

**A**MONG THE MANY revolutions of post-war society is one in mental health care. Thanks to anti-psychotic and anti-schizophrenic drugs such as Thorazine, thousands of mental patients who would have been hospitalized 40 years ago are now free to live in the community.

One such mental patient, Daniel David Morgan, was recently charged with killing 17-year-old Sarah Spiegelman of Mill Valley and wounding her companion, Dwion Gates of Oakland, in Golden Gate Park in early March.

Newspaper articles at the time of Morgan's arrest stressed his mental problems and said he was being maintained on Thorazine. Shortly before the shootings, however, Morgan reportedly stopped taking the drug.

Before Thorazine, Morgan would presumably have been institutionalized. With the advent of relatively safe mood regulators, however, Morgan and thousands like him are now able to live fairly unsupervised lives.

Thinking about Morgan's case, I wondered what effect Thorazine really has. What did the drug do to him and other patients? Just how debilitating is Thorazine? What is the mental weather inside a patient taking the drug? What trade-offs are there — for society and the patients themselves — when mentally ill people are allowed to remain outside institutions, albeit with chemical leashes attached to their minds?

To find out on a superficial level, I recently obtained a prescription for one day's worth of Thorazine: five 10-milligram tablets, which cost \$5.10 at a discount drug store.

According to my doctor, Thorazine affects different people differently. In the case of those with psychosis or schizophrenia, Thorazine's impact is greater in proportion to the severity of the disorder.

What's more, the drug's major effects don't really develop until the patient has taken Thorazine much longer than a single day. Nevertheless, in one day's dosage I got a clear idea of what lay ahead.

Simply put, Thorazine made me stupid. Because Thorazine and related drugs are called "liquid lobotomy" in the mental health business, I'd expected a great gray cloud to descend over my faculties. There was no great gray cloud, just small but unsettling patches of fog.

My mental gears slipped. I had no intellectual traction. It was difficult, for example, to remember simple words. I'd start to describe something and find myself unable to remember such terms as "screwdriver" and "volume." Watching TV — also known as "electronic lobotomy" — was harder than usual: the simple plot-lines seemed tangled.

After supposedly sleeping off the Thorazine, I played squash the next morning. The increased blood-flow caused by running around the court brought back some traces of the drug. All of a sudden, I couldn't plan strategy. I could see the ball and get to it, but when I tried to decide where to hit it, no ideas came to mind. I was stupid again.



COPY 1 in medical files  
to UFW-al 19 NOV 81  
Nelsons came into hospital

nightmares - flashbacks  
depression dulling - no joy in life  
anxiety  
trouble getting motivated  
fatigue  
isolation from others - alienation  
chronic headache  
sleep disturbance  
difficulty in concentrating  
despair - an I ever going to brighten  
lack of interest in everything  
Suicidal thoughts  
fantasies of retaliation  
memory impairment  
hopelessness  
Tm syndrome

To AL Nelson