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THROW-AWAY BOYS: WHO SALVAGES THEM?

by

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Teddy had never received even the most ordinary attention from his family. He was so filled with hate that he would not tolerate any kind of relationships with people. When he finally gave his friendship, it was to an ant. After the ant died, Teddy wanted to have a funeral. He became so violent at his family's interference, that they told the police Teddy was incorrigible. Suspicious, driven, tied in knots, he was sent to La Hacienda de los Muchachos, situated in the sparsely populated, dry, ranch-land of northern New Mexico.

At eleven, Jimmy has failed three times in school. He has failed twice already at home, first when his natural mother put him up for adoption, and later when his adoptive mother bore a son of her own.

Far away from the scene of his failures, he has found tasks he doesn't fail at---taking care of ducks and chickens, and picking up the front area of his new-found home. He

has also found a new father who loves him and shows it, and who cares enough about him to spank him when he needs it. He has ten year old Jesse who helps him and plays with him, and soon a teacher who will work with him at his own level and speed.

Teddy and Jimmy live at the Hacienda with about twenty other boys. There a burly, six-foot-five inch priest in dusty pants, boots, and a cowboy hat put his arm around Teddy's shoulder and told him, "Thanks for being my son."

Teddy was being treated the same way that Father Ed's other boys are treated.

"Each boy starts off with a clean slate with me," Father says. "We'll trust him until he proves us wrong." Somehow you know the priest with the cropped gray hair practices what he preaches.

Since 1958, Father Ed had been the chaplain at the New Mexico Boys' Institute at Springer---a correctional reformatory for juvenile boys. Restrain or rehabilitate? Punish or guide, he asked himself. He decided there must be a better way than the Boys' Institute.

In 1968 he used this and also his experience running a boys' camp in the east, besides his observations of boys' ranches and institutions in the Southwest, and marshalled his arguments for Archbishop James Peter Davis.

"I went to see the Archbishop loaded for bear," he recalls, "and came out walking on air." All he had were plans and a Post Office Box number. Soon he found an abandoned adobe school thirty-five miles east of Springer,

near the tiny community of Farley. Built during the WPA days, it has thirteen large rooms, wide, dark hal

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and several smaller rooms. By simply begging, and -

convincing argument, he obtained used furniture, money, food, materials, and volunteer work and expertise from organizations such as the Los Alamos Knights of Columbus and the state's Electricians' Union. The only commodity he didn't have to seek was boys, most of them termed delinquent or incorrigible, many found guilty of crimes, all rejected by the society they hated and the families who didn't want them or couldn't cope with them.

In theory, boys must be under fourteen and a half when they are brought to the Hacienda, where they can stay until they are eighteen or finish high school. Sometimes, however, Father Ed cannot refuse taking a boy who is over fourteen.

The Tony Garcia family live in an apartment in the building. Their jobs are hard to define. Effinite Garcia knows when to "stick her nose in and when to pull it out." She has taught the older boys how to cook, then leaves them alone to plan and prepare the meals, and clean up after. By shopping, scolding gently, mothering, and simply giving an example of what a healthy family situation is, Mrs. Garcia is as necessary a part of the Hacienda as her husband, whose myriad tasks include repair work, and supervision of the boys' work with the animals.

One of the most valuable additions to the staff is Pierre Nichols, a young man so dedicated to the work of the Hacienda, that he has lived and worked there for over a year without pay, and plans on continuing. An artist whose medium is photography as well as ceramics and canvas, Nichols came last summer from Ohio.

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"There are so many things to do, I soon became terri-

Two Catholic nuns have volunteered to teach and live at the Hacienda, as well as a math teacher and a carpenter.

"Everyone, including our boys, needs a little privacy, time by themselves," believes Father Ed. Presently he has a small borrowed trailer for one of the teachers, and has even dug trenches for the foundation for the additional rooms so necessary if he is to have the teachers and helpers the Hacienda and boys need. There is no money or materials to build, but as Father puts it, "I had just \$2 when I started."

Fifty-nine boys of all races and several religions have come and gone in the home's three years. When they are not in school in Springer, the boys have many chores, which help to give them a sense of accomplishment and worth. Father Ed is developing the Hacienda as a ranch, because the animals afford the boys chances to develop themselves through the experiences and responsibilities for God's creatures brought on by a ranch environment.

Two boys effectively manage the hog area, whose seven sows were bred this spring. Several boys are keenly interested in managing the thirteen horses, many of them shetland ponies. Other youngsters take care of the dairy calves, chickens, ducks, laundry for the twenty-five people, cooking and cleaning. When the goats ate up the garden and fruit trees, they had to go.

The Hacienda's well is run by a windmill, so there is not enough water pressure to run an automatic washing machine. Both the kitchen and washroom badly need remodeling. The roof of the gym has been repaired twice, but or

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rain spouts, and exposed foundations indicate the need for immediate repairs.

"None of our planned improvements are luxuries," explains Father Ed, "but things that desperately need to be done."

A typical day at the Hacienda begins at six in the morning, and chores are alternated with snack and meals in the morning. After the mid-day dinner, which the boys have prepared and cleaned up after in the large dining room and kitchen, there is a siesta and time for recreation. Hiking, horseback riding, picnics, baseball, marksmanship from some of the National Guard, and swimming down at Yuke Creek take care of the afternoon hours. When the gym has been repaired and cleared of debris and furniture donated for an auction, they plan indoor sports, and cultural activities.

Counseling occurs as the need arises. Often a situation will reveal a boy's needs and problems. When the sow was not producing litters, Father Ed made it a point to work with the boy taking care of the pigs. As they worked the boy revealed that if Father Ed were not there, he would be beating the sow with a board. When Father Ed did not react with revulsion but with genuine concern and affection for the boy, he confided that the sow reminded him of his mother who had paraded a succession of lovers before the boy since he could remember.

"I'll love you, son, no matter what you do, but I won't always love what you do," Father told him. Knowing that he was not rejected brought about the beginning of a great change in the boy.

Pete came to the Hacienda extremely depressed and full of self-hatred. If he saw his reflection in a mirror or window, he would break it.

"I can't tell you how many windows in restaurants and filling stations we paid for," remembers Father Ed. When Pete cut his hand on a window, Father said, "Son, can I take care of that hand, or do you need a doctor?"

"What about the window?" asked Pete.

"I love you," Father answered. "You're much more important than some glass." Father believes that his boys need to believe some one loves them, and "they make us prove it."

Attacked by one of the older boys, Father refused to fight back. The boy's own father had often beaten him. To the boy's repeated "Why? Why?" Father answered, "Because I love you."

"I know I'm better off with Father Ed," admits Jimmy, "but I still get homesick."

Father Ed and Pierre have many ideas concerning raising boys, most of which stem from the boy's needs. They judge a boy's maturity by his actions, not by his chronological age. They believe a child needs discipline, but the first thing is to accept a child as he is, good or bad, love him, and tell him often that you love him.

"Listening and respecting a boy's opinions is important to a meaningful relationship, as well as freedom to develop," Pierre adds. "Boys need emotional release. Don't make them afraid of crying."

"People don't really want to cut crime down, they want to punish," asserts Father Ed. "When the newspapers print

have two strikes against them already."

Born forty-plus years ago in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, in a family of eleven children <sup>of</sup> ~~born~~ to Irish immigrants, Father Ed has strong opinions on many things. When he recently received a plaque from the Albuquerque Juvenile Court for "outstanding and exceptional service to youth," Father asked them not to put his last name on the citation.

"Too many people use last names to put us into categories, to pre-judge us. I'm proud of my name, but you'd spell it wrong, anyway." For the record, it's Donelon.

"I'm a great believer," he adds, "in the fact that unorthodox solutions can work, that just because something has been handled one way for a long time doesn't mean something else shouldn't be tried."

Father's "unorthodox" ideas reveal a psychiatrist's awareness of a child's needs. They may explain why a marine writes regularly, and sends his picture to his "father," why no boys have been known to speak against the Hacienda after leaving.

"People can have all the good will in the world, and donate their time," Father says earnestly, squinting at the windmill, turning in the rising wind, "but without help through money and materials for some accommodations for these volunteers, without repairs made to the building, and money for food for these boys, there will be no Hacienda for boys who have been rejected by their families, society, and themselves."