

The nurse later told us that Michael had been turned down for adoption because the couple that wanted him was "too old." So some bureaucrat has taken two perfectly healthy minds and, because they had the misfortune to be born with twisted legs, consigned them to a peer group which can do no more than grunt. This was enough to make you curse the unholy trinity of parents, bureaucrats, and God.

Oddly, you blessed the television set in this ward. It was their only articulate company in this room, even though Magilla Gorilla was the spokesman.

As we were leaving, the boys

asked us to return and bring them some baseball picture cards. McCourt, a big, shaggy panda of a man, was weeping openly. "You never get used to it," he said. "You come a thousand times, and you never fucking get used to it."

As we drove away from Willowbrook, we passed the trustees' housing high on the hill with manicured lawns (many attended in slave labor fashion by the patients), all prim propriety. It was like driving through the officers' compound on an army base. The scum was kept downwind so it wouldn't contaminate the aroma of their meals, their fine sensibilities, and their locked-up women. McCourt was still weeping, and I wanted to hug the hell out of my children.

This is an issue we can't let die. Governmental pressure must be brought on every level until funds are restored and creative programs instituted. In the meantime Willowbrook accepts unpaid volunteers. All you have to bring to the job is a human touch. Also, clothes and toys can be dropped at any local firehouse and they will be delivered to the institution.

Here is a challenge to the age of consciousness-raising. Go look at the slaughter of the lambs. My words can't evoke the stench, the chaotic existence, the garbled cries, the spastic bodies, or the program that allows these marred innocents to be designated as human disposables.

Our time has dulled us with a thugs' war, with the murders of those we had anointed as hope. Our country has donned the harlequin costume of black and white. But unless we are men of stone, Willowbrook must move us to weeping, because our final shame has come. The curse of Herod is upon the land.



Willowbrook

A mass rally to show concern for the retarded will take place on Saturday, February 5, at 10.30 a. m. in the auditorium of Willowbrook State School on Staten Island. The rally is sponsored by the Willowbrook Rally Committee, an ad hoc group of parents and community people formed in November, which hopes to make the community more aware of the problems and to get commitments from federal and state legislators to counteract bad conditions at Willowbrook and other institutions across the country. Malachy McCourt will emcee the program which will feature speeches by parents of children in the institutions, and entertainment. Among others scheduled to attend are Congressmen John Murphy and Edward I. Koch, and the staff of State Senator John Marchi. For information call SA 7-9394.

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