

# Big Day for Ex-Residents Of Center for the Retarded

By CELIA W. DUGGER

For decades, Willowbrook State School on Staten Island was a barren warehouse for more than 5,000 mentally retarded people, a place where children lay naked and untended on the floors of locked wards, where the air stank of urine and echoed with the moans and cries of residents.

Willie Mae Goodman's 4-year-old daughter was in Building 14. "She wasn't clean," Mrs. Goodman recalled this week. "You could smell her. Her little toes would be so chafed I had to pull them apart. I had to cut her hair

eral court supervision over former Willowbrook residents. Virtually all the surviving residents, most of them severely or profoundly retarded, now live in group homes, including Mrs. Goodman's daughter, Margaret.

Judge Bartels, the state and lawyers for the retarded also signed a document that permanently requires the state to keep the former Willowbrook residents in community homes.

The judge is 95 years old now and peers closely at legal papers to read them. The lawyers are

The former residents of Willowbrook, once neglected and brutalized, now cook and shop and marry the people they love. They gathered yesterday for one last, emotional time in Federal District Court in Brooklyn to celebrate what they had wrought.

While so many other social problems — homelessness, poverty, mental illness — have resisted solution, New York's reforms

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## A Permanent Requirement

The institution came to symbolize everything that was wrong with the care of the mentally retarded, prompting a lawsuit and extensive reform of the way the retarded were treated in the state.

This social transformation to care in small group homes reached a concluding milestone yesterday as Federal Judge John R. Bartels ended 18 years of Fed-



Ozier Muhammad/The New York Times

Maureen Torres, 33, a resident of Willowbrook State School two decades ago, now lives at a group home in East Harlem.

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