

moved. And he loves it.

He doesn't like change and similarly-poo-h-poo-hs this new concept of community-based group homes, the alternative to institutions, where the retarded are now seen capable of more growth. "That's a bunch of baloney," he says.

Maybe you'd like a group home if you went? Anthony is half-asked, half-told. He shakes his head no and wrinkles his eyebrows.

Don't you want to get married and have a family some day? "Na," Anthony says. "Women stunad, capisce? (dizzy, understand?)"

Maybe you like Willowbrook so much because you're used to it? And you're the boss? "It's OK here," Anthony Menella says. "Better than most."

* * *

Anthony Menella's kingdom is a world of rolling hills and hollows, resembling vaguely a European chateaux; a closed world that spins and winds over 382 tree-lined acres dotted by some 40 buildings, most of them red-brick with slanting, wood-shingled roofs.

Anthony rises each day about 7, takes a shower, walks the grounds, heads to the barbershop to help with residents' haircuts, eats lunch, walks the grounds, goes to the rabbi's, eats dinner, goes to adult education class, walks the grounds, returns to his room, takes an-

other shower and goes to sleep. Monday is much like Tuesday and so on.

Rabbi Goldberg takes him home sometimes to see Anthony's parents in Brooklyn. But they are old people who can't care for him full-time.

So Anthony has become in a sense the institution's child, dependent on it for shelter, giving it loyalty in return.

Institution officials, meanwhile, realize that the goal is to prepare Anthony to live in Brooklyn, but fear that to cast him out after 20 years might be to send him into oblivion. And to illustrate the point they relate an old story about Anthony Menella whose authenticity was established by the leading participants. It's a story about an institution, a place now regarded as a mistake of the past, a world that is at once impersonal and harsh, but has moments more precious than our world. For at the institution, the little minds can be just like us — only more so:

It was half-light. A winter month, 1972. Anthony was walking the grounds when he spotted four workmen digging a hole.

"You're digging a hole," Anthony noted. "Why are you doing that?"

The workmen kept shoveling. Anthony tried to catch their attention with coughing grunts. "What's the hole for?" he grunted.

One of the workmen looked up at Men-

ella and in a toneless voice said: "Busted water main." Anthony peeked down, twisted his face in curiosity and with a ready and unpuzzled expression ordered the men to "Stop!"

"You're digging in the wrong place. Use your heads. Dig over here!" Anthony pointed to a spot about 100 yards away. "The break is there," he said.

The workmen snapped to attention, thinking Menella an official, and lifted their sweaty bodies from the hole. They limped over to the new site.

They dug a new hole — a very wide, deep one. A man wearing khaki pants and a foreman's hat approached.

"What the hell are you doing down there?" the foreman shouted. "Who the hell told you to dig there?"

The four workmen gazed about for Anthony. One picked up a shovel, ready to throw it.

The toothless man impersonating the official stood tall behind a nearby tree, casting smiles and waving impishly at the workmen who seemed very far away and very small in the half-light.

"I did it," Anthony probably was thinking to himself. "I fooled them."

"I thought they were retarded, and they thought I was the boss."

(First of three articles. Tomorrow:
The snakepit.)

Page 4 of 4 Pages