

2 A HOMELESS BOY

“Listen to this!” I said as I read the morning’s mail to my husband.
“This lady says:

‘There’s a boy in our neighborhood who has no home. He stays with one and then another of the families in this area, but no one can keep him permanently. I must tell you that he is undisciplined and hard to manage. Would you be willing to take him for the older boys’ week at your Bible camp?’ ”

“Of course we will!” my husband fairly shouted. “Why not?”

Why not indeed, I thought. *What a glorious privilege!* And while the words were still warm, our answer to the letter was on its way.

How vividly, as I write, that week at Mountain View Bible Camp comes back to me. Night after night the Holy Spirit broke the hearts of the boys, and with much sorrow for their sins one after another came to Christ. And among the first was our young homeless friend.

He seemed to love every minute of camp, and when the week ended he had become one of the most cooperative boys in the group.

And at the close of the week we were among the most miserable. What would happen now to our young friend? Where would he go? Would anyone give him a home?

And in that soil of misery God planted a seed that would germinate eight years later and grow into Joy Ranch, a home for boys and girls who needed care.

The name Joy Ranch was chosen because the buildings were to be ranch style (*buildings, indeed, when not even the first penny had been promised!*), and we most certainly wanted the children to find it a place of joy - joy because our Lord would be there, and where He is there is also love.

But we found little love among our friends for the idea of a children's home.

A letter from our hometown said in part:

“If you had believed the testimony concerning Christ's imminent return, you would not be soliciting funds for building - worthy as your motive is. We can rejoice that Jesus will soon take all children to the Father's home in heaven.”

“And in the meantime . . . ?” we answered. That letter was dated May 1960.

Other friends also objected. “Where will all that money come from?” they asked. “The Lord has so greatly blessed you at Calvary Bible Church and Mountain View Bible Camp” (we ministered in the Dugspur area for 17 years). “Why not stay where you are?” Others unabashedly said, “Wait until you get the home in operation; then we'll help.”

Then there were the Christians who felt that a children's home was simply a social work and therefore beneath the dignity of their giving. They wanted no part in promoting a “social gospel.”

We became convinced that few Bible Christians understood the opportunities that existed in work among needy children. True, there was the social aspect involved: Basic physical needs must be supplied. Many more areas of child rearing would cost money other than the saving of their souls. But it is as Amy Carmichael

said, in discussing the same problem in India, "Unfortunately . . . each soul is very permanently attached to a body." And we loved the whole child - body, soul, and spirit.

If our Lord had not shown us that Joy Ranch was definitely His will, we could not have continued on with the project. But He implanted Jeremiah 32:17 deeply in our spirits:

"Ah Lord God! behold, Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee."

And we took God at His Word. But it seemed that no one was interested in helping. No one? Yes, there were a few - a very precious few.

Herman Bond, a young man from the church we pastored who was knowledgeable about the construction field, offered his expertise;

and his wife, Cora, shared her secretarial abilities.

(They served as president and secretary, respectively, of the Joy Ranch board of directors for 20 years, and their help was invaluable in the establishment and operation of the home.)

And a few others were willing to join the Bonds to form a board of directors. As a result, Joy Ranch was incorporated under the laws of Virginia on May 2, 1957.

But becoming a nonprofit corporation was not without its difficulties.

Legal matters were new territory for us, so we went for help to our friend Senator S. Floyd Landreth in Galax, Virginia. He kindly drew up the charter and prepared the papers to send to the State

Corporation Commission. When the time came to enclose a check with the papers, Mr. Landreth asked me to write it. I looked at my husband and he looked at me.

A check? Now the Lord had always supplied our needs, but mostly on a daily basis; we knew nothing of the luxury of having a checking account. So we asked to be excused for a few minutes. And although we looked carefully through our pocketbooks, we could find only a few dollars. Suddenly I remembered a letter I had not yet mailed containing \$10, and we tore it open. But that still wasn't enough. Our hearts sank.

Then we thought of our co-worker Mrs. Clara Braim, who had come with us to Galax and was now shopping in a nearby store. We hurried to find her.

"If only . . . ,” I said. "If only she hasn't bought anything yet, she will have enough money.”

We found her, and she had enough to make up the balance needed to send to Richmond with the Articles of Incorporation.

"Thank you, Lord,” we said. And we smiled at each other and at Mr. Landreth as we walked back into his office.