

Retiring Willowbrook Chief's Goal: Treat Every Patient as an Individual

By FRED E. WEISS

For 38 years Harold H. Berman, M.D., has been working toward a single goal. His aim has been to break spasticity in the mentally retarded so that "the kids are free to gain."

At the end of the year, Dr. Berman will bid farewell to the 6,300 "kids" that were under his supervision at the big institution for the mentally retarded, Willowbrook State School.

Perhaps it is their mental ages that causes Dr. Berman to refer to the patients as "kids." But surely, the hundreds of Willowbrook staff members, community representatives and fellow-physicians who honored the retiring director Saturday night at a dinner-dance at the school know that each patient meant something to their boss.

Since there are some 40 or 50 types and degrees of mental deficiency, Dr. Berman says that each patient at Willowbrook

are mentally retarded, men like Dr. Berman, and institutions like Willowbrook are battling to reduce the number and rehabilitate the afflicted.

"WE DISREGARD the IQ," Dr. Berman says. "All it tells is the least the patient has. What we do is relax the spastic and train."

"Because of the training

with repetition there are few bedridden patients. The so-called educatable is trained to socialize; exist in society. We deemphasize book learning. We repeat that red is different from green; the number three from five, and ladies from men.

"Once trained the patient can exist in society and be returned to his family. Often the patient

returns to Willowbrook because his family life is so bad."

Dr. Berman, who, at 64, has some firm convictions that are hard to shatter, insists that additional progress, the kind made under his guidance at Willowbrook State School, can only be made "by doctors doing research on the ward and not in centers with a microscope."



DR. HAROLD H. BERMAN

is diagnosed as an individual and treated as such.

WHEN DR. BERMAN was