

Dr. William S. Hall



Dr. William S. Hall
1915-1995

Dr. William S. Hall spent 46 years of his life dedicated to helping those with mental illness in South Carolina. As a result, he was among the first citizens to be honored by the South Carolina Hall of Fame, inducted in 1975. The South Carolina Hall of Fame was founded in Myrtle Beach, SC in 1973, to recognize and honor contemporary and past citizens who have made outstanding contributions to South Carolina's heritage, history, and progress.

The following is a transcript of a video which highlights Dr. Hall's enormous contributions to the progress of the South Carolina Department of Mental Health. The video was produced by ETV, in part by a production grant from the South Carolina Hall of Fame and sponsored by the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, the City of Myrtle Beach, and the State of South Carolina. This video may be found online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCx2e>

[SR2gEc&index=32&list=PLE14E0926205E1551](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCx2eSR2gEc&index=32&list=PLE14E0926205E1551).

"William S. Hall was a psychiatrist from SC who brought the Department of Mental Health into the twentieth century. He did that by organizing the kind of ramshackle way things were back in the 20s and 30s and he got enough money from the federal government as well as the state government to change the way the mentally ill were treated in the state," said Dr. K. Richard Harding, M.D. Psychiatrist.

"Compassionate, intelligent, dignified, and dedicated, those are a few of the words I would use to describe him," said State Director John H. Magill.

From 1828-1930 the SC state hospital, located on Bull Street in Columbia, SC, was the only entity in the State to grant help to the mentally ill. In this time of racial segregation, two facilities operated to help

the afflicted, one for Whites the other for Negroes. People traveled from all corners of South Carolina for help for their loved ones, either for short-term admittance or for long-term care. As mental health awareness progressed over the years so did the problems facing the hospital. Overcrowding and lack of personnel reigned for a decade and with World War II in full swing, doctors, nurses, and all other medical staff were being called into military service cutting the staff-to-patient ratio in half. Funding was low for the hospital and even if they had money to expand, building supplies were not readily available. Add a food shortage to the mix and it was clear the War would continue to take its toll on the mental health services of South Carolina.

“Dr. Hall came along as a psychiatrist, back in the 1930s. And was instrumental in starting to feel that things weren’t quite the way they should be for the citizens of our State, whom he loved dearly,” said Dr. Harding.

In 1945, he too had been called to active duty in the war. “There he started to see the importance of quality, of ways to deal with people, medications, other treatments, and also the importance of organization. The way the Army organizes things. He never forgot that. He came back to the South Carolina State Hospital after the war and began making initiatives to have physical exams, diets, nutrition, and all those things better organized and quality assured.” Dr. K. Richard Harding, MD.

It was at that time that Dr. Hall was promoted to Clinical Director and later Superintendent. “He felt, he had the vision, to see that we had to grow our own professionals, because we couldn’t get enough coming in from other States. So, he made the William S. Hall Psychiatric Institute to have home grown doctors, psychologists, social workers, recreational therapists, and so forth, and made it a first rate training institution.”

“Dr. Hall, on many occasions, would ask members of the General Assembly and others to come out and visit the facility and see for themselves what it was like to be a patient at a facility but also to work here. I think that often was very helpful in some decision making.” said Magill. Decision making that would grant five million dollars to help build the necessary facilities and get the South Carolina State Hospital back on its feet.

As Superintendent, Dr. Hall would devote 11 years of his service to relieve overcrowding, promote professional growth, and establish several mental health clinics throughout the State.

During Dr. Hall’s tenure in the 1960s, integration came to the State Hospital. Minority patients were assured of receiving the same quality provisions and treatment as all patients.



State Director John H. Magill viewing the portrait of Dr. William S. Hall, at the South Carolina Hall of Fame.

Dr. Hall was promoted to State Commissioner of Mental Health and was assigned the daunting task of organizing all facets of the hospital system under one umbrella, forming what we now know as the Department of Mental Health.

In his last years, until his retirement in 1983, William S. Hall would forever change the structure of the long-standing institution on Bull Street. "I think one of the things Dr. Hall is credited for is the significant deinstitutionalization process of the hospitals and then the creation of our community mental health system." said Magill.

"As time went on, and with changes in the treatments that were available, including the medication Thorazine, and other types of medications, it became apparent that we could move people out into the community and that they would do as well, or just as well, or nearly as well, as they had been in the State Hospital, plus they had families helping take care of them," said Dr. Harding. With the community system thriving, the facilities at Bull Street became less and less necessary. Now, only a shadow remains of what was.

"Well, I think Dr. Hall was inducted into the Hall of Fame because I think he was held in such high regard that he was probably considered one of the absolute top citizens of the State, as well as being a top psychiatrist, and running a State agency," said Magill.

"He will always be a hero in my mind, because of his ability to try to change the course of a mighty battleship. And that's what a big Department like this is. You have to change it very slowly, but you have to keep leaning on the rudder, or you never get anywhere except where you were pointed fifty years ago," said Dr. Harding.

"A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces but also by the men it honors, the men it remembers." – John F. Kennedy