

2 ward
Parkside Mental Hospital
Adelaide, South Australia
July 29, 1963

Dear Lawrence,

congratulations my friend! A baby boy, you and Robanne must be so proud! The world is moving quickly, isn't it? yesterday I saw more of the soldiers in Vietnam on the television; what a violent business that all is. Our hour of Tele is normally a relaxing time, but lately other inmates have become more agitated watching the footage of the war. Some mumble about it being an unjust war, I really don't know.

It feels odd to write to you about the television, we only got it in the day-room a few months ago - or was it longer? I struggle to keep track in here, we've no watches and only one clock and mail is the only contact I have outside the ward. The wardens keep us scheduled to the hour but hell if any of us really know what the time is. I saw myself in a mirror two nights ago in the showers and was shocked - as I'm sure you would be - by my appearance. I've been in here waiting for the trial, but I have aged years in those few months. Looking into the mirror I realised my eyes were sunken, my skin wrinkled, and my hair ragged - I barely look like myself.

I was so glad to hear from you last week. The days are truly wasting away in this place what with having so little contact with other people. Aside from the few nice warders, it's nice to hear from outside every once and a while. How's Jeff coming along? Last year he was in a spot of bother with his heart but I hope he's well enough to coach the footy again. I hope Robby is treating you okay and you survive the baby alright.

Hope to hear from you soon,
Jack

Ps. I hope you come to the trial...it would be nice to see a friendly face.

Writer's Note - Mild Mannered Psychotic

By the 1960s the ward was getting old and the world around it is aging out of the archaic era in which it had been built. As the ward aged, the world passed around it as did the world around the inmates. With little outside contact patients watched the world change through tiny windows. Soon television, new cars and modern amenities would enter their world, but for aging inmates this could only have been more evidence of the world racing past them. To be stuck inside a criminal ward during this time of technological evolution and social change would have been incredibly alienating and left the inmates seemingly stuck inside a time period that was no longer reflected in the outside world.

This character is again not based on real world person, but is a mild-mannered, mentally ill person held in the ward. He is not currently violent, but perhaps had been in the past which necessitated his stay in the criminal ward. He had led a normal life before having some kind of episode which landed him in the ward.

**This series of letters was written by Sam Kuhl, a Flinders University student, who was on placement with the National Trust of South Australia. They are works of fiction informed by history and should be read as such. All names and addresses have been made up.*