

Mental Patients Transferred

(From ALASKA'S HEALTH AND WELFARE)

The last group of Alaskan patients at Morningside hospital in Oregon were transferred by June 30 with all but three of the final 29 going directly to newly opened Harborview Memorial hospital for mentally retarded at Valdez. In the gradual transfer back to Alaska, most of the Morningside patients passed through the Alaska Psychiatric Institute in Anchorage en route to Harborview, nursing homes, or other facilities for their care.

The contract with Morningside hospital terminated in June 1967 after 63 years with Alaska's mentally ill having been housed there since 1904. Until Congress passed the Alaska Mental Health Enabling Act, which was signed by President Eisenhower in July 1956, care of mentally ill patients of the then-territory was the responsibility of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

The 225-bed all-modern, steel and concrete Alaska Psychiatric Institute at Anchorage was opened in October 1962. Transfer of patients to it from Morningside began at the rate of 10 per month. The opening of 58-bed Harborview Nursing Home at Valdez had preceded it in September 1961. Destroyed in the March

1964 Alaska earthquake, this home now has been replaced by a modern, new building constructed with Office for Emergency Planning funds under the disaster program by the U. S. Corps of Engineers in the relocated Valdez townsite. It comprises a small general hospital and 150 mental health beds. About 75 mentally retarded patients are currently

hospitalized there. Staffing and housing for the institution continue to be developed.

Approximately 75 Alaskan patients remain at Baby Louise Haven in Portland which is a long term care hospital for mentally retarded; another 45 are in nursing homes in the area and plans are not to transfer them at the present time.