



**HELPING OTHERS**  
... a new kind of reality

They remember the young girl they became good friends with. The girl was always hearing voices telling her people were going to kill her. One weekend, Ruth and Roseann went out to Sylvan Lake for a day. On coming back to the hospital, they were told the girl had slashed her wrists in their absence.

Ruth remembers an invalid older woman. "She hadn't been outside for years. She was afraid if she went outside, they would send her away from the hospital.

"First, I became her friend. Gradually she got used to the idea of going outside. And at last we went for a walk in the garden.

"She hadn't been out for so long, you could show her a flower and she would really be thrilled."

Another member of the team tried to bring out one man who was so withdrawn he had not spoken to anyone in years. He would smile, but not even answer yes or no to a question.

"Maybe just being with him all the time made a difference," says Roseann. "At the end of the summer, just as we were ready to leave, the service corps worker was sitting with the man, trying to talk to him. A nurse came in and changed the bed.

"And he got mad at the way she did it, and started talking about the mess she made! We were all flabbergasted. Now, he is talking a little more."

The Ponoka hospital has already requested 12 volunteers for next summer. The administration has queried director Don Hamilton whether a year-round program could be set up.

Maybe the Ponoka team wasn't indispensable—but their just being there seems to have had quite an effect.

#### FORT CHIPEWYAN

Warren Larson, Bryan Watt and John Reid stepped out of the float plane into a "fretfully sleeping community".

In reality, Fort Chip is two communities: the white section at one end of the road, and "Doghead", the Indian-Metis section at the other end, around the swamp. The men had their cabin in Doghead.

They came to Fort Chip with a few vague ideas of community development projects like a co-op industry, but quickly found the situation dictating their project. The kids needed a kindergarten—so they got a kindergarten.

The children were strangers to books, pens, group play, the names of the days of the week, clocks—all the things Edmonton kids are old hands at before they start school.

The second day of the playschool, Brian remembers, "Rosie asked to go outside to the bathroom. We said sure. A few minutes later she was back. She came up, pulled on my hand and said, 'Teacher, I stole all the toilet paper.'

"She showed me her pockets, and, sure enough—all the toilet paper stuffed in. She thought it was really pretty."

The days passed. The men devised ways of keeping discipline—like paper money for everything done well, which would purchase cookies and water at the school store.

That worked fine—until some kids started counterfeiting the stuff.

"Laziness was an asset in Fort Chip," says Warren. "The days jumped so that weekends were meaningless. And the days—some good, some bad, some empty. We needed to be lazy to overcome the frustration of sometimes doing nothing, or of doing something, but wrong."

The three supervised a study class, started a community library, held track days, gave swimming instruction—and blew up the RCMP paddy wagon.

John and Bryan were riding back to Doghead one day in the wagon with their friend the constable. Suddenly the engine died. They all

piled out and looked under the hood.

Bryan suggested priming the carburetor with gas. They did. The thing caught fire and mildly exploded.

And Doghead rejoiced—a weekend of parties without the threat of the wagon coming screaming over the dirt from the other end of town.

"We grew up a little; changed a little," says Warren. "Coming back to university after submersion in the Chipewyan culture—there is one—has caused some jolts.

"The world turns more slowly up north, so that people don't need to push and shove and run to keep up."

#### FAUST

Edith Gould, rehab med 2, and Doug Beechey, arts 3, headed for Faust, a grey, dead town on the shore of Lesser Slave Lake about 180 miles north of Edmonton. Except for some almost-mansions owned by the white store keepers, most of the homes are two or three rooms. Most people are Indian or Metis.

Edith and Doug knew they wanted to start a play school, and they soon had 24 pre-schoolers coming to the Anglican church hall in the mornings.

"Rose wouldn't talk to anyone, and she was five years old," Edith recalls. "She would sit in the corner, watching. Sometimes she would smile. But never talk.

"One day we gave her crayons and paper—and she drew a beautiful picture. She turned out to be very creative. By the end of summer, she was starting to play with the others a little."

Doug got to know one Metis boy, about 17 years old, who dreamed of leaving Faust for "the outside". He had grade nine. School in Edmon-

ton was what he wanted to get to, but the crowd in Faust didn't think the same way.

One weekend, Doug and Edith visited the service corps girls in Slave Lake, 30 miles away. The Friday night, the boy went drinking with the crowd, the crowd went breaking and entering, and the RCMP picked them up.

The police suggested they all plead guilty, but the boy was the only one who did. He was packed on a bus to the Fort jail that night, and the others got off.

Doug came home Monday to find the boy gone, and the town up in arms. But nothing could be done. The boy is now serving a year.

Doug is still a little bitter.

But both Edith and Doug still regard their summer as priceless experience.

Next year, 50 university students will go out into places where "they can become involved with people". Bursaries sufficient to cover university tuition and expenses are given to each service corps worker at the end of the summer by the provincial government.

These were only a few of the places service corps people worked. A kindergarten in the Boyle Street area of Edmonton kept other people busy—day and night. Some kids would phone the students in the middle of the night to say "Mommy isn't home yet, and I don't know how to look after the baby."

A summer full of a new kind of reality—definitely. And maybe a new kind of reality inside you.

Don Hamilton has application forms for next year available from the Department of Youth, Alberta Service Corps, 26 Floor CN Tower, Edmonton.



**THREE DAUNTLESS CORPS MEMBERS AT FORT CHIP**  
... left to right; Bryan Watt, Warren Larson, and John Reid