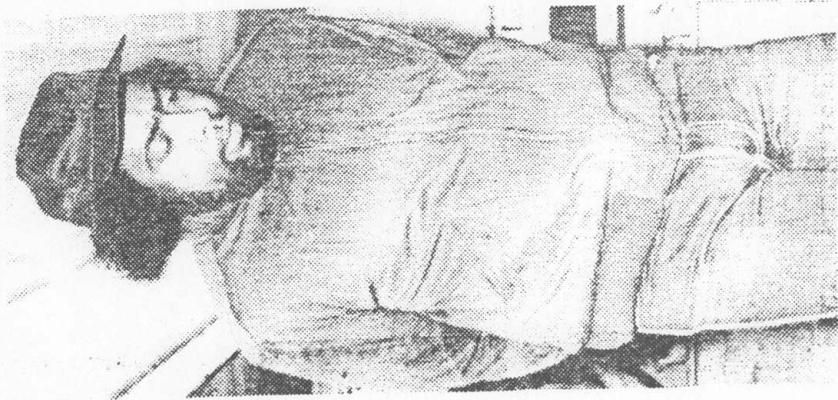


West Brighton, a mental health therapist, a mental health therapist, Herman Mickens, 40, of 1030 Post Ave., Port Richmond, a mental health therapist; Maurice Valentine, 30, of 91 Wayne Terr., West Brighton, a mental health therapist; Helen Chavis, 25, a mental health therapist, and Peter Etheridge, 40, a mental health aide, both of 178 Lockman Ave., Mariners Harbor.

Two Newark, N.J., residents — Laverne Leverage, 35, and James



Drug suspect James Ward, a mental health therapist, inside the 120 Precinct stationhouse.

Ward, 38, both of whom were mental health therapists at the center — were also arrested.

All 10 were charged with sale of narcotics, while Ms. Chavis and Handy were also charged with drug possession. Police said Handy had nine tins of cocaine and 27 packets of heroin, all worth a total of \$310, in his possession.

Lt. William McNeice of the Brooklyn South-Staten Island Narcotics squad, which investigated the incident, said he expected "several more arrests within the next few days," but declined to speculate on the number. He added that it was "an ongoing investigation."

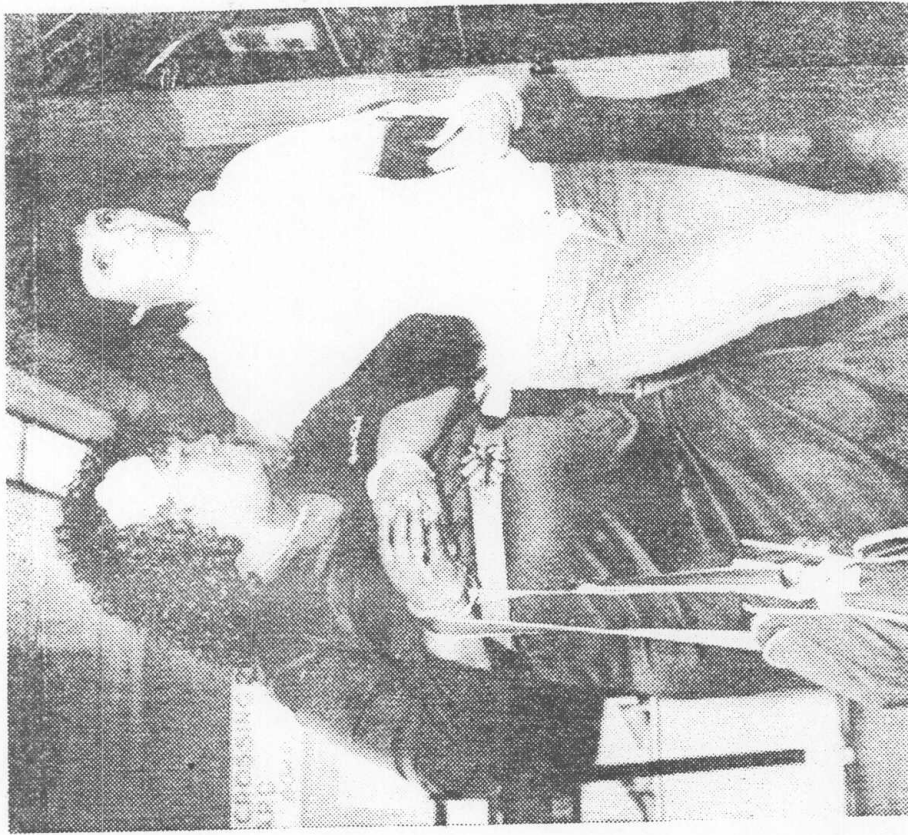
All but one of the defendants, most of whom had no prior criminal records, were released without bail by Judge Royal Radin following their arraignment yesterday afternoon in Criminal Court, Stapleton. Ms. Chavis had bail set at \$2,500 bond because of a prior drug conviction.

Radin ordered that a grand jury hear the evidence against the defendants and decide if indictments are warranted.

McNeice said each of the dealers sold between \$200 and \$300 worth of drugs a day.

Sgt. Dennis Gill, leader of the five-month-long probe and the principal arresting officer, said 60 percent of the drugs sold involved heroin.

"I had no difficulty whatever in obtaining any illegal substances. The drug dealings at the center were quite open — the grounds were not patrolled by regular police officers, but security guards instead because it is



Laverne Leverage, left, a mental health therapist, is led from the stationhouse by a police officer.

S.I. Advance Photos by Steve Zaffarano

state property. This created a climate where the employees felt free to buy or exchange various kinds of drugs without hiding them," he explained.

"It's not quite the same situation you'd have on the average street in Staten Island, where most people would be afraid of being seen in the open by the police.

He said that there was "no one particular supplier" for the alleged drug dealers. "They dealt with many different sources of supply in Staten Island, Manhattan and Brooklyn," Gill added.

The detective said there were "certain buildings, particularly on the night shift" in the 62-structure complex where frequent liquor parties would be conducted.

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