The circumstances surrounding the fatal stabbing of Dr. Joseph Henry Tyler Jr. by a patient at Acadiana Mental Health Center have outraged those who knew him.

When the people who knew C.J. Saloom Jr., or knew of him, speak of the man who killed Tyler, it is with sorrow and, very often, tears. They have nothing but praise for the man as a physician and as a father, and collectively they offer a fitting eulogy.

When the people who know C.J. Saloom Jr., or knew of him, speak of the man who killed Tyler, it is with a wider range of emotions—anger most often, but also incomprehension of his motive and the workings of his mind. His long history of mental illness and drug abuse were no secret in Lafayette, yet when he arrived at the hospital section of the Acadiana Mental Health Center to be committed on Good Friday, no particular precautions were taken.

Tyler's colleagues didn't know who Saloom was when he performed a routine evaluation before the planned commitment to a state hospital facility in Pineville. Had Tyler known that Saloom once had to be shot by a police officer after he barricaded himself in the attic of his father's house, perhaps he might have handled his patient differently. But the Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Department knew, and yet a deputy brought Saloom in, stayed for a while and then left him in a facility with 12 mental patients, a doctor, two nurses, a social worker, a couple of aides, a maintenance man—and no security.

Perhaps something like this was bound to happen sooner or later at the state-run Acadiana Mental Health Center, given the lack of security and its practice of sitting in the emergency room for mentally disturbed persons who walked in off the street. There had been some near misses before Saloom suddenly attacked Tyler with a butcher knife as he was seeing another patient.

Tragedy is a word too often overused and seemingly too true to describe the death of Dr. Tyler. But it applies here in its most literal sense.

Dr. Joseph Henry Tyler Jr., 40, was from Opelousas. He and wife, Bobbie, met in the sixth or seventh grade. "I guess you could call it puppy love," says Bobbie, but, except for one year when they were kids and split up, the relationship endured. They went to Southern University together, where Tyler had the highest cumulative grade point average in the biological sciences. They married two weeks before Tyler started medical school at LSU in New Orleans. Bobbie had intended to finish her senior year at Southern but quickly transferred to Southern in New Orleans.

The Tylers raised eight years to have children because, says Bobbie, they wanted the best for them. Dr. Tyler specialized in internal medicine. After his residency, he moved to Lafayette and set up a private practice. A colleague and close friend, Dr. Cedric Dempsey, says Tyler helped him in his own efforts to improve the availability of medical care to residents of the Northside and members of the black community.

"I want people to remember how kind and compassionate he was," says Bobbie. Tyler routinely worked 12-hour days, staying late to finish paperwork on the mental patients. He also worked part-time in the emergency room of Our Lady of Lourdes hospital. He had a fondness for music but more of his free time was spent with his family. Bobbie says he
Nurse Deborah Fontenot (shown at her home reviewing taped news coverage of the stabbing) says she asked the deputy's deputy to stay with CI. Saloom, but the deputy left after half an hour.

Years earlier, Saloom had been shot by a police officer when he lunged at the officer with a knife.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

As a friend's daughter's deputy brought Saloom to the hospital unit about 11 a.m. on Good Friday, Fontenot was in charge of the unit, but the rest of the facility was closed. Fontenot says she asked the deputy to stay and he did, but for no more than a half hour. Dauphin says he checked the visitor log later, and the deputy signed in and out within 15 minutes. When the deputy left, he said another deputy would be coming to take Saloom to Provost.

"When he came in, he was real compli-

cant," says Fontenot. "As soon as he got there he asked me, 'What's going on, where am I going?' He was very irate." She told him what would happen. He said, "Aw man, you can't do that to me." He said, "Aw man, I want to show you some books. That's all you do, you can't do that to me." And that's where he had the knife, she said."

Saloom had arrived clutching loose paper and what appeared to be a composition book. Fontenot told him to stay in the office where the walk-in wait for evaluation. Over the next few hours, he would repeatedly come out of the rooms he was placed in but readily complied with Fontenot's instructions to return. "He listened. He never cursed me. He was compliant, never anything at all. Saloom was allowed to call his father, and his father dropped off a suitcase.

He was seen by the social worker, and Tyler was called. Saloom was moved to another room, which was also unlocked, where another patient came in, and evaluated Saloom, and the Sheriff's Department was called to come get him around noon. At about 1:45 p.m., Fontenot went just outside the locked unit for her lunch break. Tyler was finishing with the other patient.

Fontenot was not actually on the floor when the stabbing took place. Employees who were there told her that as the second patient was leaving the room where Tyler was working with him, Saloom pushed his way in and stabbed the physician twice with the knife, once in the upper abdomen, once in the back. Dauphin, who would see Tyler in the emergency room, says that in his opinion Tyler was stabbed in the back first.

Dauphin says he has been told by one of the workers who was there that Saloom
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

that six chances of his success, the main artery that carries blood from the heart to the rest of the body, had been torn away.

Tyler's last hours were a demonstration of courage. "He knew. He knew it was bad," says Fontenot. Lying in the parking lot waiting for the ambulance, he inquired about his blood pressure. It was so low, Fontenot didn't want to tell him. When the ambulance arrived, he told the paramedics to start an IV.

In the emergency room at Lourdes, Dauphin was sitting across from the supervisor who took the call that Tyler was being brought in. She immediately ordered that a trauma room be ready. Dauphin says he can still see the double doors of the emergency room flying open as Tyler was brought through.

He recognized a nurse. "He said, "Oh, Conni," she got me with a big butcher knife." But when Dauphin spoke to him, Tyler, clearly in shock, didn't recognize him. He asked at me with a glazed look in his eyes, and he never responded. I knew he didn't recognize me.

It took some time to locate Robbi Tyler because she and Dauphin's wife were out shopping for candy for a planned children's Easter egg hunt. By the time she arrived, Tyler had been anesthetized for surgery. Tyler underwent surgery twice and received some 45 units of blood. But his blood wouldn't clot, and he died about 4:45 a.m. Saturday morning.

"I've never seen anybody fight so hard to live," says Dauphin. "It was like it was some kind of supernatural effort." A GREAT DEAL OF SECOND GUESING has gone on since the stabbing. Tyler's friends are infuriated by the circumstances that led up to C.J. Saloom being left at Audubon Medical Health. And charges are being made in security and procedures.

The mystery is how Saloom got the knife. George Armbruster, spokesman for the Sheriff's Department, says Saloom and his belongings were searched thoroughly before he was put in the patrol car.

"He went there with nothing but the papers," says Armbruster. He also says the department's standard procedure when discharging an order of protective custody is to deliver the person and depart. Sheriff's officials were familiar with Saloom and his history, he says.

Fontenot thinks Saloom had concealed the knife. "I really think he had it in the books, because when he went in and stabbed Dr. Tyler, he had all his books. They were all over the place."

Dauphin, who places the blame for Tyler's death on the Sheriff's Department, also believes Saloom brought the knife with him, because he says there is no way a butcher knife would be allowed in the medical hospital unit. Knives of any kind are not kept there, other than the small plastic knives given to the patients to eat with, he says.

The suitcases brought to Saloom was searched, according to Fontenot. Nonetheless, it's possible the knife was concealed there. Yet Dauphin, who has spent some time reconstructing the events, says Saloom wasn't in the same room as the suitcases, and he doesn't think Saloom had an opportunity to get to it.

The stabbing has brought out some serious procedural problems at the men-
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

only in-patient unit in the state housed at a center that is not located within a state hospital.

Even before Tyler was killed, there had been several close calls. Last year, a patient waiting to be taken by the Sheriff's Department to Monroe saw up in a bathroom, broke the shower room door when placed in the room and damaged the back door to the unit, also threatening the doctor who was there. In a report on the incident, the doctor said, "This patient was extremely dangerous and posed a threat to the lives of everyone on the unit—it is totally unacceptable not to have a security guard on these premises 24 hours a day.

Also last year, Freundot said she was attacked by a patient who broke her jaw and bruised her ribs. The maintenance man pulled him away from her. The man had a history of attacking people from behind, and, said, she was striking him. He was admitted from a halfway house whom he had attacked someone.

And only a few weeks ago, Ronagon says he was threatened by a female patient he was committing. "She said, 'I want to promise you that when I get out of here, I'm going to kill you. I'm going to burn your house and kill you.'"

For many years, Acadia Mental Health Administrator Phil Therewert says, he has put a request for security officers into his annual budget. For many years, the request has been dropped somewhere during the state budget process.

In a classic example of closing the barn door after the horse has gone, Therewert now expects to get it.

The staff, together with an outside security consultant, will put together a security plan for the entire center. The center is also negotiating a contract with Sheriff Don Breazeale to provide security officers for the outpatients area when it is open and the hospital unit around-the-clock, similar to what is done at UMC. Despite major budget cuts announced last week that will require employees to take a 10 percent pay cut and affect the programs and operations of the center, Therewert says he has been assured that the security officers will be funded. He hopes to have them in place by the middle of May.

Therewert is also negotiating with UMC administrator Larry Dorsey to more after-hours emergency evaluations of mental patients to UMC, where evaluations can be conducted as part of that hospital's emergency care services rather than on the same unit as admitted patients, and where there is better security. He hopes to accomplish that change by the middle of May.

Asked about the lack of psychiatrists at Acadia Mental Health, Therewert replies, "Isn't that something?" He says a recruiting firm is being used to locate a psychiatrist, who he hopes to have on staff by July or August. They are difficult to find, the he said, "We're trying to take this to.

And security is virtually nonexistent, according to a staff at a state Office of the Governor's office, several employees point out that University Medical Center, the Lafayette state office building, even 11-20, are all similarly guarded.

"The whole staff of the Acadiana Mental Health Center does not have security officers at all, though they are not fast enough for most staff.

In contrast, severaladdEventListener system the state has also been given greater discretion about letting in well-behaved patients. The first weekend Foundwood worked after the shooting was over, one man arrested for almost eight hours. A man who showed up with his severely disabled wife, said he was not to be put into the hospital and out. The staff didn't know what to do and agreed the couple could come in, if they agreed to be monitored.

Police are still investigating the matter. C.J. Sablanzow, a man who was seen in the Lafayette Parish Correctional Center on a charge of second-degree murder and a $5,000 bond.

District Attorney Nathan Roby says Sablanzow has been charged with second-degree murder in Tyler's death.

"C.J.," Roby says, "is the devil."