



Seven-year-old Donna Albenese, whose leg was broken for four hours before anyone noticed, lies in her bed at Willowbrook State School. S.I. Advance Photo by Everett R. Harvey

# Willowbrook patient suffered in silence

By EVERETT R. HARVEY

No one will ever know how much pain was felt by Donna Albenese — a 7-year-old, 27-pound child, a beautiful doll you'd love to hold in your arms — the day her leg was broken in Ward D of Building 26 in the Willowbrook State School. That was the first step in what was termed during a staff meeting at Willowbrook as "unfortunate mishap, an accident." The second step in the chain of events to follow was that the break wasn't discovered until nearly four hours later, when the leg began to swell noticeably.

Donna, a patient at Willowbrook for six years, can't talk. She can't hold her head up, and she can't move a muscle in her body. She has to be kept in diapers. Donna is the oldest of three daughters and a son of Alexander and Arlene Albenese of 15 East Augusta Ave., Great Kills. The other children, Richard 5; Valerie 2, and Arlene, 11 months, are normal. According to the report filed by the parents with police and concurred in by Dr. Miodrag Ristich, the institution's director since October 1972, whose attitude was cooperative, the following was the latest in a series of incidents that have happened

to Donna during her six-year stay at Willowbrook. It was 4:30 p.m., Dec. 21, and children were playing in Ward D, Building 26. Donna was on a mattress. William Nelson, an attendant, wheeled in a food cart and, while manipulating the unit into position, stepped back on Donna's left leg. A nurse examined Donna, but found nothing wrong. No doctor was called. At 8:10 p.m., a nurse on Donna's floor noticed that the child's left leg was swelling. She called a doctor, and Donna was taken down to the X-ray room where it was learned that

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