

Criticize Accommodations In Substitute Hospitals

By DON SHEARD

A German sniper's bullet smashed your spine in Aachen, Germany, while you were serving with the U. S. Army in 1944.

You have been paralyzed from the waist down ever since.

Patiently, ploddingly and with the aid of excellent care you have been receiving at Halloran Hospital, Staten Island, you have managed to build up a life of your own and have even taken unto yourself a wife.

But suddenly and with what some have characterized as "indecent haste," you are presented with a notice from the Veterans Administration which reads:

"DISPOSSESSED."

Your Government has told you that you must vacate Halloran Hospital by Feb. 15 and be transferred to Cushing Hospital, Framingham, Mass.—hundreds of miles from the wife upon whom you depend so heavily; hundreds of miles from the apartment you furnished with money carefully scraped together from your disability allowance.

The Prospect Before Him

That, in capsule form, is the dismal and melancholy prospect that confronts Donald Vanderbush, 27, who must spend five days a week receiving treatment at Halloran Hospital, but is able to visit weekends with his wife, Dorothy, at their new apartment at 791 Manor rd., Sunnyside, S. I.

That also is the plight of the 86 other paraplegics now at Halloran Hospital, who have been told they will be moved to

the Kingsbridge Hospital, Bronx; Cushing Hospital, Framingham, Mass., and the McGuire Hospital, Richmond, Va.

Doomed to spend the rest of their lives in wheelchairs, the paraplegics are understandably bitter not so much because Halloran Hospital must be evacuated but because the Veterans Administration has failed to develop a program to take care of them under one roof in New York State.

The Veterans Administration has agreed to remove all its patients from Halloran and permit the State to repossess the hospital to take care of elderly mental patients. The mental patients are being moved from quarters at the Sampson, N. Y. Naval Station which the U. S. Air Force is taking over as part of the rearmament program.

A spokesman for the Veterans Administration promised that all veterans, who received their injuries in military service, will be placed in New York hospitals. The non-service cases will be sent out of the State.

VA Ignores Suggestion

He said the agreement with the State was made necessary by the military emergency, although the Veterans Administration held a lease on Halloran until Dec. 31, 1952. By that time, the Manhattan Veterans Hospital, which will be a unit in the New York University-Bellevue Medical Center, will be completed.

The paralyzed veterans charge Kingsbridge Hospital, with 50 paraplegics already there, has no room for the 55 cases the Veterans Administration proposes to transfer from Halloran.

"Kingsbridge is already pressed to the wall in handling 50 paraplegics," one veteran said.

The veterans declare it would not be necessary to send one paraplegic out of the State if the Veterans Administration would make Brooklyn Veterans Hospital at Fort Hamilton available for their treatment.

The veterans say there is ample room to accommodate the paraplegics in Brooklyn, but the Veterans Administration has ignored the suggestion.

Just how shattering a blow the closing of Halloran will be in the life of a paralyzed veteran can be judged from these words of Donald Vanderbush:

"The whole thing is foul smelling. It's messing me up in all ways.

Legion Heads Protest

"We spent \$4,000 furnishing our apartment. We got wall-to-wall carpeting and special bookcases installed, as well as Venetian blinds. I couldn't go anywhere without my wife and most of the things we bought wouldn't be any good anywhere else.

"You can imagine how being moved to Massachusetts or Virginia will disrupt my life. I have to stay in the hospital all week, but I am able to spend the weekends with my wife because we live in Staten Island.

"Halloran is a beautiful place and has all the facilities we need. We can go fishing and have a swell gym and a good basketball team.

"You know how hospital food is. It keeps you alive and

that's about all. So my wife cooks special dishes and brings them to me every day.

"Now they're taking it all away from us. I don't know. Sometimes it's too much for me to figure out."

American Legion officials condemned the transfer of paralyzed veterans to institutions remote from their homes and said it was due to a lack of planning by the Veterans Administration.

Maurice Stember, New York State Adjutant of the Legion, said:

"The blame for this misfortune to our paralyzed veterans lies with the Veterans Administration at the top level.

"The whole thing can be traced to a lack of planning

on the part of Gen. Carlye Gray, chief of the Veterans Administration.

"We have a phantom administrator in the person of Gray."

William T. Collins 2d, County commander of the Legion, said:

"We think it's a crime to close Halloran to paralyzed veterans. The transfers will work a hardship on the men and a hardship on their families, who will have to travel all over the country to visit their loved ones."

(The story of what the closing of Halloran Hospital means to paralyzed veterans will be continued in tomorrow's New York Journal-American.)