

swimming pool, the gym, to the movies once and on a hospital ship in New York harbor for a day. They loved every minute of it and so did we.

The following summer, again we applied for the job because we both enjoyed working with the mentally retarded and we got to know each patient personally.

But our "wonderful" Governor Rockefeller cut state funds which we were cut also. So, we were out of a job and Building 20 was without the recreation they once had. Once in a while we visit Willowbrook and all the patients still remember us and they ask when we're going to play baseball outside again, take walks and go for a bus ride but all we can say is anything but the truth just to make them happy.

So if the people could know what is going on, then they would want to know what they can do to help because Staten Islanders are like that.

Maybe by some slight chance Congressman Murphy, Borough President Connor, Senator Marchi, Assemblyman Russo, Mayor Lindsay, or even Governor Rockefeller might investigate and find out what's happening and what they can do.

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**Dedicated
personnel**

This letter is not being written as a challenge to the facts of the stories but rather as a reminder that a true story is seldom told by "facts" alone. There is the old and true adage, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder". This suggests as equally true that, "Grossness is in the eye of the beholder".

Your reporter presented a gross story of Willowbrook. She saw the facts as it was very likely suggested that she see them and, in fairness, as most outsiders would indeed see them. For there are "gross" facts to be observed at Willowbrook. The unkempt appearance, the misshapen bodies, the sores, the drooling, the soiling, the groveling and the animalistic cries and behavior are all there. But this does not mean that Willowbrook is a "gross" institution and that its employees should be shamed for being a

part of it. Though there may well be some unworthy members, it does not mean that the Willowbrook staff is peopled by incompetent, uncaring, barbaric, sadistic persons. And it does not mean that the residents of the school are regarded as anything less than human.

Quite to the contrary, Willowbrook State School should be viewed with an appreciative eye. Then the real story of the institution will unfold. This story must begin with the social concern that created a place where those exceptional persons whose families would not or could not care for them could find a home.

True, it's not "homelike" but their sheer number precludes this possibility. However, the basic care should be adequate to keep them comfortable and happy. Should be! But admittedly at present it is not. The level of care provided at Willowbrook is unfortunately directly related to the level of the concern of us who are society. Collectively as the "State" we created the institution to "care" for these "persons", but having got them out of sight we put them out of mind and tell our representatives in Albany to "spend only enough to keep them alive".

This is sinful! We should appreciate Willowbrook for what it does but we have to be concerned enough for the persons there to support it at the level that it can be appreciated. I am not a "protestor," but last Sunday I permitted myself to be photographed with other concerned people in a protest march at Willowbrook designed to influence our Governor and representatives in Albany to lift the freeze against hiring and spending so that we might have an adequate budget for staff and care.

Every concerned person and certainly every critical person ought to make an effort for improvement through his representative, for it can only come through legislation.

The next chapter of the true story of Willowbrook would be concerned with the residents. Seen with the proper eye, they are beautiful people. Not in the aesthetic sense for so often retardation is accompanied by some sort of physical anomaly, but they are beautiful in the genuineness of the personalities.

They are friendly, warm, emotional, affectionate, open and direct. They have no social veneer to hide behind as we do. They are happy too, when given a little love and attention. They are so desperately needful of love. This is what makes the present situation so doubly tragic. The shortage of help robs them not only of the satisfaction of actual physical needs but it robs them of the happiness that attention gives.

The final chapter of the Willowbrook story is the true perspective of its personnel. In all the levels of the operation, these are dedicated persons. They are living the concern that society "says" it has. They are the persons who seek to fill the void left by family separation. They are not "Keepers". They are the persons who share the lives of and share their lives with the "undesirables". They are the ones who touch the "untouchables". They are the persons who are reclaiming many social "rejects" to be discharged as productive citizens. They are the persons who give meaning to empty lives by teaching skills to fill empty hours. And so on and on . . . They are the persons whose hearts glow with the response of those to whom they minister but they are also the persons whose hearts bleed because there are so many who need so much more. These are the heroic persons who sacrifice from extra time and meager salaries to bring happiness and comfort to overwhelming need. They are the people who care!

And these are the people who are maligned because they do not do more!

Yes, there are faults at Willowbrook State School but let's not criticize. Let's be appreciative and supportive! Correction and improvement

will most certainly follow if there are the means.

ARNOLD E. OSTLUND,
Protestant Chaplain
Willowbrook State School

Advance,
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