

## HACIENDA de los MUCHACHOS

in retrospect  
prior to ten years ago

one of three parts

During my work with children at the New Mexico Boys School, I became aware of what seemed to me to be a great need for a boys Ranch. A boys ranch that would be set up for those who did not need short term remedial work but those who needed long term work (as far as human judgement could determine): those who could not "make it" in the normal social setting or other institutional settings; those for whom there was some hope but would require special considerations because of their problems, not necessarily delinquency, but it may be a part of the problem and usually a result of a prior problem. I hoped to help the unwanted (real or psychological), the margined, the hopeless for whom there could be hope.

My ten years experience at the New Mexico Boys School; my rapping with the staff; the inservice training courses; my close working relationship with one psychologist and my very good working relationship with another, the heroic work of a few staff under such adverse conditions; my own "having to make due;" all of this and more was the best preparation any human--priest could have for the challenges that were not yet history.

During these years meetings were held for consultations with various people and small groups with the main discussions centered around:

- 1) is there a need for another boys ranch in the state;
- 2) would the people of New Mexico (primarily) support such an endeavor if support was based solely on charity without gimmicks;
- 3) would a boys ranch aimed at dependent & neglected children who needed a place to grow up, and found it difficult to conform to the social norms of society and/or other institutional settings be appreciated in our "success orientated" society. The problems of course would follow a pattern of geometric progression;
- 4) that such a ranch, because of the boy problems, would probably not be able to develop profit-making programs, and the best that could be hoped for would be some programs that would be able to pay their own way: hogs, for example because of Father Ed's knowledge and work with them. Would business people be able to understand this? In other words, the product of a Boys Ranch should hopefully be a young man, and not some animal, vegetative, or materialistic product;
- 5) would Father Ed be such a person that would be capable of starting such an endeavor?

As a partial result of some of these meetings a small group was formed. This group consisted of

Father Ed - chaplain at the State Juvenile instution  
John B. Wright - Lawyer  
Joe DiLisio Jr. - Businessman - Banker  
Ed Fernandez - Rancher  
Richard Azar - Certified Public Accountant (R.I.)  
Frank Gumm Jr. - Banker - Rancher (R.I.P.)

*Who was the  
retired army gt.  
referred to in  
this letter?*

SSS.000639

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Besides the discussion of the five points already mentioned the legal set up of the Hacienda was discussed. Among others, the following points were decided:

- 1) the board would be a passive board comprised of
  - a) Father Ed - president
  - b) Joe DiLisio Jr. - vice-president
  - c) Ed Fernandez - secretary-treasurer
  - d) John B. Wright - legal advisor
  - e) Richard Azar - accountant
- 2) it was understood that for the first ten years or so, that Father Ed and the Hacienda would be legally separate entities but for all practical purposes the same. In other words if something happened to Father Ed, it would be the death of the ranch. Father Ed say the first part of the ten years as the "cradle stage, the second part as the crawling stage, and the third part as the walking stage. To visualize this concept the first printed sketch of the Hacienda building was shown in a cradle. (cover of our first brochure)
- 3) after about ten years, or at the end of the second stage the ranch administration should be changed so that the necessity of Father Ed for the continuance of the Hacienda would be lessened and during the third state (walking stage) the Hacienda would be so established as to be independent of any individual. To accomplish this it was planned that a group of people from various walks of life from the surrounding communities be established. Their function would be to meet as an advisory board, and to establish a regular board.

All these ideas were discussed with social workers, probation officers, judges, priests, etc., etc. Now that I was thinking "Boys Ranch", I began to study in order to better prepare myself for the work already at hand and the challenges that may be in store for me. To this end I took courses at Highlands University at my own expense. May it be added that never in all my years of study did I get such good grades.

At this time I was also looking for someone who would be able to help me - to be my assistant - more, to be my "right hand". I was looking for the usual qualities that one looks for when planning on hiring someone, but I needed some one with the added qualities of: a) being a married man with love and a loving wife and family; b) a man who was not afraid of challenge, and who could stand on his own two feet; a man who would not be afraid to talk up to me; a man whose wife would be able to love someone else's children, when maybe the only reason for loving them is that they were created by God!

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## HACIENDA de los MUCHACHOS

Cradle Stage 6 years  
 Crawling Stage 5 years                   two of three parts  
 THE FIRST TEN YEARS

In March, 1966, my Church Authorities gave me the "go-ahead" to start a boys Ranch. A quick trip was made to the lawyer's office and the request for incorporation was drawn up and mailed to Santa Fe.

At the end of March the mailman delivered the envelope which contained the legal documents setting up the Hacienda de los Muchachos - a Boys Ranch - as a non-profit organization under the laws of the State of New Mexico.

My next step was to inform the parties involved that the papers had arrived. Then came the first real action on my part. I asked Tony J. Garcia (see last paragraph of Hacienda de los Muchachos - one of three parts) if he would take a years leave of absence from the NMBS and give me a hand in the greatest challenge of my lifetime. He responded with a tremendous vote of confidence - he submitted notice that he was terminating his position at the NMBS the middle of the following month.

We now needed a piece of geography - one that would have sufficient buildings on it to let us get started as the Ranch had no money. My first business venture was to borrow some money. No collateral, so each of the co-signers had to be able to honor the whole note if it became delinquent. When some people heard of the situation, they offered their homes as collateral.

We were told of an abandoned schoolhouse thirty-five miles east of Springer. Upon investigating, we discovered that it came under the Springer School District and so negotiations were gotten underway. In the meantime, assured of its continued use, we began working on the Hacienda in May. The Hacienda became a legal-geographical entity December of 1966.

The Licensing Dept. of the Welfare Dept. sent out inspectors to look the building over and told us what we would have to do to get a license to care for troubled children. It took a year of work to get the building up to their requirements. Our first license (renewable every year) was for twelve boys. It arrived March of 1967.

In March of 1967 we began to take boys: "MI CASA ES TU CASA":

Work was continued on developing the building. The Los Alamos Knights of Columbus began to send work crews to the Hacienda to work with the boys.

The local water works was inadequate for our needs and so a well was developed. Lines laid, storage tank installed and a windmill erected. This project, most of the work done by the Los Alamos K of C's working with our boys, exemplified our complete trust in God...even our drinking water depended on the "breath" of God.

## HACIENDA de los MUCHACHOS

Cradle Stage 6 years  
 Crawling Stage 5 years  
 THE FIRST TEN YEARS

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It was decided that our fiscal year should go from August 1 to July 31. The office work was a drag and was slowly becoming an anchor around my neck. My favorite sister (God blessed me with seven) was a widow. She decided in 1968, that she would come out to see how I was doing. For about two weeks she worked days and into the evenings trying to educate me and straighten up the mess. She wanted to return for the full next summer, if we had a place to house her and her daughter. Again God provided, and they were to donate two years of work and loving concern for our boys. When they left, my right hand, Tony, told me that he was going to see that the office never got to be a mess again. My sister would travel to the Ranch several times a year and worked with Tony. He and his loving wife Efinita have kept the office from regressing.

March 1969 - sufficient work had been done to pass inspection to increase our boy population to twenty-four. We did not expect to have this many boys for we'd already learned that our boy population would fluctuate.

In the summer of 1969 our special summer programs began. Three young men came to handle it, donating their services although we had no private facilities for them. In the summers that followed, God was to send us a variety of short-term volunteers (in addition to our regular staff) who would enrich the summer programs of academic and cultural development, nature walks, carpentry, tool-work, ceramics, music, gardening, landscaping, etc. It was during these summer months that our boys were to have "on-the-job" training by the experts who came from Los Alamos to build "El Portal de los Caballeros" - The Knights Gateway!

In the beginning of July 1969, two Sisters of the Presentation from the Motherhouse in Massachusetts came to look the situation over: they had the use of a public lavatory and arranged with the Garcia family to use their shower facilities. The Sisters' quarters consisted of a 12 x 12 room. Seeing the tremendous needs of the boys, the Sisters were to answer my plea for permanent help. In 1970 two Sisters made the Hacienda their home.

In 1969 Pierre, an extremely talented young man joined the Hacienda Family by making a yearly commitment (renewable if circumstances permitted). His contribution to the Hacienda consisted of helping draw up building plans for the future; sharing his love and knowledge of nature with the boys; teaching art and ceramics; and leading hikes and campouts.

In 1970 the Los Alamos Knights of Columbus made a complex commitment consisting of a building with four apartment to house staff; another building consisting of an all-purpose room, propaganda rooms, and a single apartment plus a small building called a "casita". Their commitment was one of work not material nor money, however as the work progressed over the years much material and money was donated by them as well. The work crews came (work parties were organized under Joseph Petranto and John Schulte) - and consisted of men from all races, creeds, colors, and financial and educational backgrounds. Each spring and summer saw the return of the

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Cradle State 6 years  
Crawling Stage 5 years  
THE FIRST TEN YEARS

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work crews. Surveying, laying foundations, brick-laying, carpentry work, electrical work, roofing, plumbing, and in the summer of 1973 (thanks to a generous donation) we were able to put in septic tanks and leachfields. Thanks to God and the men from Los Alamos, two Sisters and Pierre were ready to move into living quarters (not quite completed but very livable) at the end of that summer. The work on the remaining buildings is now in progress.

In 1972, the LEARNING CENTER at the Ranch was established. This would be for boys who could not fit into a regular public school program for one reason or another. (The boys who could attend public school classes were being bussed into the Springer Public Schools.) Each month for about six months, we received over \$1,000 worth of up-to-date, brand new equipment for our Learning Center. Certainly an answer to prayer! What a God!!! As the years progressed, material help was received from Title I through the Springer Public School System. This enabled us to up-date our Learning Center on materials and programs needed for individualized instructions. Three teacher-aides made a semester commitment which also enriched the program.

The Hacienda is located on what are called the "high plains". Apparently trees are not natural to this area as the few that were here have been planted. Soooo, we began to plant. We planted 500 (100 each of five different kinds) seedlings one year and more the next. Staff had to be careful not to be too excited over them as when the boys were annoyed with staff they would pull up some trees. The tree program has been continuous and in spite of "blizzard" conditions taking its toll (as well as extreme heat and dryness) about 500 of them are flourishing. The future promises shade and added beauty for us.

Over the years of the Hacienda's existence public recognition has been given by: 1) the Juvenile Court in Bernalillo County with the Honorable Edwin L. Swope presiding; 2) the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, in the person of His Excellency, James P. Davis, then Archbishop of Santa Fe; 3) the Juvenile Court of the First District with the Honorable Samuel B. Montoya presiding; 4) and the National Guard of the State of New Mexico.

As the years progressed, we have introduced a variety of individualized special training programs. Since most of these were meant to fill "boy needs" many of them died with the growth or leaving of the boy. Some of them have been carried on by other boys. After due consideration, it was decided that training in heavy equipment should be the first of the vocational areas. So without any money, a front-end loader and back hoe was purchased - \$14,000 worth of equipment bought and no money. "Give us this day our daily bread....." we were not looking for bread.....we sent out about 4,000 copies of special request news letters and as a result were able to more than cut the notes in half.

Our hog program was out in the open and the snow filled the pens. There was no place to put the hogs where it was dry. It was a wipe-out. Those that didn't die or have to be killed because of sickness had to be butchered. We've started it up again and started to excavate for a hog building.

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## HACIENDA de los MUCHACHOS

Cradle Stage 6 years  
Crawling Stage 5 years  
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We have two fiestas a year to which boys, staff, and friends alike look forward with great joy.

Part of our special Christmas Program consists of spending Christmas Day visiting and caroling for the sick, the aged and shut-ins in Springer, Raton and Clayton. Gifts are shared on St. Nicholas Day, Christmas morning, and the Feast of the Three Kings. Each boy's birthday is celebrated with a religious ceremony and a part consisting of cake, ice-cream and gifts.

The Summer of 1975 brought a retired Army sergeant and his family into our Hacienda family. During their stay with us, which was donated service, they added their share of love, concern, work, and involvement. Although army life had apparently not prepared them for this sort of life and problems, some positive gains were made during their short stay.

Father Ed's function at the Hacienda has been that of "Father figure", Priest & friend, counselor and provider & disciplinarian and administrator. We are looking forward to the establishing of a regular board who hopefully will alleviate some of these responsibilities freeing Father for his work as "Father figure", Priest, friend and counselor.

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## HACIENDA de los MUCHACHOS

forward in HOPE  
"Walking Stage"

three of three parts

To begin with, we hope to celebrate our tenth anniversary from August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1976 to August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1977. We are looking forward to developing an advisory board whose main job will be to form a regular board to take up its position by August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1977, so as to make the Hacienda less dependent on Father Ed, and to get the Ranch on its feet (walking stage) so that at the end of the third phase of the Hacienda, it will be independent of any individual.

It is also hoped, that the building complex - el Portal de los Caballeros - the Knights Gateway - will be ready for dedication by August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1977. This was explained in HACIENDA de los MUCHACHOS - first ten years.

It is also hoped to remodel the boys area and develop quarters for a staff family immediately adjacent to the boys area. This will remove some of the responsibility from Father Ed, consistent with the phase three - walking stage.

We just had over one thousand dollars worth of new, up to date, books and related materials donated to the Math dept. of our Learning Center. This will greatly please Sister Barbara when she returns from the General Chapter in the fall.

We have also been informed by visitors from the State Dept. of Education (5-20-76) that we would be able to receive some state and federal funding for our Learning Center. They also informed us that we would also be able to get some funding to help out on our feeding of the boys.

This is about as far as I can go writing about the "forward looking plans" as the advisory board would have a hand in the making of those plans.