

We Are The Lucky Ones

"We Are The Lucky Ones"

*by those who made this book possible
and
Lotte Moise*

Gull  Press

Thank you, B. J.

Thank you, Shirley

THANK YOU, ENCOR

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Why

There was a day back in 1959 that I will never forget. Our college special education class visited a large State Hospital for several thousand residents with mental retardation. It was to be a day of lectures and clinical presentations. An impressive array of administrators, doctors, psychologists and ward personnel faced the students from behind a long table on a raised platform in the auditorium. "Patients" were interviewed and presented for our benefit. We were to visit no wards.

By chance I met a staff person whom I knew and she offered to give me a guided tour. Many of the impressions have become blurry except these two:

I remember the outdoor play areas which were completely enclosed with fence wire (the tops as well as the sides) giving them the appearance of bird cages in a zoo. Symbolically this eliminated all possibility of flight!

And I remembered well into weeks of restless sleep the "cottage" which housed seventy little girls very much like our six-year old daughter at home. As they crowded and pushed and stumbled around me, all trying to touch, all vying for a hug or a word, all calling me "mama" in their wishful yearning for affection, I saw our child, lovingly tucked into bed by her parents, surrounded by stuffed animals and crowded by favorite dolls.

"We are the Lucky Ones" was born on that day, for at that moment I knew with overwhelming certainty that *we* were lucky to be able to have our child at home and that *she* would grow and develop in a family rather than wither in a warehouse.

My intuition of 1959 has since matured into accepted experience, knowledge and theory in the field of developmental disabilities. The "Normalization" principle clearly states that hospitals are for sick people, and that persons with special needs develop best in their own homes, or in homelike surroundings close to their community.

There are across our land community programs which shine and those persons with mental retardation or other disabilities who are a part of such a program shine in reflected brightness.

Such a community program exists in Eastern Nebraska, where the Eastern Nebraska Community Office of Retardation (ENCOR) provides services for approximately one thousand disabled citizens of five counties. The facilities are integrated into neighborhoods and "Normalization" is the key attitude which underlies all programs.

The ENCOR office, which administers the umbrella program provides:

- Child Development Services
- Vocational Services
- Residential Services
- Developmental Recreation
- Transportation Services

Specialized Services:

Speech Therapy

Physical Therapy

Occupational Therapy

Medical and Psychiatric Consultation

Guidance, Individual Counseling and Program Planning

Crisis Assistance and Respite Service

Developmental Maximization

Many of the young adults who enjoy the ENCOR services formerly lived in State Institutions. Their "flight" into accepted citizen status of their community has helped them grow to responsible adulthood. They are ready to "take the words out of our mouths" and speak for themselves.

"We Are The Lucky Ones"

A tale that ends around the next corner of hope, effort, expectation, acceptance, courage and *love* for our fellow man.

There was once a small child, a boy and a girl, a young man, a young woman and elderlies.

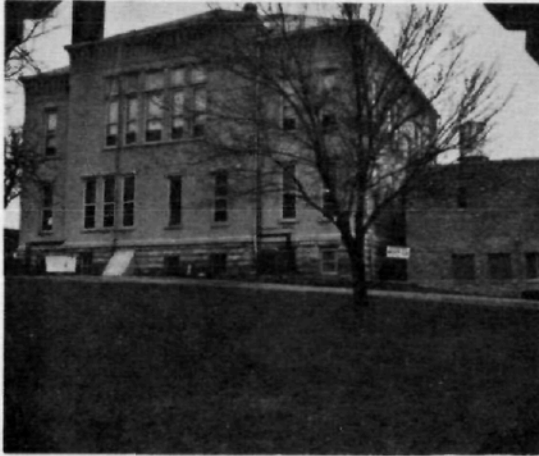
Somewhere along the conveyor belt of life their flaws were detected and they were removed from the others - put on a shelf so-to-speak.

The shelf, a state hospital, nursing home, or training school, was in Alabama or New York, California or Nebraska. It was fair or bad or indifferent. *But it had put them on the shelf* to be neither for use nor ornament.

Over the years many of them grew cobwebs, faded or even cracked and broke. They were wasted.

But I have met some of the lucky ones who are back in the moving stream of life.

And this is what they say. This is what our children and young men and women say who are back in our midst - in this world which is their world too:



"I wouldn't give you 2¢ to go back there. I was twelve years when I went in there. I spent eighteen years there. I'm NEVER going back - not even to visit."



"We plan to write a letter to the Governor 'n see how if we can help pull some more outa there. There's lotta them that could be trusted to get out without someone stepping right behind them~following 'em around."



" Well- I'm treated a lot better than I was in there. You get more freedom. "



"Now we can come & go as we want. It was really CRUDDY. We really had NOTHIN' in there. Everything had to be their way."



" We couldn't sleep in - we had to get up & clean up the living room - move all the furniture - mop up on our day off. Now on my day off I take every chance I get to sleep."



"We had parties and dances, but we couldn't have a private time with our boyfriends. The attendants would be around - I don't call it too much like privacy - not like I do right now."



"Remember the time they cut all our hair off & made us wear our nightgowns & monkey suits (cover-alls) to the dance~ remember?"



"We had to dance clear apart—couldn't dance close together. We fixed THEM though! When a guy wanted to kiss a girl we'd all bunch up all around the party that wanted to kiss, and get out in the middle where nobody could see us. But we knew when someone was coming towards us in the middle of the floor too—a supervisor or someone would sneak up on us—we knew just when they was coming!"



"We couldn't have long hair. They cut it every time. They made us look like creeps!"



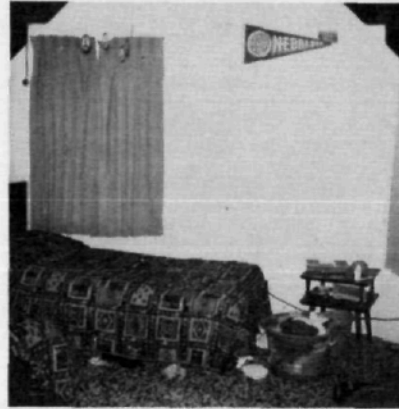
"In there food taste like GARBAGE-SLOP! They just slopped it on a soup bowl - looked like a hog trough. But when if you didn't eat they'd force you to eat. They'd make you eat. They'd horsefeed you. They'd sit behind you & feed you like some two-year old."



"I mean really-food in there should be improved better-it just don't taste right. About the only time it just about tastes all right is when a tour or something is coming through there. Then they change their menu. But after they's gone it's all back the other way around again."



*" I like our house.
It was just like a jail on that ward- closed the door & locked it.
Just a room & bed, & that's it."*



"The dormitories-they had lots of beds- & stalls like horses- they had two beds in each stall & then they had a stand in between where we could keep our things- but the attendants would take half of it out & keep it. They'd go through our letters too."



"Well~to my thinking~when I'm going to the restroom I don't like to have the door wide open. The girls would run in & out & then when a person is setting nobody should bother them. Now that I have my own apartment I have more privacy."



"At one time they didn't allow us to even sit on our bed-they wanted them to stay made up-not unless we were sick. Now I can lay down anytime I feel like. They had hard chairs. So we'd sleep on a chair. I have done it. Put about two or three together & lay down. Our landlord got this davenport for us-brand new!"



"Yes-it was noisy on the ward, & when they made too much noise they put 'em on silence. They wouldn't let 'em talk. Now I can talk all I want-but when I'm resting I can have it quiet."



*"It felt good-the first time my social worker took me into town.
I must've been eighteen."*



*"I live with one other person. We like it real well-our apartment-
but we're looking for a cheaper one. We're starting to decorate."*



"The other Friday I went bowling with the workshop. In 3 games my series was 399 & if I'd had one more I would have had a 400 series. I'm going to my church tonight."



"Now I get paid. There I used to get \$5 a month. I had a store card, but you couldn't buy very much-just powder 'n lipstick 'n stuff-no clothes."



"I worked in the cafeteria. Sometimes I have to work all three shifts if they were short - like morning noon & night. When I got my first paycheck I was excited. I started putting it into the bank."



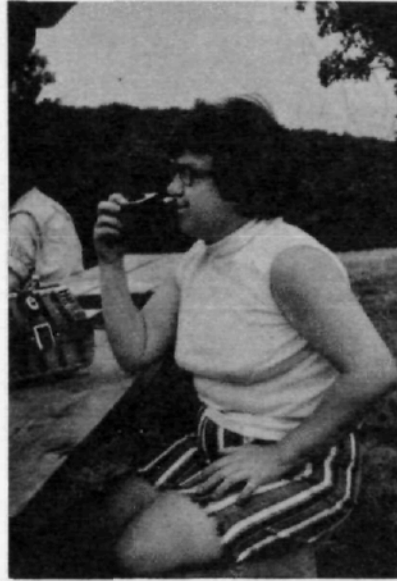
*"I worked in the washroom from 7 to 12 - & then from 12 to 3
I worked in the kitchen, & from 3 to about 10:30 I worked in the
boiler house. Sometimes at 5:30 in the morning I'd haul chickens
& everything else.
They workin' us like a bunch of slaves."*



*"John & I - we'll be going with each other a year on the
18th of October."*



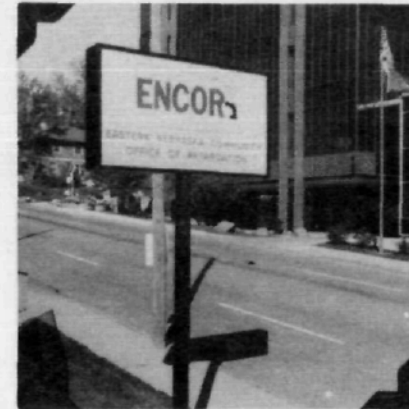
"We're going to Jim- He's a marriage counselor, every Tuesday. We learn how to get along with people. If you can't get along with people then you're not going to get along with the one you're going to marry. The ones that are planning on getting married they are going to those meetings to be prepared for what's in store."



"My Mother had eight children-by no means I don't want that. Dave & I we decided not to have children or like probably later-after two years- maybe one or two."



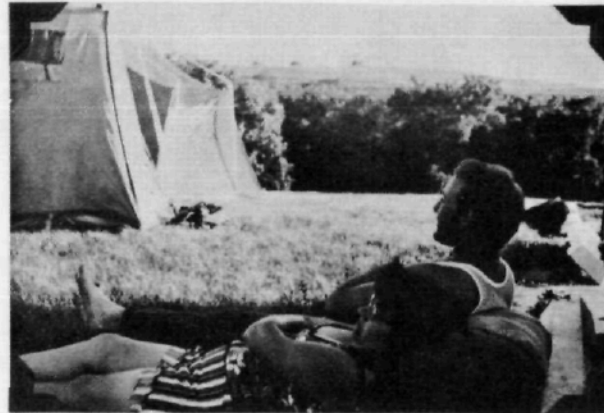
"And WHY aren't you ever going back inside the hospital?"



"Well - I'm happy with ENCOR."



"And I have a lotta friends here."



"And they have recreation."



"And my job's important."



TALE'S END- *the wish that never again we will have to hear:*
"We made it! We got out!"

WE'RE THE LUCKY ONES!"



LOTTE MOISE became a worker in the field of mental retardation by being a parent. She served a summer internship at a large state institution, as part of her special education credential program, and became instantly and totally committed to the concept of hometown living for persons with special developmental needs like her daughter Barbara.

From specific tasks such as organizing a small special school, teaching at summer camp, and directing an activity center, she has branched into broader concerns: family support programs, residences, Citizen Advocacy, the right to be a sexual human being, all dovetail under the heading of "Normalization," which is the birthright of every citizen and a proper investment for the good society.

The entire family - husband Al, daughter Karen, and son David have actively supported Lotte's endeavors on behalf of Barbara.