

Citizen briefly
Sally Ann's
getting ready
now for
Christmas
-Story on Page 3

Inquest jury told attendants out of ward Mystery towel used in suicide

by Murray Moore

During the morning of Sept. 13, when Mitchell May committed suicide in his room in Ward B of the Oak Ridge division of the Penetanguishene Mental Health Centre, May was able to obtain a towel which helped him to hang himself, a coroner's jury heard Wednesday in Midland.

The jury also heard that only two ward attendants were in Ward B in the half hour before May's body was discovered hanging in his room at the far end of the ward from the ward's main entrance and the ward supervisor's office. Two of the four ward at-

tendants were out of the ward, escorting another Ward B patient to Penetanguishene General Hospital.

Ward attendant Gordon Campbell, one of the two attendants in Ward B when May's suicide was discovered, told the jury that the normal complement of staff for Ward B is a supervisor, who works in the office at the main entrance, and four attendants. When one or more attendants leave the ward during a shift, a replacement or replacements are sent to the ward. Substitutes were not sent to Ward B on Sept. 13, however.

May killed himself by tying the ends of two

towels together, which he looped above his head through a cast iron radiator that projects from the wall of his room.

May was only supposed to have one towel. The only explanation given the jury was a suggestion by Campbell that May had taken the second towel from another patient's room earlier that morning, between 8 and 9 a.m., and other patients were cleaning the ward, and smuggled it back to his cell. May was allowed one towel, at the discretion of the ward attendants, because of his good behaviour.

Although the policy in Ward B is that at-

tendants are to check each room every 15 minutes, on a staggered schedule, the other attendant, Leonard Dubeau, estimated that he checked May two or three times that morning between 7 a.m. and 10:49 a.m., when he found May hanging in his room. The last time he saw May alive was during the doctor's rounds, which ended shortly after 10 a.m. May was the first or second patient seen by the psychiatrist, Dr. Ivan Sirchich. May was in Room 38 of the 38 room ward.

Campbell, the other attendant in the ward when May was found, told the jury that he saw May three or four times that morning before he was found hanging, but that no room checks were made after 10 a.m.

Clifford Therrien, the ward supervisor that morning, said that Campbell and Dubeau were walking the corridor at 10:25 a.m., five minutes before laundry distribution began. Blood samples were taken from three or four patients between the end of doctor's rounds and the start of laundry distribution.

Dubeau said that at 10:30 he and Campbell started to supervise the distribution by five or six Ward B patients of clean laundry. When that work was done, with about 10 minutes to go to the patients' midday meal, the two attendants decided to take their charges to a nearby sun room for a break until 11 a.m.

Dubeau was in the lead as the group started to leave Ward B for the sun room when he saw May hanging.

May had been one of between 15 and 25 Ward B patients allowed to participate in the cleaning of the ward before doctor's rounds. May requested of his psychiatrist, Sirchich, that his medication be changed. May was told his request would be discussed at the weekly meeting of staff to be held that afternoon. "Good, good", he was quoted as responding.

A team of doctors and nurses who quickly responded to the alarm of a hanging in Ward B used extensive means to revive May, but stopped at 11:14 a.m. Dr. Ian Richardson gave the opinion that May had been hanging for over eight minutes, past the point of no return.

Dr. Sirchich said that he has many patients who are much more depressed than was May.

In the previous week, Dr. Sirchich said, Mitchell May earned enough points through work to earn him a card that would entitle him to more privileges. A registered nurse, Jeanne Jones, who heard Dr. Sirchich and Mitchell May talk on the day of May's suicide, testified that May told his psychiatrist that he was depressed, that he wanted a change in his medication, and that he "wasn't as good as he had been previously."



The play's the thing.... Huronia Players get into the act tonight.

— Picture, Page 3

CITIZEN BRIEFLY

Telethon tops \$15,000 target

A total of \$20,350 was raised this year during Huronia Association for the Mentally Retarded's annual telethon.

Final figures released yesterday noted the telethon's goal of \$15,000 was easily topped during the 24-hour-plus event telecast over Channel 12 from the Midland Civic Centre.

Three new Rotarians for Penetang club

Rotary Club of Penetanguishene which received its charter this past summer inducted its first new members, Nov. 9.

Joining the club were Cel Mailloux, Peter Shirriff and Jim Tippett. On hand for the occasion was District Governor Don Whitfield.

District Governor Whitfield, a second generation District Governor with 20 years' perfect attendance at Rotary, welcomed Penetanguishene as the "baby" of the 36 clubs in District 701.

The district spans the Quebec border, reaching north past Rouyn-Noranda, and includes five French language clubs.

Snow news is good news? Read on...

For those of you keeping tabs, a total of nine centimetres of snow has fallen on this area since snow and hail appeared for the first time this season on Oct. 16.

At this time last year, snow had yet to appear!

Dateline Canada

The NHL was organized in Montreal on Nov. 22, 1917.

On Nov. 26, 1926, Vincent Massey became the first Canadian envoy to the U.S.A.

Important meeting for RC Board's brass

Inaugural meeting of the Simcoe County Roman Catholic Separate School Board is set for Dec. 1.

Probes continue on several fronts

Const. Jack Charlebois of the Midland Police Department and Inspector Gord Mugford from the Ontario Fire Marshal's

Office are continuing their investigation into fires at Peoples Store in downtown last December and again last month.

Last month's blaze caused \$180,000 damage.

'Main-streeting' Mayor-elect Roach

Midland's Mayor-elect Al Roach, who officially takes office Dec. 6, continued his policy of "main-streeting" this week.

Roach visited municipal officials in Tiny Township and Penetanguishene on Wednesday while yesterday he was in Midhurst watching Simcoe County Councillors in action.