

Access Press

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History Note

Sam Newlund's storied career

by Luther Granquist

Throughout his 32-year career as a reporter for the Minneapolis Tribune, Sam Newlund, who died last month, wrote often about people with disabilities. In the Sunday paper for January 10, 1965, he described the life of the men and women at Faribault State School and Hospital. He told of one of the 104 men in Dakota Building who rocked "endlessly back and forth on a wooden chair, staring blankly at the floor" while dozens of barefoot men and boys milled about. One man was manacled to a bench, while others "with scarred heads" slumped, "dozing in rows of chairs, their knees pressed hard against their chests in the position of an unborn child." He showed that more staff was needed if these men and other residents at Faribault were going to be taught to care for themselves, to be kept clean, to get outside, and to experience "the healing power of human affection."

Newlund wrote other graphic articles about state institution practices. In March 1967, he exposed pernicious restraint practices at Anoka State Hospital. In April of that year, he reported that Faribault was much the same because the institution could not keep staff in the new positions the legislature authorized in 1965. But Newlund also covered in depth the legislative and administrative actions which affected persons with disabilities. Because he combined knowledge of those issues with an understanding of and respect for persons who have disabilities, the articles he wrote provide a rich and revealing history of their lives. ■

The History Note is a monthly column sponsored by the Minnesota Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities, www.mnddc.org or www.mncdd.org and www.partnersinpolicymaking.com

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