I known how strongly I would feel, I would not have agreed to read the MS in the first place.

*Nina Ridenour*

Nina Ridenour  
29 Mt. Bolus Rd.  
Chapel Hill, N. C. 27514

*July 20, 1976*



FROM THE DESK OF

NINA RIDENOUR

Re: "James" File

I have always kept a folder labeled simply "James" - lists of people connected with projects in which I am involved - as reminders of names I might otherwise forget. Here are the few lists I have left. And it occurred to me that such lists might possibly have some historical interest, in indicating who was interested in what when.

NR

9/28/76



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Aug '69

### Persons Attending the Council Grove Conference

April 7-11, 1969

BERNARD AARONSON, Ph.D.  
Bureau of Research in Neurology  
and Psychiatry  
Box 1000 Princeton, New Jersey 08540

G. W. ARENDSSEN-HEIN, M.D.  
Klomperweg 113  
Ederveen, Netherlands

U. A. ASRANI, Ph.D.  
52 Adarsh Nagar  
Lucknow, India

PIERRE A. BENSOUSON, M.D.  
Neuro-Psychiatre  
74, Rue Raynouard  
Paris 16, France

HELEN L. BONNY, R.M.T.  
Maryland Psychiatric Research Center  
Box 3235  
Baltimore, Maryland 21228

ARTHUR J. BRODBECK, Ph.D.  
Pennsylvania State University  
The Capitol Campus  
Middletown, Pennsylvania 17057

BARBARA BROWN, Ph.D.  
Experiential Physiology  
Veterans Administration Hospital  
Sepulveda, California 91343

THOMAS BUDZYNSKI  
EEG Laboratory  
Colorado Psychiatric Hospital  
4200 East Ninth Avenue  
Denver, Colorado 80220

J. F. T. BUGENTAL, Ph.D.  
Stanford Research Institute  
333 Ravenswood Avenue  
Menlo Park, California 94025

CECIL CHAMBERLIN, M.D.  
The Menninger Foundation  
Box 829  
Topeka, Kansas 66601

THOMAS CIMONETTI, M.D.  
Maryland Psychiatric Research Center  
Box 3235  
Baltimore, Maryland 21228

WALTER H. CLARK, Ph.D.  
Andover Newton Theological Seminary  
750 Commonwealth Avenue  
Newton Centre, Massachusetts 02159

ELEANOR CRISWELL, Ed.D.  
933 Shoreline Drive #408  
Alameda, California 94501

CHARLES CLAY DAHLBERG, M.D.  
William Alanson White Institute  
20 West 74th Street  
New York, New York 10023

ARTHUR J. DEIKMAN, M.D.  
University of Colorado Medical School  
4200 East 9th Street  
Denver, Colorado 80220

HENRY L. DRAKE, Ph.D.  
Philosophical Research Society, Inc.  
3910 Los Feliz Boulevard  
Los Angeles, California 90027

ROBERT J. DRIVER  
Director, Kairos  
P.O. Box 350  
Rancho Santa Fe, California 92067

EDWIN H. ELKIN, Ph.D.  
1629 Columbia Road, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20009



## Nina Ridenour papers

-2-

JAMES FADIMAN, Ph.D.  
Snowden, Sullivan & Goodwin  
235 Montgomery Street  
San Francisco, California 94104

LESTER G. FEHMI, Ph.D.  
Department of Psychology  
State University of New York  
Stony Brook, Long Island, New York 11790

KENNETH GAARDER, M.D.  
6316 Rockhurst Road  
Bethesda, Maryland 20034

RILEY W. GARDNER, Ph.D.  
Research Department  
The Menninger Foundation  
Topeka, Kansas 66601

DOLLY GATTOZZI  
Research Grants Branch, NIMH  
5454 Wisconsin Avenue  
Chevy-Chase, Maryland 20015

HENDRIK GIDEONSE, Ph.D.  
Planning Officer  
Bureau of Research  
U.S. Office of Education  
Washington, D.C. 20202

KENNETH E. GODFREY, M.D.  
V.A. Hospital  
2200 Gage Boulevard  
Topeka, Kansas 66622

ALYCE M. GREEN  
Research Department  
The Menninger Foundation  
Topeka, Kansas 66601

ELMER E. GREEN, Ph.D.  
Research Department  
The Menninger Foundation  
Topeka, Kansas 66601

PAVEL GROF, M.D., Ph.D.  
Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital  
McMaster University  
P.O. Box 585  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

STANISLAV GROF, M.D.  
Maryland Psychiatric Research Center  
Box 3235  
Baltimore, Maryland 21228

WILLIS W. HARMAN, Ph.D.  
Stanford Research Institute  
333 Ravenswood Avenue  
Menlo Park, California 94025

FRANK HARONIAN, Ph.D.  
2807 Princeton Pike  
Trenton, New Jersey 08638

JOSEPH T. HART, Ph.D.  
Department of Psychology  
University of California  
Irvine, California 92664

TOMIO HIRAI, M.D.  
Department of Neuropsychiatry  
Tokyo University Branch Hospital  
Faculty of Medicine  
The University of Tokyo  
120 Zoshigaya  
Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo, Japan

JEAN HOUSTON, Ph.D.  
Foundation for Mind Research  
Yorkshire Towers, 14-G East  
315 East 86th Street  
New York, New York 10028

S DAVID KAHN, M.D.  
Laboratory of Experimental Psychopathology  
Georgia Mental Health Institute  
1256 Briarcliff Road, N.E.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30306

JOE KAMIYA, Ph.D.  
Langley Porter Neurological Clinic  
401 Parnassus Avenue  
San Francisco, California 94122

ROBERT KANTOR, Ph.D.  
Stanford Research Institute  
333 Ravenswood Avenue  
Menlo Park, California 94025



## Nina Ridenour papers

-3-

HERBERT L. KLEMME, M.D.  
The Menninger Foundation  
Box 829  
Topeka, Kansas 66601

MARILYN KOLTON, Ph.D.  
Center for Studies of the Person  
1125 Torrey Pines Road  
La Jolla, California 92037

SOL KRAMER, M.D.  
Department of Psychiatry  
College of Medicine  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, Florida 32601

STANLEY C. KRIPPNER, Ph.D.  
Director, William C. Menninger  
Dream Laboratory  
Department of Psychiatry  
Maimonides Medical Center  
4802 Tenth Avenue  
Brooklyn, New York 11219

BARBARA B. LASSITER  
660 Park Avenue  
New York, New York 10021

FATHER HERVÉ LE BAUT  
1247 Ohio, Apt. 303  
Lawrence, Kansas 66044

ROBERT LEIHY  
206 Sanford Avenue  
Catonsville, Maryland 21228

LEE LOHRENZ, Ph.D.  
Research Department  
The Menninger Foundation  
Topeka, Kansas 66601

GAY GAER LUCE  
Research Grants Branch, NIMH  
5454 Wisconsin Avenue  
Chevy-Chase, Maryland 20015

J. ROSS MACLEAN, M.D.  
Hollywood Hospital  
515 Fifth Avenue  
New Westminster  
British Columbia, Canada

O. W. MARKLEY, Ph.D.  
Western Behavioral Science Institute  
1150 Silverado  
La Jolla, California 92037

R. E. L. MASTERS  
Foundation for Mind Research  
Yorkshire Towers, 14-G East  
315 East 86th Street  
New York, New York 10028

PAULINE MCCRIRICK  
28 Bryanston Square  
London W.1., England

MATTHEW MILES, Ph.D.  
Stanford Research Institute  
333 Ravenswood Avenue  
Menlo Park, California 94025

THELMA MOSS, Ph.D.  
The Neuropsychiatric Institute  
UCLA Center for the Health Sciences  
Los Angeles, California 90024

GARDNER MURPHY, Ph.D.  
Department of Psychology  
George Washington University  
Washington, D.C. 20006

CLAUDIO NARANJO, M.D., Ph.D.  
University of California  
Institute for Personality Assessment  
and Research  
2240 Piedmont Avenue  
Berkeley, California 94720

DAVID NOWLIS, Ph.D.  
Laboratory of Hypnosis Research  
Psychology Department  
Stanford University  
Stanford, California 94305

VINCENT NOWLIS, Ph.D.  
Morey Hall  
University of Rochester  
Rochester, New York 14627

ROBERT E. ORNSTEIN, Ph.D.  
Langley Porter Neurological Clinic  
401 Parnassus Avenue  
San Francisco, California 94122



## Nina Ridenour papers

-4-

KARLIS OSIS, Ph.D.  
Research Director  
American Society for Psychical Research  
5 West 73rd Street  
New York, New York 10023

WALTER N. PAHNKE, M.D., Ph.D.  
Maryland Psychiatric Research Center  
Box 3235  
Baltimore, Maryland 21228

SHASHI K. PANDE, M.D.  
Henry Phipps Psychiatric Clinic  
601 North Broadway  
The Johns Hopkins Hospital  
Baltimore, Maryland 21205

BURYL PAYNE, Ph.D.  
School of Public Communication  
Boston University  
640 Commonwealth Avenue  
Boston, Massachusetts 02215

K. RAMAKRISHNA RAO, Ph.D.  
Department of Psychology and Parapsychology  
Andhra University  
Waltair, A.P., India

ILSE RICHARDS  
Maryland Psychiatric Research Center  
Box 3235  
Baltimore, Maryland 21228

WILLIAM RICHARDS  
Maryland Psychiatric Research Center  
Box 3235  
Baltimore, Maryland 21228

NINA RIDENOUR, Ph.D.  
102 Saratoga Trail  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514

KOJI SATO, Ph.D.  
Department of Psychology  
Otemongakuin University  
Ibarakishi  
Osaka 567, Japan

GERTRUDE R. SCHMEIDLER, Ph.D.  
Department of Psychology  
City College, Convent Ave. at 138th St.  
New York, New York

WILLIAM SCHUL  
The Menninger Foundation  
Box 829  
Topeka, Kansas 66601

ROBERT A. SOSKIN, Ph.D.  
V.A. Hospital  
2200 Gage Boulevard  
Topeka, Kansas 66622

WILLIAM SOSKIN, Ph.D.  
Department of Psychology  
University of California  
Berkeley, California 94720

JOHANN M. STOYVA, Ph.D.  
University of Colorado Medical Center  
4200 East Ninth Street  
Denver, Colorado 80220

WILLIAM SWARTLEY, Ph.D.  
Center for the Whole Person  
1633 Race Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103

CHARLES T. TART, Ph.D.  
Department of Psychology  
University of California  
Davis, California 95616

JAMES TAYLOR, Ph.D.  
Research Department  
The Menninger Foundation  
Topeka, Kansas 66601

MONTAGUE F. ULLMAN, M.D.  
Maimonides Hospital  
4802 Tenth Avenue  
Brooklyn, New York 11219

EVE UNGER  
Route No. 97  
Glenwood, Maryland 21738



## Nina Ridenour papers

-5-

SANFORD UNGER, Ph.D.  
Maryland Psychiatric Research Center  
Box 3235  
Baltimore, Maryland 21228

HAROLD M. VOTH, M.D.  
Research Department  
The Menninger Foundation  
Topeka, Kansas 66601

E. DALE WALTERS  
Research Department  
The Menninger Foundation  
Topeka, Kansas 66601

BEVERLY WEBSTER  
Neptune Terminals Building  
347 Bay Street  
Toronto 1, Ontario, Canada

DONALD C. WEBSTER  
Neptune Terminals Building  
347 Bay Street  
Toronto 1, Ontario, Canada

MERRITT WEIDNER, Ph.D.  
Pennsylvania State University  
The Capitol Campus  
Middletown, Pennsylvania 17057

JOHN R. B. WHITTLESEY, Ph.D.  
5439 Del Monte Drive  
Houston, Texas 77027

SIDNEY WOLF  
Maryland Psychiatric Research Center  
Box 3235  
Baltimore, Maryland 21228

WILLIAM WOLF, M.D., Ph.D., Sc.D.  
40 West 59th Street  
New York, New York 10019





Persons Acknowledged in Ridenour Book (MH-52)

Acknowledged in ME

Allen, Miss Vera  
60 Barand Rd.  
Scarsdale, N. Y.

Baldwin, Mr. and Mrs. John E.  
Mt. Hermon, Mass.

Barrie, Mr. Robert, Executive Director  
New York State Association for Mental Health  
105 East 22nd Street  
New York 10, N. Y.

Beatty, Mr. William T. Asst. Executive Director  
New York State Association for Mental Health  
105 East 22nd Street  
New York 10, N. Y.

Beers, Mrs. Clifford W.  
171 Sherwood Place  
Englewood, N. J.

Boll, Mr. M. A.  
360 Roaring Brook Road  
Chappaqua, N. Y.

Bond, Dr. Earl D.  
Institute of the Pennsylvania Hospital  
111 North 49th Street  
Philadelphia 39, Pa.

Brown, Dr. Muriel W.  
Children's Bureau  
Department of Health, Education and Welfare  
Social Security Administration  
Washington 25, D. C.

Crane, Mr. Roger A., Director, Division of Publications  
Commonwealth Fund  
1 East 75th Street  
New York 21, N. Y.

Darling, Dr. C. Douglas  
Director of Psychiatric Services  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, N. Y.

Davies, Mr. Stanley P.  
New York State Association for Mental Health  
105 East 22nd Street  
New York 10, N. Y.

Deutsch, Mr. Albert  
2800 Quebec St. N.W.  
Washington 8, D. C.



## Nina Ridenour papers

- 2 -

Dubwad, Dr. Gunnar, Executive Director  
National Association for Retarded Children  
386 Park Avenue South  
New York 16, N. Y.

Eberhart, Dr. John C.  
Commonwealth Fund  
1 East 75th Street  
New York 21, N. Y.

Felix, Dr. R. H., Director  
National Institute of Mental Health  
Department of Health, Education and Welfare  
Bethesda 14, Maryland

Gitlin, Mr. Irving  
Program Executive: Creative Projects  
Columbia Broadcasting System  
485 Madison Avenue  
New York 22, N. Y.

Goldfarb, Dr. William  
Henry Ittleson Center for Child Research  
5050 Iselin Avenue  
Bronx 71, N. Y.

Griffin, Dr. J. D.  
Canadian Mental Health Association  
732 Spadina Avenue  
Toronto 4, Canada

Harrower, Dr. Molly  
55 East 86th Street  
New York, N. Y.

Hoch, Dr. Paul  
Commissioner of Mental Hygiene  
New York State Psychiatric Institute and Hospital  
722 W. 168th Street  
New York, N. Y.

Hunter, Mr. Richard C.  
Mental Health Association of  
Southeastern Pennsylvania  
210 Medical Arts Building  
1601 Walnut Street  
Philadelphia 2, Pa.

Ittleson, Mrs. Henry  
Hampshire House  
150 Central Park South  
New York 19, N. Y.

Ittleson, Mrs. Henry, Jr.  
2 East 61st Street  
New York 21, N. Y.



## Nina Ridenour papers

- 3 -

Ittleson, Jr., Mr. Henry  
C.I.T. Financial Corp.  
650 Madison Avenue  
New York 22, N. Y.

Johnson, Miss Isabel  
288 Lexington Avenue  
New York 16, N. Y.

Lightbody, Mrs. Georgia  
Lenox School  
170 East 70th Street  
New York, N. Y.

Loomis, Dr. Earl  
Union Theological Seminary  
Broadway and 120th Street  
New York, N. Y.

Martin, Miss Emily  
71 West 12th Street  
New York 11, N. Y.

Menninger, Dr. William C.  
Menninger Foundation  
Topeka, Kansas

Mudd, Mr. Merle W., Executive Director  
Connecticut Association for Mental Health  
956 Chapel Street  
New Haven 10, Conn.

Musial, Mr. Joseph W.  
152 Colonial Parkway  
Manhasset, L. I., N. Y.

Neher, Mr. Jack  
Mental Health Materials Center  
104 East 25th Street  
New York 10, N. Y.

Rees, Dr. John R., Director  
World Federation for Mental Health  
19, Manchester Street  
London, W.1. England

Robinson, Mr. Robert L., Public Information Officer  
American Psychiatric Association  
1700 18th Street, N.W.  
Washington 9, D. C.

Ross, Dr. Mabel  
Special Asst. in Mental Health  
Office of the Chief  
Bureau of State Services  
101 N. Carolina Ave. S.E.  
Washington 3, D. C.



## Nina Ridenour papers

- 4 -

Bowland, Dr. Loyd W., Executive Director  
Louisiana Association for Mental Health  
1528 Jackson Avenue  
New Orleans 13, Louisiana

Sarayan, Mr. Alex, Director  
Mental Health Materials Center  
104 East 25th Street  
New York 10, N. Y.

Seoville, Miss Mildred C.  
7 Peter Cooper Road  
New York, N. Y.

Senn, Dr. Milton J. E.  
Yale University  
Child Study Center  
14 Davenport Avenue  
New Haven 11, Conn.

Stevenson, Dr. George S.  
940 West Front Street  
Red Bank, N. J.

Stroock, Mr. Alan M.  
Stroock & Stroock & Lavan  
61 Broadway  
New York 6, N. Y.

Tallman, Dr. Frank F.  
Professor of Psychiatry  
School of Medicine  
University of California Medical Center  
Los Angeles 24, Calif.

Turitz, Mrs. Etha  
Child Welfare League of America  
44 E. 23rd Street  
New York 10, N. Y.

Voletsky, Mrs. Ida  
90-23 149th Street  
Jamaica 35, N. Y.

Voletsky, Mr. Sidney  
26 Court Street  
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Watson, Mrs. Marjorie  
239 E. Torrence Rd.  
Columbus, Ohio

Wickman, Mr. E. K.  
Box 230  
Lakeville, Conn.



## Nina Ridenour papers

- 5 -

Mentioned in MS

Anderson, Miss Florence  
Carnegie Corporation  
589 Fifth Avenue  
New York, N. Y.

Chapel, Miss Eugenie  
7 Lexington Avenue  
New York, N. Y.

Chisholm, Dr. Brock  
Seawood R. R. #2  
Victoria, B. C.

Braceland, Dr. Francis J.  
The Institute of Living  
200 Retreat Avenue  
Hartford 2, Conn.

Hahn, Mr. Maxwell  
Field Foundation  
250 Park Avenue  
New York 17, N. Y.

Frank, Mr. Lawrence K.  
25 Clark Street  
Belmont, Mass.

Fremont-Smith, Dr. Frank  
149 Brewster Road  
Massapequa, L. I.

Ginsburg, Mrs. Ethel L.  
201 East 19th Street  
New York 3, N. Y.

Healy, Dr. William  
Bronner, Dr. Augusta  
830 Mandalay Avenue  
Clearwater Beach, Fla.

Hincks, Dr. Clarence M.  
Canadian Mental Health Association  
732 Spadina Avenue  
Toronto 4, Canada

Jarrett, Miss Mary C.  
59 W. 12th Street  
New York, N. Y.

Kenworthy, Dr. Marion E.  
1035 Fifth Avenue  
New York, N. Y.



## Nina Ridenour papers

- 6 -

Levy, Dr. David M.  
47 East 77th Street  
New York, N. Y.

Menninger, Dr. Karl  
Menninger Foundation  
Topeka, Kansas

Jones, Mr. Arthur  
Rockefeller Bros. Fund  
30 Rockefeller Plaza  
New York, N. Y.

Rockefeller Foundation  
111 W. 50th Street  
New York 20, N. Y.

Ryan, Dr. W. Carson  
1303 Mason Farm Road  
Chapel Hill, N. C.

Stanton, Miss Jessie  
2 Horatio  
New York, N. Y.

Stirling, Miss Nora  
865 First Avenue  
New York, N. Y.



## Nina Ridenour papers

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 JOHN P. SPIEGEL, M.D.  
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 BENJAMIN SPOCK, M.D.  
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 R. BURKE SUITT, M.D.  
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 WILLIAM B. TERHUNE, M.D.  
 PAUL J. TILICH, PH.D.  
 MOTTRAM TORRE, M.D.  
 MRS. RONALD TREE  
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 GERALD WENDT  
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 EUGENE ZISKIND, M.D.



May, 1952

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Mrs. Jonathan Bingham  
Francis Braceland, M.D.  
Dexter Bullard, M.D.  
Mamie Clark, M.D.  
Frank Curran, M.D.  
Allen W. Dulles, Esq.  
O. Spurgeon English, M.D.  
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Maurice Fremont-Smith, M.D.  
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Lloyd K. Garrison, Esq.  
Mr. Lester Granger  
Ralph Greenson, M.D.  
Roy Grinker, M.D.  
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Marion Kenworthy, M.D.  
Milton Kirkpatrick, M.D.  
Lawrence S. Kubie, M.D.  
Miss Katherine Lenroot  
Norman Levy, M.D.  
James Marshall, Esq.  
Jules Masserman, M.D.

Leonard Mayo, S.Sc.D.  
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John M. Murray, M.D.  
Winfred Overholser, M.D.  
Florence Powdermaker, M.D.  
Nina Ridenour, Ph.D.  
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Mrs. Joseph Simmons  
John P. Spiegel, M.D.  
René Spitz, M.D.  
Benjamin Spock, M.D.  
Mary Steichen, M.D.  
Mrs. Ralph I. Strauss  
R. Burke Suitt, M.D.  
Robert Sutherland, M.D.  
Miss Mary Switzer  
William Terhune, M.D.  
Mr. Thomas J. Watson  
Mrs. Louis S. Weiss  
Mary White, M.D.  
Mr. Benjamin Youngdahl  
Gregory Zilboorg, M.D.



*James*

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH, Inc.

## Mental Health Week

1790 Broadway, New York 19, N. Y. (Circle 5-8000)

PRESIDENT  
Oren Root

MEDICAL DIRECTOR  
George S. Stevenson, M.D.

February 21, 1952

### NEWSLETTER #2

#### NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

In NEWSLETTER #1, we told you what we were doing with national organizations and described some of the things that had already been done. The national offices of the organizations listed below have informed us that they would like to receive Mental Health Week mailings. We have indicated with an asterisk those which we understand will give the WEEK publicity in their publications and will pass the word along to their local units. We know that you will be able to use this information in many ways. The list is as follows:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| American Ass'n of Psychiatric Social Workers    | Health Information Foundation                |
| American Institute of Family Relations          | Int'l Social Service                         |
| American Legion                                 | Metropolitan Life Ins. Co.                   |
| American Legion Auxiliary                       | Nat'l Board - YWCA                           |
| American Medical Ass'n                          | Nat'l Catholic Welfare Conference            |
| American Public Health Ass'n                    | *Nat'l Congress of Parents and Teachers      |
| *American Psychiatric Ass'n                     | *Nat'l Council of Churches of Christ         |
| Ass'n for Family Living                         | *Nat'l Council of Jewish Women in America    |
| *Ass'n of Junior Leagues of America             | Nat'l Council of YMCA's                      |
| Board of Hospitals and Homes, Methodist Church  | Nat'l Federation of Settlements              |
| Bureau of Prisons                               | Nat'l Health Council                         |
| Bureau of Public Assistance (F.S.A.)            | *Nat'l Institute of Mental Health            |
| *Camp Fire Girls                                | *Nat'l Jewish Welfare Board                  |
| Child Study Ass'n of America                    | Nat'l Lutheran Council                       |
| Child Welfare League of America                 | Nat'l Organization for Public Health Nursing |
| *CIO Community Services Committee               | *Nat'l Recreation Ass'n                      |
| *Community Chests and Councils                  | *Nat'l Social Welfare Assembly               |
| Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds | Nat'l Tuberculosis and Health Ass'n          |
| Council of State Governments                    | *Nat'l Urban League                          |
| *Family Service Ass'n of America                | Public Health Service                        |
| Friends of the Mentally Ill                     | *U. S. Junior Chamber of Commerce            |
| General Federation of Women's Clubs             | *U. S. Dept. of Labor                        |
| *Girl Scouts of the U.S.A.                      | United Community Defense Services            |
| Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry         | United Council of Church Women               |
|   | United Seamen's Service                      |

Subsequent NEWSLETTERS will contain additional information about cooperation from national organizations.

NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH WEEK—May 4-10, 1952