

# Wants to quit Willowbrook; dad says no

By JANE KURTIN

When she was 19 — four months before she was scheduled to be graduated from her Long Island high school — Mary Ann Bruno's father had her committed to Willowbrook State School.

Now 27 years old, Miss Bruno is seeking her freedom in defiance of her father's unalterable decision to have her live out her life within the walls of a mental institution.

Justice John A. Garbarino yesterday signed a writ of habeas corpus requiring that Miss Bruno appear in Supreme Court Thursday with Dr. Jack Hammond, respondent in the case.

Dr. Hammond, who as director of Willowbrook is technically guardian for Miss Bruno and other patients, has until now not used the option open to him for having the woman released from Willowbrook.

Pointing out the family's very strong objection to having Miss Bruno released, Dr. Hammond said: "The only thing we could have done would be to have gone to court with the case."

Explaining that he has consistently requested that John Bruno approve his daughter's placement with a foster home in the community, Dr. Hammond said that he was reluctant to take this step.

Mary Ann Bruno has a brother at Willowbrook. He also was institutionalized after a substantial amount of schooling and within several years of the death of his and Mary Ann's mother.

While no attempt was made to have Robert Bruno, now 30, released from Willowbrook, the father last night said he has been contacted "at least a half dozen times" with regard to his daughter's future.

"One time," said Bruno, who has remarried, "Dr. Hammond sent me a letter saying that Mary Ann would be placed with an elderly woman on Staten Island where she would work as a housekeeper.

"I called Dr. Hammond on a Sunday morning and told him that I was adamantly opposed to having my daughter live or work off the grounds of Willowbrook. She does not belong on the outside."

Following this, Bruno wrote a letter to the director of the institution reminding him that his position was "unalterable" and expressing the hope that he would not be requested to change his mind again.

Dr. Hammond did succeed in having Mary Ann placed in a special training program at Willowbrook which technically prepares higher functioning patients for work and sometimes life in the community.

Bruno gave permission for his daughter's placement in the Training Adults for Community Living (TACL) program with the stipulation that the training never reach its logical conclusion. Mary Ann could be trained, but Bruno insisted that her skills never be applied anywhere but inside Willowbrook.

## HAD A JOB

For the past 3½ years, Mary Ann has worked as a housekeeper for Dr. Hammond. She receives \$10 a month above her room, board and any medical care she requires.

Her father's insistence that she remain in Willowbrook costs New York State approximately \$5,000 a year.

The writ signed by Justice Garbarino and prepared by Robert Feldt, an attorney for the Legal Aid Society, says that Mary Ann was committed when her father "discovered her involvement with a boy friend."

"At Willowbrook," the writ continues, "Mary Ann Bruno received training in sewing and typing. . . Miss Bruno is, intelligent and capable of managing her own affairs. She desires to leave Willowbrook State School and to live and obtain equal employment in the community but has been prevented from doing so by the respondent (Dr. Hammond) in violation of policies and standards of the Department of Mental Hygiene."

Despite the correspondence from Willowbrook State School claiming that his daughter should be working outside the institution, Bruno insists that he has "spoken to expert psychiatrists who say Mary Ann has the mentality of a 6-year-old."

"You must remember," Bruno said, "that she is a grown woman with the mentality of a child. When she lived at home, she was molested and tormented."

"I don't have to tell you how cruel this world is. Mary Ann used to come home crying because people would call her stupid. You don't know the heartaches I had."

## SEX PROBLEMS

When asked if he felt that these reasons justified his daughter's institutionalization, Bruno said: "I just mentioned to you that she had been molested. Being a female creates problems. Sex problems."

Asked if he knew that Mary Ann could be discharged from Willowbrook against his will (if Dr. Hammond took the case to court), Bruno said that he had consulted lawyers about this.

"As long as I'm alive — the lawyers told me — they can't let Mary Ann go without my permission."

Bruno claims that both his children were advanced through school by teachers "just to keep them up with the children their own age. But they were in special classes, and they just couldn't compete with the other normal children."

Mrs. Bruno, who said her husband "kept the children for as long as he could," claimed that their behavior was "causing their father the loss of his own health."

"Robert," Mrs. Bruno said, "went to junior high school and then was in a workshop. Then there were some sex problems, and he would steal from the stores in the area."

"The storekeepers knew the children, so they wouldn't press charges, but they'd complain."

"My husband had to go away for a year himself because they thought he had tuberculosis. He did have a very bad ulcer."

People who know Mary Ann say that she types about 40 words per minute and, among other skills, knows how to use a dictaphone.

Bruno maintains, however, "the records will show that she's incompetent and belongs in a state institution."

"If they (the director of the institution) try to get her out, I'll fight it. As far as I'm concerned, there's nothing they can do."