

R.D. #1, Box 73A  
Emlenton, Pa. 16373  
April 20, 1973

Ms. Helene Wohlgemuth  
Secretary of Welfare  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17100

Dear Ms. Wohlgemuth:

I was an employee of Polk State School and Hospital from June, 1971 until July 1972 assigned to the Nursery Building, Ward F. The residents in this ward are profoundly and severely retarded and many are also physically handicapped. They range in age from five to sixteen years. This does not make me an expert on conditions at Polk State School, but I did learn a great deal about caring for the retarded and the problems involved in their care. I was reprimanded by the building nurse shortly after I began working at Polk for having tied a little girl to a chair. I had not done this to be cruel. It was the best method I could find at the time to keep her from falling off the chair. She has cerebral palsy and could not hold herself upright. In fact, she has fallen several times from her chair usually striking her head on the floor since she is not able to catch herself with her arms. Which treatment is then really cruel? The child was never injured while I was on duty.

It is my opinion that the methods used at Polk State School are generally protective and in the best interests of the residents. Perhaps those who have not had any close association with profoundly and severely retarded patients do not understand how difficult it sometimes is to protect them or to protect the other residents from them. I do not think that one should be so critical of existing methods unless one can suggest and show to be effective some other method of dealing with the problem.

I could cite many other instances during my employ at Polk when residents were restrained for their own protection or the protection of others simply because there seemed to be no other way to deal with them. We had the best patient-employee ratio at Polk (3-1) and yet we could not supervise each resident constantly.

I do not know exactly what the case against Dr. McClelland is really all about and I do not know Dr. McClelland personally at all. I do think that much of the publicity about Polk State School has been misleading and that the impulsive firing of Dr. McClelland is unjustified.

Yours truly,

*J. K. Runge*

J.K. Runge  
(Mrs. Earl)