

buildings are sealed shut with heavy sheets of plywood or tin. Marie Ortiz used to work in one of those buildings. But today she drives past the abandoned complex and parks in front of a two-story, brick garden apartment, its front neatly appointed with evergreen hedges.

Inside, the dwelling radiates an easy charm. In the dining room, two rock-maple dining tables are set with cornflower-blue tablecloths and magenta silk flowers. The living room is furnished with a couch, a pair of soft easy chairs, an exercise bicycle and a 25-inch console color television. Scattered about is an assortment of toys and games: building blocks, a checkerboard, a jigsaw puzzle and a fuzzy white unicorn with a pink horn.

Jean pads downstairs and bids everyone a cheery good morning. Assisted by Charlotte Young, the house's director, Jean sits and softly hums a tune. "She knows the melody to 50 or 60 songs by heart," says Jean's sister-in-law. Jean never sang at Willowbrook.

Other family members filter down to the breakfast table. "Who's going to say grace?" Young asks. "Me!" Jean volunteers. The family digs into a breakfast of scrambled eggs, hot cereal, toast and coffee.

When she finishes her coffee, Mary bangs the table with her fist, points to her cup and shouts at staffer Katy Tucker, who prepares their meals, "Want!"

"I want," Tucker reminds her charge.

"I want," Mary replies.

"You want what?"

"Coffee."

"You want coffee, what?" Tucker coaxes.

"Coffee, please," Mary finally responds. With a heartfelt laugh, she bounds from her chair and wraps Tucker in a steel-trap bear hug.

The severely and profoundly retarded, whose I.Q.'s are less than 40, were once thought to be uncontrollable and ineducable. "Many of them may never learn to read or write," says Dr. Mary Howell, assistant clinical professor in pediatrics and geriatrics at Harvard Medical School and a Joseph P. Kennedy,

Jr., Scholar in Geriatrics and Mental Retardation. "But through consistency and repetition they can be taught to feed, dress and groom themselves and to clean house—activities that increase their independence and self-esteem."

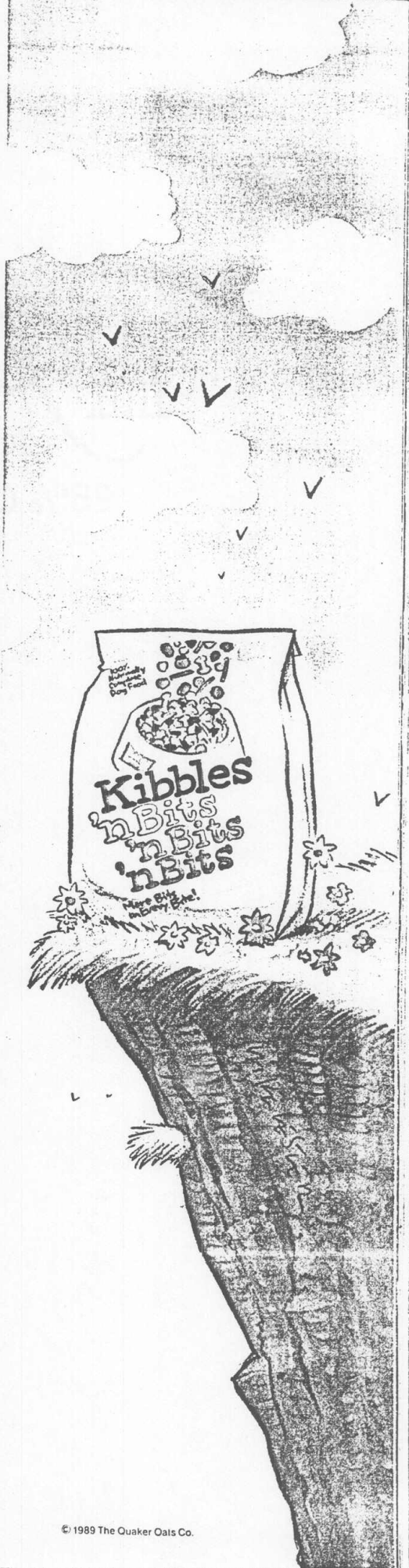
For the more mildly retarded, Dr. Howell says, mastery over such tasks might facilitate their admission into a job-training program, or even a move to an apartment of their own. But for Jean and her housemates, learning these skills might simply mean "graduating" to a group home with a more independent environment. Because of the shortage of group homes and the painstaking process of teaching the retarded necessary skills, moves are relatively infrequent, says Harris Rimshnick, who administers several Executive Way units.

Still, when moves are proposed, they're often cause for celebration. "One of our residents was moved to a less restrictive house last week," Rimshnick says. "It was practically next door, but he couldn't stop bragging to his housemates: 'I'm going up the road.'"

Breakfast is finished. Marcia totes her dishes to the kitchen; Sally grabs a dustpan and begins to sweep the dining room floor. Rose, assigned to report to the family on the day's weather forecast, has become enraptured by Jane Pauley on the *Today* show. Jean trundles out the door to take the bus to a special-education program in a nearby neighborhood. Seeing her out, Ortiz smiles.

"Her brother never thought she'd make it in a group home," Ortiz says. "It's really incredible, isn't it?"

Almost as incredible is that the idea of group homes for the mentally retarded caught on at all. At first, even many who were appalled at institutional conditions opposed them. "In effect, group homes second-guessed a parent's decision" to put away a family member, points out attorney Chris Hansen, who helped to press the Willowbrook case against New York State and is now associate director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Children's Rights



Moving?
Let us know
eight weeks
before you go.

For fastest service, attach your current address label (from magazine cover) in the space above. Then fill in your new address and

mail to: McCall's/P.O. Box 56093/Boulder, CO 80322-6093 1 yr. \$13.97

12-89

Attach your address label from current issue here.

NEW ADDRESS:

Name

Address

City, State

Zip