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## Paul Davis: Woman searches for link to lost grandmother

By Paul Davis

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*"Mr. Davis:*

*I found your name when I was researching information about whether Bryce Hospital (in Tuscaloosa) would have retained, or even had, any records of my grandmother, who was confined there from around 1926 until her death in 1973-74.*

*Although I reside in IL outside of Chicago, my father grew up on a farm around Hueytown, AL. His mother, my grandmother, was committed to Bryce in the late 1920s. Because being institutionalized carried such a big "stigma" back in the day, I never had the chance to meet my grandmother.*

*Having read the deplorable conditions which my grandmother would have experienced, while being at Bryce in the '40s, '50s, '60s, etc., my heart breaks for her and the thousands of other residents who did, indeed, seemed to be warehoused rather than treated for their respective conditions.*

*From my family history, I know that my grandmother was committed because, having witnessed the death of her beloved brother, in an explosion and fire, she subsequently suffered a nervous breakdown. I understand that today's modern day treatment modalities obviously did not exist in the late 1920s, however, to learn of Bryce's non-treatment and living conditions, I can but imagine what she probably endured; seemingly everything from possibly having to provide slave/unpaid labor, to having morsels to eat, possibly being the subject of experimentation with massive amounts of "vitamins" and/or thorazine therapy, lack of safety ... need any more be said.*

*To say the aforementioned history and reality of life at Bryce was reprehensible is a gross understatement equivalent to putting a band aid, with a smiley face, on a gaping gun shot wound.*

*I read about the fact that, as a journalist, you previously reported on the conditions at Bryce. Can you please e-mail me or refer me to where I might find the articles you wrote? I also read about the Wyatt v. Stickney case and its outcome. What is currently being done, from a preservation of Bryce's history perspective? Does Ricky Wyatt, by chance, still reside in/around Tuscaloosa?*

*He would have been at Bryce during the time my grandmother was confined there. if you have any information or directions as to where I may find actual Bryce records or talk with someone who had a first hand account of life inside Bryce, I would very much appreciate being able to speak with them.*

*I know this is an unusual request (it is not) but I'm seeking to gain some type of closure and/or information that could be applied for the benefit of others who may find themselves in a current day mental health facility.*

*I submit that we taxpaying citizens need to be informed and/or involved to make sure mental health patients' rights are protected, whatever the state, whatever the facility On behalf of my grandmother, Hazel Lassiter (Laird), please accept my personal thank you for being part of the solution, i.e., for bringing to light the conditions that you found at Bryce years ago. I would be honored to speak with you should you ever have the time."*

*Thank you.*

Ms Daryl Laird  
Cary, Ill.

Want to pay your respects to this grandmother or your grandmother? A memorial park is being planned for all these forgotten souls buried at Bryce. It will be on the Bryce campus. Checks may be made payable to the Bryce Hospital Cemetery Memorial Fund, P.O. Box 3033, Tuscaloosa, AL 35403.

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