

PSYCHOLOGY

Avoiding Mass Murderers

There are many revealing signs and symptoms that can be detected in the people who suddenly become crazed and commit mass murders.

► HOW can people protect themselves from mass murders by crazed persons running amuck?

The New Jersey veteran who shot down over a dozen people is not the first such occurrence, nor will it be the last. In the Pacific Northwest the bloody Easter Sunday murders of this year are remembered.

Here are the signs to look for among your friends and neighbors who may do the same thing:

1. Anyone who goes to great extremes in his eccentricity should be watched. In the New Jersey case this took the form of overly-religious activity, Bible reading. In other cases it may be lavish spending of money, excessive drinking, or even being over-conscientious and meticulous. This is a form of getting away from reality, which is a sign of abnormal behavior.

2. Anyone who has an accumulation of firearms or other deadly weapons and takes undue interest in them should be suspected. Most states and cities have ample laws to prevent anyone from having such firearms. It is a matter of spotting the danger and then doing something about it.

3. Anyone who feels that people are after him, that he is being persecuted, that the FBI or the police are spying on him, or that neighbors or shadowy creatures are his enemies is likely to be suffering from a psychiatric condition. This is somewhat more recognizable as a dangerous condition and, of course, the persecution complex is not always present in persons who become dangerous.

Getting action before such people become overt and commit some crime is always difficult. But for the protection of the individual who is mentally ill—and that is what such murderers are—as well as the safety of the community, his friends and relatives should act.

Get the individual to a doctor, especially a psychiatrist or a hospital handling mental cases. Call upon authorities, such as police, court officials, etc., who will appreciate and handle such a situation.

This is the best general advice that psychiatrists, psychologists, and specialists in abnormal behavior can give.

The big problem in murder is prevention. Little can be done after the crime is committed. In his book, *THE SHOW OF VIOLENCE*, Dr. Fredric Wertham says:

"In the life of both the individual and society, murder is not the whole drama, but only one act. The negative emotions which find release in violence may be due to problems that seem entirely personal and far removed from the social setting.

But scientifically we still must ask why it is that in this particular person who lives in a society to which he should be tied by common rights, duties and aspirations, personal problems should loom so large."

Some psychiatrists feel that murders are likely to be more prevalent after a war. The late Dr. William A. White, pioneer in modern psychiatry, said: "Nothing activates the aggressive instinct more seriously than does war. An orgy of killing lets loose and it is a good many years before it is ever chained up again."

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AERONAUTICS

New Guide on Metals Out For Aircraft Designers

► AIRCRAFT designers who use metals will find much help in a new and revised edition of a publication of the Civil Aeronautics Administration just issued, entitled *STRENGTH OF METAL AIRCRAFT ELEMENTS*. It is available from the Superintendent of Documents, in Washington, for \$1.25.

The publication was prepared by a subcommittee on Air Force - Navy - Civil Aircraft Design Criteria of the Munitions Board Aircraft Committee. It is a "one-stop" reference book for metal aircraft designers. The relatively few differences between Air Force, Navy and civil standards are noted in it. These differences are largely concerned with allowable stresses or minimum strength of typical structures.

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ENGINEERING

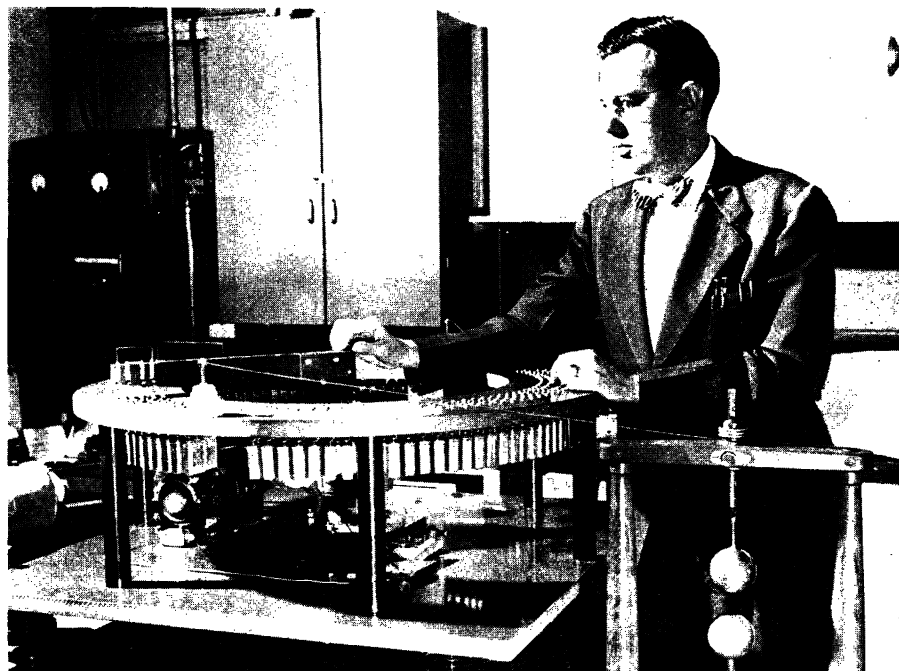
New Instrument Increases Voltage from Generator

► "VOLTAGE multiplier" is the name of a new laboratory instrument, revealed by General Electric in Schenectady, N. Y., which will increase 100-fold the voltage produced by a small, shop-size generator. It will step up the voltage from a 1,000-volt machine to 100,000 volts.

The instrument is still in a development stage, but may eventually be used in conjunction with X-ray equipment and atom-smashers. As explained by Charles Lemmond, G. E. scientist, it operates on the principle of the old-fashioned water wheel.

While a water wheel develops power as its buckets fill with water, he said, the new voltage multiplier builds up energy by "filling" 100 capacitors with electric charges. Connected in series, the capacitors accumulate energy by picking up their charges through a sweeping arm with "finger-tip" brushes.

Science News Letter, September 17, 1949



VOLTAGE MULTIPLIER—This new device so greatly increases the output from the small generator at the left that current leaps across gap between the two metal spheres at right.