

Floridians Worried About Tourist Business

Area Calm Despite Sleeping Sickness

By DOUGALD E. FERGUSON
Of the Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Life goes on at its normal pace in this resort area where sleeping sickness has taken more than a dozen lives since July 21.

But there is concern among city officials and business people. They wonder how publicity about the epidemic will affect their winter tourist business.

There is no panic in the streets.

Businessmen are not closing their shops or retrenching.

Motel owners are not turning their mortgages back to the banks.

There has been no mass exodus of people.

Officials point out that less than five-tenths of one per cent

of the 400,000 people in Pinellas County have come down with the illness.

A tiny minority, but Charles Wentz was one of these.

It was Friday afternoon when the 54-year-old sales engineer started feeling sick to his stomach.

His temperature rose to 103½. His head ached. He saw double. At times, he was delirious.

A doctor treated him for an intestinal virus. Then Wentz's mind went blank. His wife took him to the hospital. A spinal tap and blood tests were taken.

Wentz lay in a coma.

Encephalitis, said the doctors. They explained to Mrs. Wentz that her husband's brain and nervous system were inflamed by the virus.

Wentz remained unconscious for five days.

Today, 25 pounds lighter, he is recuperating. Doctors say he will be able to return to work in about two months.

Wentz had a severe case. Some shake it off without even going to a doctor.

A lot of mystery surrounds sleeping sickness, the layman's term for encephalitis.

There are three types predominant in the United States: Eastern Equine, Western Equine and the St. Louis variety. The St. Louis type, the strain prevalent here, is considered benign and seldom fatal.

Yet, 10 per cent of the patients here have died.

Doctors blame the high death rate on the large number of elderly persons living in this

haven of the retired. Older persons, often in poor health, are unable to produce the antibodies that counteract the virus.

Health officials have concluded that the virus is seeded in Pinellas County. They theorize that the virus is carried by birds. The county has the largest bird population in the state.

"The county is a natural birdcage, surrounded on three sides by water," said Dr. W. C. Ballard, director of the county health department.

And the birds like it here, because the older folks feed them as a hobby.

But birds can't give encephalitis to humans.

Doctors blame the mosquito, the same insect that carries yellow fever and malaria, for transmitting it from infected birds to humans.

City and county insecticide fogging programs have been doubled.

An emergency federal health laboratory has been set up to study mosquitoes and birds to determine which species are the prime carriers and reservoirs of the virus.

Businessmen say it is too early to determine the financial impact of the epidemic on the county's economy.

This is a slack time of year for tourists, the main source of income. The summer season ended Labor Day and the winter season doesn't open until late November.

Taylor Carr, manager of the Gulf Winds Apartments and

about encephalitis. Last year at this time my 33 units were about one-fourth filled. I'm empty today."

Doc Webb, owner of Webb's City, an establishment almost as famous as St. Petersburg's sunshine, said his business was up \$100,000 last month over August of last year.

"I'm in the process of a \$1 million expansion and remodeling program," he said. "This thing doesn't scare me."

The Sunshine City is hoping this year for something it would have roundly cussed in years past—an early cold snap.

This will kill the mosquitoes.

Village on St. Petersburg Beach, said his business is off about 20 per cent for this period.

But Carr, president of the beach chamber of commerce, said: "I don't think the publicity about encephalitis will have too much effect on the winter tourist business. The situation looks much better than it did a couple of weeks ago."

But Ben Holtzinger, manager of the Wilshire Motel, says "I can't help but believe that people making plans for the next several months might tend to shy away from Pinellas County and the west coast of Florida because of publicity

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Crew Cuts and Kilts

Sailors 'Belong,' Says Scot

DUNOON, Scotland (AP) — "Look at that," said the mayor of this Scottish town, "did you ever see a kilt-wearer with a crew cut before?"

Hugh Christie pointed to three American boys, decked out in kilts, each with an unmistakable crew cut.

Dunoon is the biggest town near the U. S. Navy's nuclear submarine base, Holy Loch.

Over 600 wives and children of sailors serving on the depot ship Proteus now live near here.

Last week, officials recorded the 100th marriage between an American sailor and a Scottish bride.

Dunoon, in fact, is running out of unmarried girls.

When the Proteus is replaced next year by the Hunley, there's going to be a real crisis in the lives of unmarried sailors.

"I was considerably worried when the Americans first came," said town councillor Catherine MacPhail. "We didn't know what was going to happen, but I must say, everything is fine."

"These men, the Americans and their families, why they're part of our community. They really seem to belong here."

The Proteus commander, Capt. Raymond Debois, of Naugatuck, Conn., said 200

men have requested transfers to the Hunley so they can remain in Scotland.

"Every man's case will be considered individually," said the American officer, "and we'll do what we can to help."

Many of the Americans based here with their families can claim connections with certain of the Scottish clans—but not all of them.

So, to push the sales of kilts, a local tailor has devised a Proteus kilt.

It contains green for the sea, blue for the navy, and gold for—well, probably all that money the Americans have brought into this corner of Scotland.

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