

L-152

Liberty Ward C-2
State Hospital
Howard, R. I.
Jan. 21, 1961.

Dear Bob:

I have been here about two weeks. Since it has been about nine years from my departure from this place, a commentary on the changes, evolution, or progress is indicated.

I forget whether it was you, or Dr. Bacon, who wrote that there was no other class of patient, other than little children, who was so quick to apprehend the interest, or lack of interest, of the doctor than the alcoholic. In the present instance, the eighty or more patients in this ward are aware that the present incumbent is such a "rara avis".. It is most unfortunate, that after a short tenure in the present position, he will be transferred, by choice or necessity, to some unallied field. This is too often the case.

On meeting such rare people, I stifle my instinct to commiserate, lest I dull the edge of their crusader spirit. One informs them of the disappointments & pit-falls, with the same hesitancy as that employed when telling a small boy, that Santa Claus is an ideal rather than reality. I have already gathered that his colleagues regard the treatment of alcoholics as a disreputable practice & a stigmatized field. The alcoholic, himself, will enhance this opinion by repeated failures, his inability to preserve a common trust in the most trivial or matters, & his unlovable personality.

On the other hand, you will encounter a medical practice, ~~under-the conditions-of-this-present-circumstance;~~ which is considered as reputable. I offer to you the hundreds of cases of arteriosclerotic insanity, senile dementia, & paresis (where organic change has taken place & irreparable damage has been done). Just exactly what can a doctor do other than sign