

# Sift Patient's Fatal Scalding

By JACK MALLON

A second scalding death at the Willowbrook School for Retarded Children on Staten Island, disclosed in THE NEWS on Friday but never reported to the district attorney or police, will now be investigated, Richmond District Attorney John Braisted said yesterday.

The peculiar circumstances surrounding the fatal burning last Feb. 7 of Herbie Harber, a 42-year-old retarded patient, were described in THE NEWS Friday—the same day that another Willowbrook patient, 10-year-old Johnny Taylor, died under similar circumstances.

In both cases, the all-but-helpless victims suffered burns while taking showers.

"We are investigating all the facts surrounding the death of Johnny Taylor," Braisted said, promising that the case would be placed before a grand jury.

Of the Harber fatality, the prosecutor said:

#### Promises Investigation

"We never knew anything about it. It was never reported to our office.

"In cases of this kind, if it were reported to police as a suspicious or unusual death, the police would investigate it and forward a report to us.

"We will now investigate all the facts surrounding the Harber burning."

Inspector Walter Bracken, in command of Staten Island detectives, said the Harber death had not been reported to police.

"There is no indication of it in any of our records," he told THE NEWS. "It's up to the medical examiner to call us because we don't get called in by the hospital in any cases of this type."

Dr. Gertrude Wilbur, assistant medical examiner who has been an m.e. for 25 years, confirmed that there have been "accidental deaths" at Willowbrook.

"Police were called in on many of them," she said. "Nothing's been done by the district attorney before on these cases."

Within the past year, there have been accidents resulting in death which were attributed to falls on stairways and asphyxiations, as well as the burnings, she said.

It was Dr. Wilbur who reported the Harber death as an accident.

The two-part series in THE NEWS reported the lack of facilities and the type of treatment given in institutions for the care of retarded children.