

# Staff Shortage Factor in Four Willowbrook Deaths

By MARK WIESNER  
(LAST OF FOUR ARTICLES)

Thomas Cochrane, 26, a patient at Willowbrook State School for 16 years, died July 19 in a crowd of milling, swaying figures.

The blow that killed him was delivered in a matter of seconds.

The 77 men in Ward C, Building 9 are classified as low-grade imbeciles. They are aggressive types and are given heavy doses of tranquilizers.

Flareups among the patients are frequent, nevertheless. At best there are four, three and two attendants for day, evening and night shifts. When Cochrane died, there were only two.

MOREOVER, one was a woman because of the shortage of male help. Sometimes lack of personnel makes it necessary to staff a ward like this with two women attendants.

Authorities are of the opinion that four attendants are the absolute minimum needed in such a situation and even this number couldn't do much more than reduce the frequency of accidents.

Two deaths have occurred because of burns suffered in scalding showers.

Dr. Jack Hammond, the school director, showed a picture of the 10-year-old boy who met his death.

Hammond said the faulty shower apparatus is being overhauled. But in one building already had new valves installed, he said, the temperature of a shower recently was discovered to be 170 degrees.

"This was a brand new valve just put in," Hammond said. "Fortunately, nobody was hurt, but look how easily something like this can go wrong."

LAPSES on the part of personnel figured in the accidents. But recognition that more ded-

is needed in Willowbrook, but in almost all instances the girls come to Willowbrook pregnant or are made pregnant during visits home.

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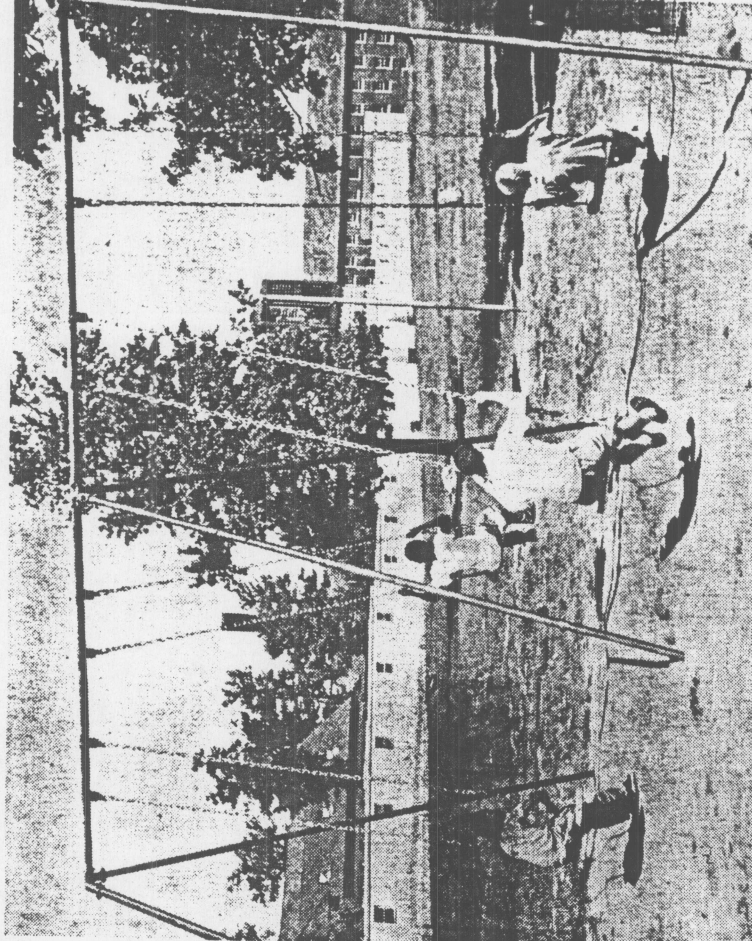
Mrs. Viola Tuttle, president of Staten Island Aid to Retarded Children, who once worked at Willowbrook as a nurse, said that parents are

on the whole pleased with program training. A new wing that will add 21 classrooms to the facility's school, a multi-million dollar research center, an expanded

if practical nurse reached and laugh, as a spark of intellect is kept alive and these are Willowbrook's future.

But problems immediate and daily. But problems immediate and daily. But problems immediate and daily.

None will be easy to solve.



The children swinging have an intelligence level that makes them almost unreachable. As brighter children are kept in the community, more and more Willowbrook is being filled with retardates for whom "nothing can be done."

S.I. Advance Photos by Barry G. Schwartz

