



What makes a newspaper great?

How does it feel to wear a strait jacket?

Your arms ache and you can't move them, Geri Hoffner reports, but pretty soon you don't care. And then you don't care whether you're clean or dirty...and you don't mind the cheap, sodden food on the old tin plate, and you forget you're a human being, and you slump all day on a hard wooden bench with your hopes as blank as the blank faces around you.

That's what life used to be like in most state mental hospitals in America when funds were low and staffs inadequate and people outside ignored you. Geri Hoffner knows because of a remarkable reporting job she did for the Minneapolis Star and Tribune which won her national recognition and helped to shock a whole state awake to the needs of the mentally ill.

For three weeks this Tribune reporter lived in Minneapolis mental hospitals talking to listless patients in filthy wards, eating watery stews meal after meal, watching overworked, underpaid

attendants resort in desperation to shackles and harsh restraints as they tried to cope with the troubles of sick minds that couldn't be helped or cured for lack of money and facilities. Then for four weeks more Geri Hoffner toured the state digging out facts and interviewing mental health authorities to complete the picture.

"Minnesota Bedlam," her story of conditions in Minnesota's eight state mental hospitals, documented with on-the-scene pictures by Tribune photographer Art Hager, highlighted the crucial situation for the largest newspaper audience in the Upper Midwest, helped win wide popular support for a new mental health program which brought the Minnesota state hospitals a vitally needed 18 million dollar two-year appropriation.



Strait jackets and restraints have almost disappeared today in the clean, efficiently operated wards of Minnesota's mental hospitals. Food is good. Staffs are larger, better trained, better paid. Morale has improved, patients are happier, and more are being cured. Again, Geri Hoffner knows from experience. Her "Minnesota Bedlam Revisited" series in the Minneapolis Tribune recently brought her new fame and new honors, including a Sigma Delta Chi citation for distinguished reporting, the first ever made to a woman by the national professional journalism fraternity.

Serving the interests of all citizens, among them the forgotten and unfortunate, is part of a good newspaper's job...and another reason why the Minneapolis Star and Tribune have earned the respect of Upper Midwest residents as inspiring leaders and dependable friends.