

# After months of waiting, Eddie begins his new life

By STEVE CROSS

When 19-year-old Eddie Clohessy walked through the doors of a Pennsylvania center for the mentally retarded this morning at 10 o'clock, it climaxed almost a half-year's effort that not only involved a Pennsylvania congressman but caused Eddie's family to uproot itself from Staten Island.

The story begins last September, when Edwin Clohessy quit his job at a Stapleton furniture store and, with his wife, Ruth, moved to Allentown, Pa.

"We found their system of caring for the mentally retarded far superior to New York's," he said. And it was for better care for their son, Eddie — a resident at Willowbrook Developmental Center since 1970 — that they moved.

They felt that their son just wasn't getting proper care at Willowbrook, and even expressed their concern in a letter to the Advance prior to their move. Since then, they felt the situation was worsening.

A source at Willowbrook described Eddie as "very over-active and aggressive. He was under heavy sedation at most times."

The source also said Ed was involved in several fights with others. It is those fights that made the Clohessys decide to move to another state.

When they arrived in Pennsylvania, they thought it would be only a matter of weeks to admit Eddie into Whitehaven Center, a care facility in northern Pennsylvania.

It was far from a "matter of weeks."

"First they told us it looked good," Mrs. Clohessy remembers. "But they had to trade one patient with New York in order to take Eddie."

It's not quite as simple as trading Thurmon Munson for Johnny Bench.

According to a spokesman for New York's Department of Mental Hygiene, "When parents, for example, move from New York to Massachusetts, we try to exchange their child with the new state."

But it doesn't always work out that way. In fact, one family that moved from New York to a neighboring state nine years ago still is waiting for their son to be transferred to a mental care facility in the same state.



Eddie Clohessy leaves the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital in Clifton on his way to a new home. With him are his mother, Mrs. Ruth Clohessy, and his sister, Mrs. Nancy Morotta.

S.I. Advance Photo by Robert Parsons