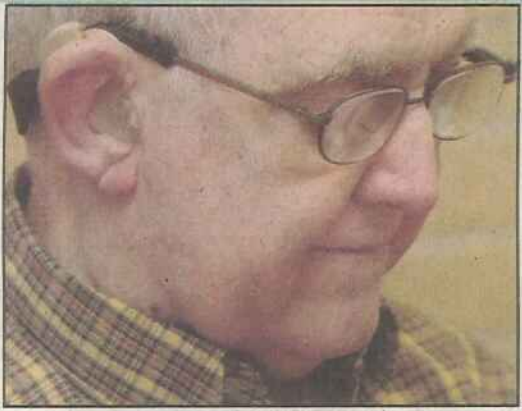


Nicky F., 57, has lived at Caswell Developmental Center for 48 years. He sits inside the McNairy workshop there. Nicky is visually and hearing impaired.



Nicky's day

A tight schedule is gospel for residents at the Caswell Developmental Center. One man negotiates his routine while finding time for loved ones.

■ Story and photos by Janet Sutton ■

A light green placemat sits on the table top inside the dining room at Birchwood House at Caswell Developmental Center. Cups of coffee, apple juice, water and milk are strategically placed in a row in front of the brightly colored mat. There, Nicky F. holds a fork close to his eyeglasses to see which utensil he has. Nicky is visually and hearing impaired.

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Nicky gives his girlfriend Patsy a hug in the living room at Birchwood house. The two have been a couple for more than 20 years.

7:30 a.m.



Nicky eats breakfast in the dining room with others at Birchwood House at Caswell. Nicky eats breakfast on a green placemat. The colors create a contrast so he can see his plate and utensils better.

8 a.m.



Nicky, right, and Ivey Jones, his rehab therapist, make their way to Oakwood for Nicky's exercise session. Nicky needs a sighted guide when he's outside or in unfamiliar surroundings.

LIVING



8:10 a.m.

Rehab therapist Ivey Jones watches Nicky during his exercise. Nicky exercises three days a week with a therapist.



8:30 a.m.

Nicky assembles ARMS for Electrolux as he works in the McNairy Workshop. Nicky works about six hours a day.

NICKY

Continued from Page C1

For residents of Caswell, the century-old state run facility for the mentally retarded, routine is gospel. At age 57, after 48 years as a resident, Nicky has made routine a touchstone of normality. Every day Nicky eats breakfast at 7:30 a.m. with about six other housemates. Without a guide, he slowly maneuvers throughout the kitchen to heat up his waffles and toast. Unlike some residents, Nicky can do almost everything by himself. Caswell staff members observe and assist residents during their daily activities. Although he's very high functioning alone, he still needs a sighted guide outside of familiar surroundings. Though he has hardly any peripheral vision, Nicky navigates around his room and the halls of Birchwood with ease.

At 8 a.m. it's time for a ride on the exercise bike with his recreation therapist; then it's off to work. As he walks across the Caswell campus, Nicky greets familiar faces with a warm hello, often asking staff about their family and how their last vacation went. Once he arrives at the McNairy workshop, Nicky assembles mechanical ARMS for Electrolux. A long rectangular table filled with V-shaped parts awaits him as he

carefully takes his seat. One by one, slowly and methodically, he attaches Velcro pieces to brackets. Light chatter fills the workroom, but no complaints are heard. After about six hours of assembly work, it's back home for Nicky.

"I have a date with Patsy," says Nicky to his house manager, Judy Ellis, who walks with him into the elevator. Patsy, his girlfriend of more than 20 years, waits for him with her home manager in the game room. The couple then walks to the living room where they sit together and hold hands.

"We've been together a long time," says Nicky as he gives Patsy a hug. Nicky uses the money he earns from work to buy his girlfriend gifts.

Ellis says Nicky's a very caring individual. He leaves a lasting impression on the staff and anyone he meets. The day's events have come to a close and Nicky heads back to his room. He turns the lights off and takes his place in his chair only a foot or so from the TV screen.

Commercials and television programs reflect in the lenses of his eyeglasses as he relaxes. Pictures of family and friends placed throughout the beige colored room overlook his neatly made bed. Sleep awaits. His checklist is complete for the day, and tomorrow he begins again.

3 p.m.



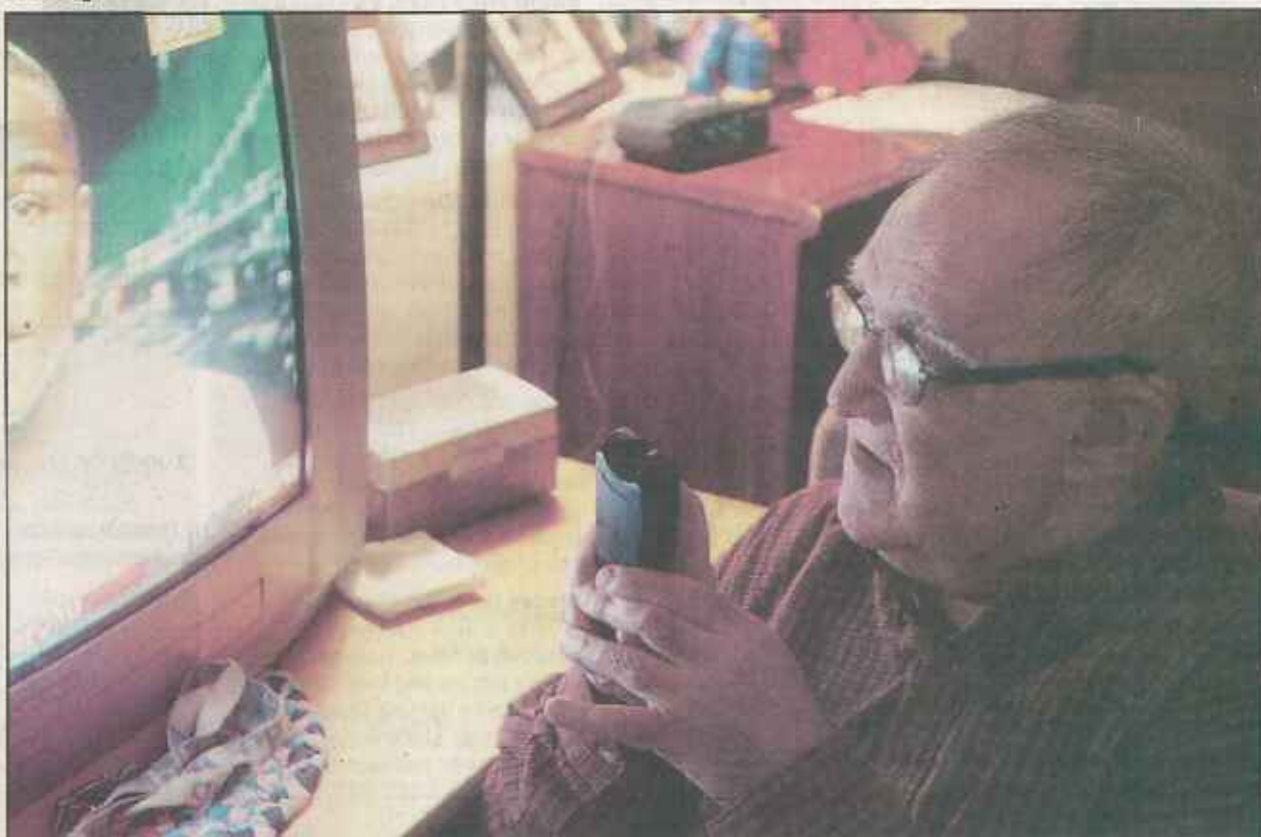
Nicky walks with his house manager, Judy Ellis, after spending time with his teacher, Derek Carmichael, left.

1:15 p.m.



Nicky washes out his circulatory socks in the laundry room at Birchwood.

7:30 p.m.



Nicky searches through the television channels in his room at Birchwood. Nicky wears hearing aides in both ears.