

# Dr. Hammond dies at 55

Dr. Jack Hammond, the former director of Willowbrook State School who led the state's largest institution for the mentally retarded through the stormiest period in its history, died early today of an apparent heart attack in Rome, N.Y. He was 55.

The death of Dr. Hammond, who left Willowbrook after eight years last July to assume control of Rome State School, was confirmed this morning by Lawrence J. Maxwell, deputy director of the upstate school. Maxwell said that while details were sketchy, Dr. Hammond apparently suffered the attack at his home and died en route to Rome Hospital.

Dr. Hammond arrived at Willowbrook in June 1964, barely a year after the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy attracted attention to the 6,000-patient institution by terming it a "snakepit." In ensuing years, Dr. Hammond was generally credited with attempting to reduce the patient population while improving conditions, and attracted little publicity.

In November 1971, the Advance began an expose of the institution and Dr. Hammond became the central figure in the dispute over why patients were not receiving adequate care. His most violently opposed action during the controversy, which brought national attention to Willowbrook, was the dismissal of a doctor and social worker after they publicized conditions at the school.

While parent groups angrily demanded Dr. Hammond's resignation, several hundred Willowbrook employes walked off their jobs and travelled by bus to Albany, where they insisted to state officials that he remain director.

Last June, Dr. Alan D. Miller, commissioner of the state Department of Mental Hygiene, announced that Dr. Hammond would leave Willowbrook to become director of Rome State School, where he had been assistant director five years before coming to the Island.



Dr. Jack Hammond

In an interview shortly before leaving the Island institution last year, Dr. Hammond maintained that, "The fault of Willowbrook is not mine. I did make progress here." He said that while he attempted to introduce many innovative programs, his efforts were hampered by state budget cutbacks and employe hiring freezes.

Dr. Hammond said that if the school eventually improves following wide-scale media exposure, much of it hostile to himself, "I will be satisfied in the end that a lot of it was good to happen."

Before his departure last July, Dr. Hammond was honored at a reception by more than 400 persons from the community and around the state, during which he was commended in telegrams from President Nixon and Gov. Rockefeller.

Prior to coming to the Island, Dr. Hammond had served at the 3,500-patient Rome institution since 1959. Earlier, he was senior psychiatrist at Willard State Hospital and later supervising psychiatrist and acting clinical director.

Dr. Hammond was a Navy medical officer from 1941 to 1946, and maintained a private practice in Manhattan before entering state service.

While at Rome, Dr. Hammond served as psychiatrist to the Oneida Child Guidance Clinic; was director of the Oneida-Herkimer Mental Retardation Clinic and also chief of psychiatric services at Auburn State Prison.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by two sons, Robert, and David, and a daughter, Susan.

Mrs. Elizabeth Hammond, a registered nurse, was in charge of the volunteer program at Willowbrook, and held a similar position at the Rome institution.