

Cursing, Fighting Gov. Long Taken to Mental Hospital

Ailment Reported As Schizophrenia

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Sheriff's deputies Thursday night hauled a cursing, fist-swinging Gov. Earl K. Long to a Louisiana state mental hospital.

Doctors said the ailing 63-year-old governor is suffering from paranoic schizophrenia—delusions of persecution.

Deputies had to pull the fighting, screaming governor from one automobile and force him into another before speeding to the hospital at Mandeville.

The governor was placed in the Southwest Louisiana Hospital at Mandeville less than four hours after he had skipped out of a New Orleans hospital, where he had agreed to stay two weeks or longer for treatment.

Dr. Charles Belcher, acting superintendent of the Mandeville hospital, told the Associated Press later, "it usually takes as much as 30 days to arrive at a firm decision as to a patient's condition and release."

The new commitment order was signed by Dr. Chester Williams, coroner for the East Baton Rouge Parish (county).

Williams said the action was taken at the request of Mrs. Long, who on June 2 had signed a similar order that kept the governor in a Galveston, Texas, psychiatric clinic 19 days.

"Hell, I'm not going to get in there," Long yelled while taking a full swing with a fist as he was tugged and shoved into the sheriff's car that carried him to Mandeville, 50 miles to the east.

Long had just arrived at the Baton Rouge courthouse after the 80-mile trip from the famed Ochsner Foundation Hospital at New Orleans. A sheriff's car had intercepted the governor at the parish line and advised him that Judge Fred S. LeBlanc had signed a new commitment order.

Ochsner doctors had argued unsuccessfully 3½ hours to get the governor to agree to continue treatment there. The governor insisted he could relax and get more rest at his farm or at the farm of a friend.

Accompanied by state troopers and a doctor, Long headed for Baton Rouge. He apparently was unaware of the arrangements for him to be intercepted as his speeding automobile entered East Baton Rouge Parish (county).

Mrs. Long, who had signed the Galveston commitment papers June 2, had left Ochsner's hospital a half hour ahead of the governor, apparently to complete arrangements here. She was known to have made a number of telephone calls as the Ochsner doctors tried to convince the governor he should stay there.

LeBlanc signed his order as the governor's car crossed the parish line. His action was radioed to a police car on the highway.

The governor's sedan was forced to the side of the four-lane highway and sheriff's deputies took over.

Long refused to get out of the car once it arrived at the Baton Rouge courthouse. The driver had to thread his way through a crowd of people as the car moved into the courthouse basement.

A court-appointed, three-member medical commission, headed by Williams, was waiting to examine the governor.

Driving the car was Sheriff's Capt. Herman Thompson. With him were Asst. Deputy George LeBlanc, Deputy A. B. Cutrer and Police Lt. Russell Willie, Long's regular chauffeur.

Long called from the window: "Get this mob out of here." Jim Hughes, a reporter for the Baton Rouge Morning Advocate, was arrested as police sought to break up the crowd that had surged around the vehicles.

"Get across the street, get across the street," officers yelled. "They're coming out."

Hughes was among those refusing to get across the street. Williams said Long has thoughts and beliefs not fully based on fact.

The coroner said he was advised Thursday afternoon by an attending physician the governor was in much worse mental condition than Wednesday when he arrived from his enforced stay at Galveston's John Sealy Hospital.

Williams said he advised Mrs. Long of the situation and informed her the governor had decided to leave Ochsner's.

Mrs. Long replied if such was the case she wished to have the governor committed.

Williams emphasized Long still is Governor of Louisiana, although Lt. Gov. Lether Frazer presumably will continue to carry out the duties of the chief executive.

The coroner said the commitment order is good until the hospital superintendent believes the governor is in condition to return to society.

The Mandeville hospital is an intensive treatment center. It has facilities for the newest and most modern methods of treating mentally disturbed persons.



—Associated Press Wirephoto.

Governor Long, left, under guard at start of ride to mental hospital.