

After trial, jurors comment

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Some jurors in the Andre Rand trial expressed outrage last night over the failure of four employees of the former Staten Island Developmental Center in Willowbrook to at least question why Andre Rand was walking on the grounds with a 12-year-old girl with Down's syndrome.

The jurors indicated they felt that Jennifer Schweiger might still be alive if the witnesses had stopped Rand to ask him about his companion or called their observations to superiors.

Three of the employees testified they knew Rand from having seen him walking around the center; the fourth, a mechanic, said he had seen him once before when Rand sought unsuccessfully to obtain an air tank from him.

Three of the witnesses said they observed Rand walking with the girl and pushing his bicycle on the afternoon of July 9, 1987 from a cafeteria window in Building 17.

One witness acknowledged that she and her companion asked among themselves, "What was this old man doing with this girl?" She gave no indication they did anything further.

The mechanic said he was test-driving a marked center patrol car with "Police" clearly marked on it when he spotted the two

walking in the direction of Rand's campsite on the grounds, a short distance away.

The mechanic said he slowed almost to halt, making his final observations through a rearview mirror. While admittedly curious, he said he took no further action as he drove off.

One juror pointed out, that based on testimony, there were no residents with Down's syndrome at the center at the time. He indicated that this alone should have aroused the curiosity of the employees.

The jurors said they had comparatively little difficulty in agreeing on Rand's guilt on a first-degree kidnapping charge on the first day of their deliberations, Tuesday, especially when Supreme Court Justice Norman J. Felig read back to them the eight elements needed for the jury to convict.

"There was never any question," said one juror. "It was cut and dry."

Several jurors said: "Too many people saw him with her." The murder charge, however, presented more of a problem to the jurors, with the final vote six-six, before the judge declared a mistrial after the jury said it was deadlocked.

A juror who still possessed a sense of humor remarked that

who discovered the girl's body. Felig questioned the jurors after they had been discharged on their reaction to having newspaper and TV cameras present at the trial. The inquiry had been requested by the Office of Court Administration in connection with an experimental program to open the state's courts to audio-visual coverage.

The jurors unanimously approved the experiment, saying they believed the presence of the cameras added to the public's knowledge of the courts, and especially making the public aware of what a jury goes through to arrive at a verdict.

They also told the judge they did not feel the press coverage affected their ability to arrive at a verdict.

A number of jurors raised questions about the testimony of those



ADVANCE PHOTO/JIM BULLLEY
Judge Norman J. Felig reads from a document after the jury was dismissed.