

May take week to reassign judge to Willowbrook case

By PETER HARRIGAN

Brooklyn Federal Court officials say it may take a week to select a judge to oversee conditions at the Willowbrook Developmental Center in the wake of Judge Orrin G. Judd's death Wednesday night.

Judd, who in 1973 ordered the state to correct "inhuman and shocking conditions" at the sprawling institution, died of an apparent heart attack while attending a judicial seminar in Aspen, Colo. He was 69 years old.

The judge was scheduled to conduct a hearing July 23 in an effort to determine whether the Department of Mental Hygiene has moved quickly enough to comply with a 15-month-old court order establishing minimum care standards at Willowbrook.

A spokesman for Chief Judge Jacob Mishler, who heads the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of

New York, said yesterday it will probably take a week to reassign the Willowbrook case and other matters pending before Judd at the time of his death.

"We are all shocked by Judge Judd's death," the spokesman said. "All of his cases will obviously have to be reassigned but nothing has been decided on yet."

It was not immediately clear whether Judd's death will force a postponement of the July 23 hearing, which had been requested in May by parents of children at Willowbrook. It had been expected that the parents' group would ask Judd to cite the state for

contempt of court on the ground that court-established care standards have not been met.

Judd, in April 1973, issued a landmark ruling in which he ordered the state to hire hundreds of additional employees at Willowbrook in an effort to improve patient care. He also forbade the state from keeping patients locked away in seclusion.

The ruling was issued about two months after Judd, during an inspection tour of Willowbrook, was assaulted by a female patient.

Over the last three years Judd followed through on his

pledge to personally keep track of improvements made at Willowbrook and, last year, signed a consent judgment in which the state agreed to make substantial improvements at the institution.

Among other things, the judgment provided that Willowbrook's patient population must be reduced to 250 by 1981.

Judd remarked in signing the judgment that the agreement was "a practical solution" to the much-publicized problems at Willowbrook. The judgment also represented "a lot of work and a substantial achievement," he noted.

Aside from the Willowbrook order, Judd also issued noteworthy decisions in which he ruled the U.S. bombing of Cambodia illegal and in which he directed that individual cells be provided in Brooklyn and Queens jails for persons awaiting trial.

Judd had once considered becoming a doctor and took pre-med courses when he attended Colgate University. He later changed his mind, however, and was graduated from Harvard Law School in 1930.

He practiced law privately for a number of years before being named state solicitor general by Gov. Thomas E.

Dewey, and later served as a surrogate court judge in Brooklyn. Judd was elevated to the federal bench by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1968.

Judd is survived by his wife, Persis; four children and seven grandchildren.

A memorial service was conducted today at the Aspen Institute of Humanistic Studies in Colorado and another service will be held in Brooklyn at an as yet undetermined date.

The judge's body is to be cremated, with the ashes buried in the Colgate University Cemetery.