

EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE

THE SILENT SOUND OF HANDS SINGING

Ten retarded adults have found success and purpose because of a concept developed by Diane Dupuy, 35, of Toronto, Ontario. Mrs. Dupuy, in 1974, founded the Famous People Players, a professional theatre group that includes some members who are mentally retarded. They present "black-light theatre" where performers operate props, including life-size representations of famous people, as well as fantastical creatures that move to evocative music. Under special black lights and dressed in black, the performers become invisible. The result is magical.

They have toured China and been the subject of a film, *Special People*, broadcast this year in North America.



Famous People Players

OAKS FROM LITTLE ACORNS GROW

Twelve hours a day, seven days a week, a blind 6 year old stands in the chaotic traffic of a Jakarta intersection begging for enough rupiahs to buy himself dinner. This scene is repeated in thousands of cities and villages throughout Asia. Two-thirds of the world's blind live in Asia. In India, 40 000 children every year lose their sight; in Thailand there are only 200 ophthalmic surgeons for 49 million people. Lack of vitamin A, unhygienic conditions that encourage the spread of trachoma and untreated operable cataracts, cause most of the blindness. All are easily remediable situations, provided there are enough qualified doctors and eye clinics.

The situation has only marginally improved since 1932 when a Baptist missionary doctor from Yarmouth, N.S., **R. Ben Gullison** and his new bride, Evelyn, arrived in the coastal village of Sompeta, India.

Dr. Gullison estimated that there were about 200 000 needlessly blind people in the vicinity and quickly decided to establish a makeshift eye clinic in their tiny home. Fifteen years later they persuaded an Indian doctor to join them and were able to convince the local and Indian governments to build a small hospital in that village.

In 1963, at a fund raising lecture in Calgary, Alberta, Dr. Gullison's cry for help for his little village clinic mushroomed into the creation of an organization that even he had never envisioned. Operation Eyesight Universal today funds 70 eye clinics in nineteen countries throughout Asia, Africa, South America and the Caribbean.

Dr. Gullison, now 79, is still awed by the scope and strength of this organization.

"CARE...BUILDS A HEAVEN IN HELL'S DESPAIR"

Men and women who join religious orders expect to spend a life of service to others, but even then, some go beyond the call of duty and create a lasting legacy of love, caring and inspiration.

One such person is **Sister Thérèse Saint-Bertrand** of the Order of the Sisters of Charity, who has improved the quality of life for hundreds who found themselves caught in the eddies of society's mainstream. She dedicated her life to the service of God in 1935 and has spent the last 15 years in selfless, humanitarian service among the sick, mentally ill and alcoholic.

Sister Thérèse was born in l'Original, Ontario. After years of nursing, she returned to the University of Toronto and studied psychiatry.



Sister Thérèse Saint-Bertrand

As head nurse of the wards reserved for the care of alcoholics at the General Hospital in Ottawa, she spent entire weeks with the sick and became a specialist in the treatment of alcoholism. In 1969 she opened a rehabilitation centre on Cathcart Street in Ottawa called "La Maison de la Sérénité", Serenity House, which still opens its doors to those in need of its caring and security. Serenity House is a registered non-profit organization with a board of directors which offers bilingual counselling and shelter to alcoholic men and women.

After retiring from active involvement in Serenity House, Sister Thérèse continued in pastoral work at the Elizabeth Bruyère Health Centre as well as visiting the sick and elderly at home. Ottawa named her Citizen of the Year in 1981, and she was made a member of the Order of Canada in 1983.

A HELPING HAND ALONG THE WAY

A good samaritan and some of his colleagues helped a dream come true for 13-year-old Becky Junkin, a spinal bifida sufferer.

Bob McBean, a member of the Ontario Voyageurs Kayak Club, saw Becky in her wheelchair at the beach last summer and asked her if she would like to take his tiny kayak for a paddle. She did, and a 30 metre round trip later she was hooked on the independence and freedom the little craft granted. In the kayak she was on an equal footing with everybody else. The installation of a \$15 000 home elevator was taking all the family's spare cash, however, and they were not in a position to provide her with her own kayak.

McBean and another postal worker, Joe DeSilva, began selling tickets to their co-workers in a 50-50 draw. This produced enough cash for a \$375 kayak donated at cost by a fellow club member, plus a donated hand carved paddle. Last Christmas Eve, Bob McBean delivered his gift to a surprised and delighted Becky Junkin. Becky is now a member of Toronto's Cando Kayak Club for Crippled Children.

"Strive, and hold cheap the straine;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never
grudge the throe!"

Robert Browning, "Rabbi ben Ezra"

"...that which we are, we are;
...strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."
Tennyson, "Ulysses"