

September 18, 1952

September 19, 1952

Jury Given School File On Tuccillo

Personnel Staff Members Of Willowbrook Called to Testify on Perjury Charge

Members of the personnel office of Willowbrook State School reported under subpoena this morning at the grand jury office in St. George as witnesses against Ralph Tuccillo, 48, ex-convict and former inmate of a mental institution, who for seven months this year was employed as an attendant at the state school.

District Attorney Sidney O. Simonson is placing before the grand jury charges of perjury and state civil service law violations against Tuccillo. The charges grow out of an investigation the district attorney conducted Sept. 10 to ascertain how Tuccillo obtained employment at the school without discovery of his past record.

Two of today's witnesses were among those examined Sept. 10. These are James W. Dutremain, who took Tuccillo's fingerprints at Willowbrook last January; and Mrs. Therese Sherman, a personnel clerk, who made typed entries on the fingerprint blank.

Uses Assumed Name

According to Simonson, he has learned that Tuccillo applied for the job under an assumed name and also gave false answers to questions on his application blank. These answers were given under oath, Simonson said, constituting perjury, a felony.

In the same connection, he is charging the defendant with the civil service violations, a misdemeanor.

Simonson also had under subpoena today Tuccillo's personnel records from the Willowbrook file. Most, if not all, of these were produced at his investigation a week ago.

Even now, Tuccillo, a Tompkinsville man, is charged in Magistrate's Court with assault. This charge alleges that he struck two of the boy-patients at the school with a broom.

Protesting 'Unfairness'

Employees at Willowbrook State School have vigorously objected to the publicity resulting from the discovery that an ex-convict and former mental hospital inmate had worked there without his true identity having been detected.

They feel that it reflects unfairly on them and the school's administration. More than 400 employees, along with representatives of affiliated organizations, turned out for a rally to express a vote of confidence in the school's staff.

It's highly possible that some persons have read into the case of the ex-convict, now charged with beating two boys at the institution, more than they should have.

We agree — without hesitation — with those who note that youngsters at the school receive the best of care . . . and that the school is generally well run.

But loyal employees intent upon defending the school's good name should not gloss over the points raised by the well-publicized case.

Some administrative flaws were discovered. Normally, these would probably not be so serious. But there were compounded by a major drawback on higher echelons, within the State Civil Service Commission. It has yet to be denied, or proved incorrect, that the commission files fingerprints according to race—and that trickery on an application provides access to a loophole in gaining a job.

Employees have a case in pleading for fairness. But they'll be open to no criticism in the future if faults detected now are corrected.