

LAWRENCE'S MIRACLE:

John's story

John Evans' story began two years ago with the dissolution of his marriage. He had gone to the Yukon "looking for my pot of gold, as so many people do."

He acquired some of the possessions he sought, but then the roof fell in on his world when he discovered he'd lost his wife to another man. The bitterness he felt led to two years in a government correctional institute. John gives no thanks to the institution, but he came out of it a changed man. He knew now what was important, and he made a vow to do something for children.

After leaving the institution, John moved into a basement suite in a home with a "so-called Christian couple," in Whitehorse. Every day after work, he'd pick up children from the streets and take them home with him.

It wasn't just any child he picked up, they were all special children—children from broken homes, children of alcoholic parents, illegitimate children, all the children who roam the streets because they are afraid to go home or who have no home to go to. John took these children to his humble home and he gave them love.

"Finally the people who owned the house said I'd have to leave. They were afraid of these kids, afraid they'd catch some disease from them."



So John was out in the street with a passel of kids looking to him for support. He wandered into a real estate office where he overheard some men discussing a sixty acre place on Mayo Road.

"I had 20 cents in my pocket, but I bought that place. I didn't know how I'd pay for it. I just knew we had to have it." There was a house on the land and they moved in. To raise money for operating expenses, they held an auction. "We bugged businesses to donate merchandise, and we collected \$10,000 worth of goods."

But they still needed \$11,500 to pay for the land. John took a trip to Ottawa to appeal for help. Ottawa was unsympathetic and when he got back to Whitehorse, he found he'd lost his land. He had gained a lot of publicity, however; people learned what John was trying to do for the unwanted children in Whitehorse.

"I went down to the lands office one day to see what I could do. There was a man standing in there with his wife and two children. He came over and hit me on the shoulder, and I recognized the superintendent of the institution I'd been in. "John," he said, "I believe in what you're doing. If something doesn't come up for you in three days, come and see me."

Three days later, John drove out to the superintendent's home. It was spring and the roads were muddy. The access road to the super's house was plagued with ruts as well. John's car got stuck, and he was too embarrassed to ask for help getting it out. Instead, he tried to coax it out of the rut till well after dark.

"Around midnight, I saw a light coming down the road and it was the superintendent." He told John he was an idiot for not asking for help then took him up to his house where his wife fixed John a supper. While eating, John



explained his plight. Then the superintendent got out a deed to 160 acres of land in a valley outside Whitehorse and signed it over to John.

John and his kids were delirious with joy. But there was one problem. There was no house on the land. So John had another idea—they'd live in tents till they could get something better. "In tents?" the kids asked. John just looked at them and said, "You kids are used to sleeping in the street or wherever you can, so what's wrong with a tent?"

As it turned out, they built themselves a lean-to of corrugated tin and a brick fireplace, but with none of civilization's other amenities. "People thought we were nuts, but we didn't care. It was better than living on the streets. We had the land now and no one could kick us off."

Then one day John and the kids were sitting in a cafe talking about a house when a local contractor came over to their table and said he would give them three houses that were otherwise scheduled for demolition. They weren't junk heaps, either; they were good houses. Then someone else gave them three more houses, one of which they sold to help allay costs.

The first contractor said he would move the first three houses but John had to ready them for moving. John was given 60 days to move the last two houses. The major problem was that there was no road to John's valley.

So he went on the radio on an open line show, discussing the project. A woman phoned in and said, "John, I'm a neighbor of yours, and I don't like you personally, but I do like what you're doing for those children."

She donated \$1000 towards the hiring of a caterpillar tractor to make the road into the valley. With the help, financial and physical, of many more people, they got the houses moved to the valley just twenty minutes over the deadline.

Next they needed a telephone, since they were about nine miles from town. The trouble



with getting a phone to his house was that there were no lines. They would have to be built to the house at considerable cost. The head of the telephone company donated half the money from his own pocket, leaving it to John to find the rest. But he decided to have another go at the bank. On the way, he met an old friend who wrote him a cheque for \$100 towards the telephone.

Then John discovered that there was a new manager in the bank. "I've heard about your project," he told John. "I know what you started with, and all I can say is that you've got to be getting divine help to have come so far."

John sat there stunned. "You don't expect a bank manager to say something like that." But he got a \$300 loan towards the phone.

And the Yukon Children's Village, that John Evans started with 20 cents in his pocket has grown.

"There are people who don't like us, who are jealous, who would like to break us up. Welfare has tried to take the children. But the children come here with the consent of their parents or guardians, and they come here to stay. We don't have big fancy buildings or a lot of money, but we have something no institution can offer. We have love."



Lawrence's story

Although this Lawrence is a real person, he is also Everychild who has ever lived on the streets, who has been afraid to go home at night to a drunken parent, or has been kicked out of the house, or who has no parents at all. Lawrence is Everychild who has learned to hate and fear and to have no trust in others.

Lawrence was a quiet child that John Evans found in the streets and took to his valley to live.

In the summer, John decided to go on a fund-raising tour of Canada and he asked Lawrence if he'd like to go along. He knew Lawrence needed extra attention. He knew Lawrence was at a point where he could either decide to grow up into a happy trusting adult, or he could decide nothing was worth while, and become one of this country's many malcontents.

He wanted Lawrence to see for himself that people do care about others.

They made a circle tour of the country, travelling 15,000 miles on "faith in people". The Gulf and Texaco oil companies paid for all their gas.

As they were driving into Calgary, a man in a car waved them over to the side of the road. Mystified, John stopped the van and they all