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Willowbrook's legacy

By ROBERT RAYMOND

The Willowbrook Trial: A Decade of Struggle for Social Justice by David J. Rothman and Sheila M. Rothman from Harper & Row at \$27.95. Any book that has the premise that TV newscaster Geraldo Rivera revealed the conditions at Willowbrook State School and thus led to reform has a fat chance of getting a favorable review in this newspaper. That report stirs up bitter memories in the Advance building. Rivera showed up on TV screens with his report in January, 1972. The previous November reporter Jane Kurtin and photographer Eric Aerts had spilled it across the front pages on the Advance in a blazing series. Several years before that, Robert Kennedy had made a short, well-covered visit to Willowbrook and called it a snakepit. (The Advance also has been repeatedly cited for continuing news coverage through the years.) Anyway, the Rothmans look at Willowbrook from a social standpoint and ask what happens when conflicting needs arise.