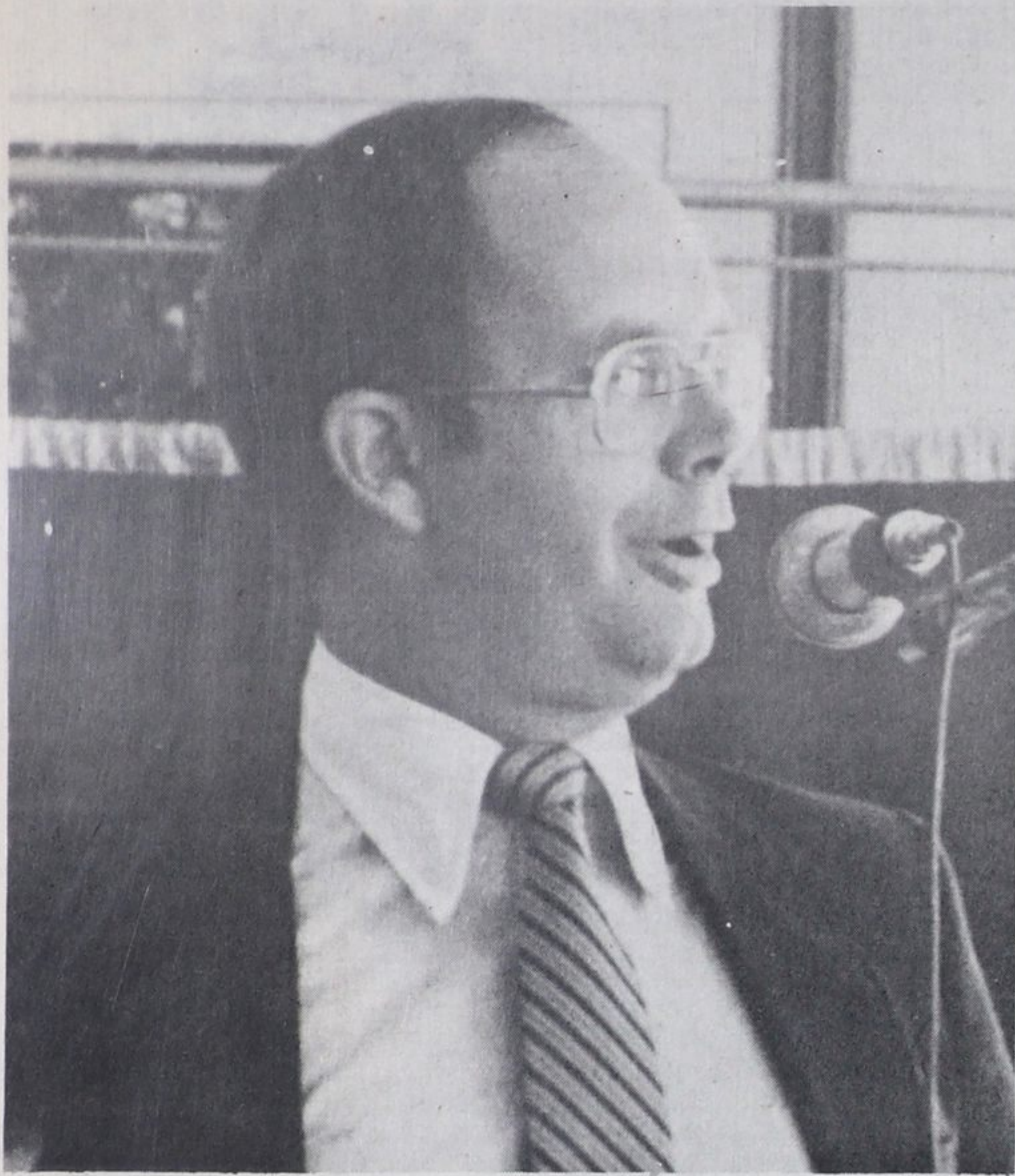


That's My Line



Wayne McKerrow MHC's top brass

by RON JOHNSON

Wayne McKerrow, administrator of the Penetanguishene Mental Health Centre, was the guest at Wednesday's meeting of the Midland Rotary Club at Budd Watson's Gallery.

McKerrow gave an informative talk on how the MHC, especially the Oak Ridge section, fits into the legal and penal systems of Canada.

The basic premise of the law is that no one can stand trial for his actions unless he or she understands fully two things. The first is that the person committing the crime must realize that what he did was wrong, and secondly, that what he did was a crime.

Being unfit to stand trial is a legal defence in Canada's law system, and if this defence is taken, the defendant is sent to a Mental Health Centre for an evaluation of his mental capacities for either a 30 or 60 day period.

At the end of this period, the MHC reports back to the courts with the findings.

If the defendant is found to be unfit, by reason of insanity, to stand trial, he or she is acquitted of the crime in a court of law.

The defendant is then made a ward of the Lt.-Governor of Ontario by a Warrant of the Lt.-Governor.

According to the severity of the crime, the patient is then assigned to either a regional MHC, or a provincial MHC like Penetanguishene, or a maximum security detention centre for the criminally insane like Oak Ridge.

This, according to McKerrow, is

where all the problems start. The MHC is always in a "no win situation". Several situations lead to this predicament.

First of all there is the cost of keeping a person in a Mental Health Centre. An approximate cost for keeping a patient for a year at Penetanguishene MHC is \$46,000. It is very difficult to justify such a sum when little of the outlay is returned in any manner from the institution.

Another problem which opens the centres up to public criticism is the question of when a patient is ready to be released.

To be released from a Mental Health Centre, the patient must face a review board made up of either a retired or active Supreme Court judge, two psychiatrists, one lawyer, and one other professional from an unrelated field.

This board hears reports from lawyers, and the hospital about the patient, and then makes its decision as to whether he or she is released, moved to another facility, or re-examined.

Each patient in a Mental Health Centre is reviewed after his first six months, and then every year thereafter.

Whether the patient is released or not, the decision of the board is always open to criticism and second-guessing.

Upon the results of the review board, patients are released, transferred or kept on by a cabinet order of government.

The third, and most perplexing problem with the MHC's is that obviously the patients don't want to be there, and have certain rights guaranteed to them with which to try to

get out.

Patients have the right to file legal action against the MHC or any of the staff, if they feel they are being mistreated.

Secondly, the patients have the right to stop publication of any information pertaining to their personal records. This often inhibits the MHC from defending itself against outside allegations.

Finally, the question of how to treat the criminally insane is completely arbitrary in itself. Very little research or investigation has been done into what will or will not be successful. Every thing that is done is almost experimental, and therefore subject once again to criticism.

What should be recognized is that Canada's system far outshines the systems of other nations. It is internationally recognized as first-rate.

It may not be without flaws, but it is a system which employs a hard-working core of professionals doing their best.

We're glad you asked!

Jim Lynn
Funeral Director



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- Can I sell my lots to someone else?
- Is the cemetery properly funded for Perpetual Care?

Some of these questions can't be answered without some action on your part. You should investigate and discuss them with representatives of cemeteries under consideration.

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Business would employ handicapped

A Midland man is trying to start a salvage and recycling venture which would employ the handicapped.

Ray Lalonde says that a pilot program will make money and, through the gathering of scrap metal and newspapers, create jobs.

A meeting will be held in September at a location to be announced, says Lalonde.

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