

**MAN JAILED WITHOUT MEDICAL AID
FACES LOSS OF FROSTBITTEN FINGERS**

Was Dazed by Combined Effects Of Medicine, Alcohol, and Cold

By TOM SNAPP

A 26-year-old Tanacross man, John Paul Luke, sat up in his bed at Bassett Army Hospital yesterday, and his blackened frostbitten hands trembled.

He bit his lip and an extremely bitter expression swept over his face.

"They were more interested in getting me to jail than to the hospital," he said.

And then Luke explained further how on February 15 he had had an experience whereby his hands became frostbitten, how he had attempted to summon aid and had been turned down, and how now he was facing the amputation of some of his fingers.

According to Luke:

Early on the morning of Feb. 15 he was a passenger in a car driven by a friend, Moses Thomas, at Dot Lake. He said about a mile and half from the lodge the car went into a ditch and that he had tried to assist in pushing the car out.

Though he was wearing gloves, he said that the weather was very cold, 30 or 40 below zero, and the winds were blowing. He said after about a half hour, he thought his hands were beginning to freeze and that he started out for aid.

Previously, Luke said he had been drinking, had drunk four cans of beer and three shots of whisky, but that he had not drunk enough to be drunk. He said that he had previously been to a

dentist and had been given a shot by the dentist.

Suddenly, he said, he grew extremely ill, probably as a re-

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Man Jailed . . .

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sult of the medical shot, the drinking of the alcohol earlier, and the extreme cold.

He walked a mile and a half to a lodge and proceeded to knock on the door to summon aid. No one, he said, would come to let him in. Finally, in desperation, he knocked harder and a pane of glass was accidentally broken in the door.

Personnel of the lodge came then, he said, but they still wouldn't let him in.

The persons who operate the lodge are elderly and had no way of knowing the events leading up to the incident of the broken glass. They had experienced other break-ins and told police that Luke appeared intoxicated.

Finally Luke said he walked back to the car "about half out of his mind" and about an hour and a half later a State Police trooper arrested him on charges of malicious mischief and disorderly conduct.

"I told the trooper that my hands were froze," Luke said, "but he told me that they looked all right to him."

"They were hurting me and I knew I should go to the doctor, but they took me to the jail in Tok."

By 8 a.m. Luke said his hands had swelled greatly and he was in great pain when taken to court at 8:45 a.m.

At 9 a.m. he was brought before Deputy Magistrate Alberta Clarke. He pleaded guilty to the charges and was sentenced to 15 days in jail on each count.

"I didn't want to sentence him but he was balmed," Mrs. Clarke said. "He was simply wild and refused to go to the hospital. He kept saying something about having a dental appointment in Anchorage. I sentenced him and told the trooper to get him to the hospital at once," Mrs. Clarke said.

"The whole affair in court couldn't have lasted over ten minutes," she said. "I gave him an aspirin—that was all I had—because I could see he was in great pain."

Luke said that he wanted to go to the hospital but that the state trooper and the magistrate appeared to be more interested in sending him to jail than to the hospital.

"I tried to explain to them that I was not drunk but that it was the shot of the dentist and the cold that had caused me to be ill," Luke said his jaws and face also were affected by the cold

impairing his speech.

State Trooper Robert Dean-Olson who made the arrest said it did not appear to him that the man's hands were frostbitten; otherwise, he would have seen that he had been sent to a hospital at once.

After court, arrangements were made with the Bureau of Indian Affairs for hospitalization of Luke. He was first brought to St. Joseph's Hospital, then transferred to Bassett Army Hospital at Ft. Wainwright.

A Mt. McKinley mountain climber, frostbitten slightly himself, Art Davidson, who spoke before the Farthest North Press Club Wednesday in Fairbanks said it was his understanding if Luke had received emergency medical treatment, he would not now be facing amputations of his fingers.

Asked why he pleaded guilty to the charges, Luke said he would have pleaded guilty no matter what the charges were adding, "They wouldn't believe me."

It was about 1 p.m., about 10-1/2 hours after the incident, before Luke was admitted to the hospital in Fairbanks.

Deputy Magistrate Clark indicated that she had made an amended judgment in the case directing that he be hospitalized. She said that he would not have to spend any time in jail for the offense after he is released from the hospital. The amendment was sent in four or five days later, she said.

"I don't care if a person is drinking, if he is cold and wants to warm, I would let him come," said Luke. "I wouldn't try to put him in jail."