

WIESNER

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six months, it  
rday.

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opening would  
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s learned that  
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ill be six to 12  
Suffolk will be  
nts from here,"  
mond, Willow-  
said.

County grand  
hand look at  
e overcrowded

and understaffed Staten Island  
institution yesterday.

**THE SURPRISE** visit of the  
jury came coincidentally on the  
heels of the governor's an-  
nouncements of measures to re-  
duce overcrowding and improve  
patient care.

Rockefeller approved addi-  
tional jobs for teachers and  
therapists and gave the State  
Department of Mental Hy-  
giene a Dec. 1 deadline to sub-  
mit to him a list of facilities  
in the New York City area,  
which could be rehabilitated  
for use in housing Willow-  
brook's overflow.

Facilities to house 500 to 1,000  
patients are being sought.

Hammond said patients who  
were formerly at Willowbrook  
have been sent to Bronx State

Hospital to await Suffolk's open-  
ing, but it will be at least 6 months  
before any of Willowbrook's  
current population of 5,900 can  
be transferred there.

Willowbrook has a certified  
capacity of 4,500.

The grand jury investigation  
was prompted by accidental  
deaths at the school, and the  
jurors toured the building where  
two deaths occurred and saw  
conditions representative of  
those attacked by U.S. Sen. Robert  
F. Kennedy last month.

But the panel stayed long  
enough—in the words of Dr.  
Jack Hammond, Willowbrook's  
director—to "see what the  
senator didn't stay long  
enough to see."

**District Attorney John M. Braisted Jr.** at the close of the  
visit, said he was "convinced  
that officials at the "institution  
are doing all they can do with  
the manpower and equipment  
available. But there's no ques-  
tion they need more financial  
assistance from the state."

**BRAISTED** went on to say  
that he saw evidence of "dedi-  
cated and conscientious work"  
of employees.

In addition to trying to help  
prevent such accidents as those  
that prompted the inquiry, its  
aim is to acquaint the public  
with what goes on at the insti-  
tution and to "help Dr. Ham-  
mond improve conditions," Brai-  
sted stated.

He paid tribute to Hammond  
for "cooperating fully and hold-  
ing back nothing."

Hammond, who led the  
grand jurors, members of the  
D.A.'s staff and reporters on  
the tour of the wards and  
buildings, said the job posi-  
tions approved by the gov-  
ernor represent only "a be-  
ginning."

"The department has already  
been looking at a number of fa-  
cilities in the city which can be  
rehabilitated for use," Hammond  
said.

"One of the things being  
considered is the possibility of  
leasing or purchasing stain-  
less steel, pre-fabricated  
buildings, similar to portable  
classrooms."

Hammond said it would be  
better if additional facilities  
were erected on the state school  
grounds, where "we have focus  
for care of the children, rather  
than an old building in Brook-  
lyn."

**THE DIRECTOR** said he  
was particularly heartened by ap-  
proval of the new positions,  
which will make it possible for  
more youngsters to engage in  
activities.

"Without activities, without  
stimulation, Willowbrook be-  
comes a warehouse for humans,  
rather than a school," Ham-  
mond declared.

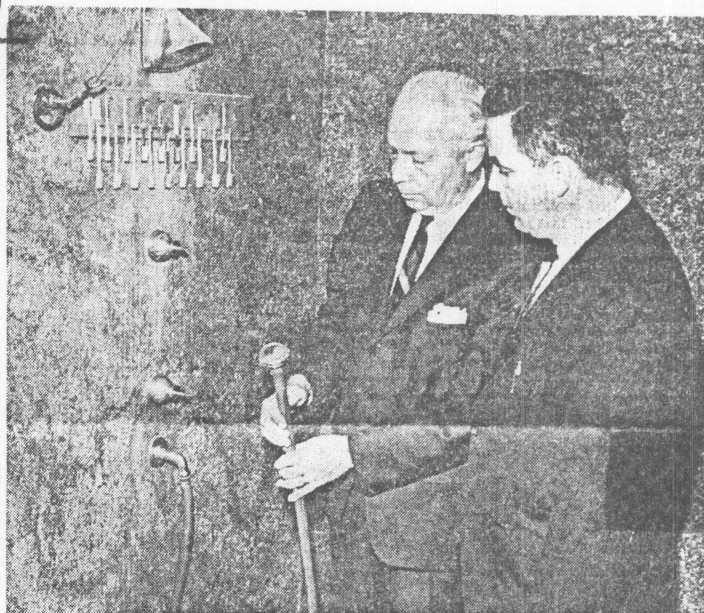
He said he hoped to be able  
to fill more than half the posi-  
tions within a year. He noted  
that reductions of overcrowding  
and improved conditions might  
make it easier to find at-  
tendants for jobs now vacant.

The grand jurors—who ar-  
rived by chartered bus in the  
morning—first went the build-  
ing 27, where 10-year-old John  
K. Taylor was fatally burned  
last Ma.

They examined the shower  
stall where he was scalded and  
the underground piping of the  
water supply system. They also  
saw Building 2, where 42-year-  
old Frank Harber died last  
February when another patient  
pushed his wheelchair into a  
scalding bath.

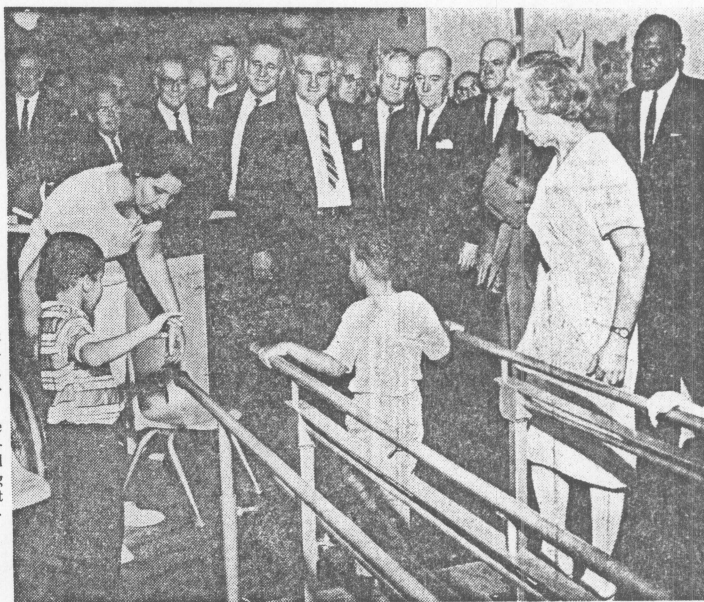
**THE OTHER SIDE** of Wil-  
lowbrook emerged in visits to  
the school facility and occupa-

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District Attorney John M. Braisted Jr., left, and Detective Vincent O'Grady inspect the shower where 10-year-old John K. Taylor was scalded to death last May in Willowbrook State School. The water cannot be turned on without the use of a key.

S.I. Advance Photos by Barry G. Schwartz



The panel watches physical therapists teaching retarded youngsters, who are also physically handicapped, how to walk.

tional therapy and physical  
therapy rooms.

In the school room, jurors ap-  
plauded a class of blind chil-  
dren who sang "Allegheny  
Moon." They also saw young-  
sters reading schoolbooks and a  
class of children with defective  
hearing learning how to speak  
and read.

"It would be quite a thing,"

Hammond said, "if we had  
enough help to have them all  
in activities, rather than in  
wards of 150 to 200 like you  
saw this morning."

Many of the patients get little  
or no activity, Hammond said,  
"all could benefit from it."  
IT was 3:30 p.m. before the 21-  
man and one-woman jury board-  
ed a bus to leave the institution.

It was evident that they had  
gained a new perspective and  
broader appreciation of the  
complexities of the school's  
operation.

The grand jury will resume  
next Tuesday when Dr. Ham-  
mond will be called to testify.  
Its investigation will go on at  
least "to the end of the year,"  
the district attorney said.