

The needs of children

by Mary MacDonald

The Yukon Youth Center: A Village for Children can be a very misleading name. It seems to suggest a children's play village but in reality a far more important type of "play" unfolds there.

"There is a tremendous need in this country for preventive measures for kids and teenagers," says John Evans, the founder of the Whitehorse project. The "village" concept is designed to help alleviate the type of situation in which some kids find themselves in unhealthy home settings, caused in many cases by the abuse of alcohol.

When a child finds himself living in either this type of home or being moved from foster home to foster home, a mark is left on him. This insecure childhood influences him and forms the basis for his behaviour in adulthood and future problems. If he can grow up under a relatively stable type of home atmosphere with a little bit of TLC (tender loving care), then he has a better chance of getting along well in adulthood.

The village is designed to provide this in a home type of atmosphere.

Ideally, according to Evans, the village will consist of a maximum of 200 kids, with each house occupied by 7-9 kids 14 years and under. Each of these permanent houses will be run by a house mother together with two assistants, called uncle and aunt, who will give their "kids" love and affection.

Although, ideally, this will be a self-contained, self-sufficient community with agricultural facilities as well as facilities for learning the practical ways of survival in this world, the kids will go to school in the outer community and are not segregated from the outside world.

Because he himself has lived the life of these kids and has also been imprisoned within himself, Evans hopes to help others going through similar trials, by taking them out of shakey home settings and giving them one more stable.

"We hope to work with the authorities in a cooperative

manner," says Evans. Both boys and girls (living on separate levels of the houses) will be accommodated as well as those from various racial, religious, and financial backgrounds. Evans points out that it is not only the children from financially poor homes who live sometimes in unhealthy environments but many from wealthy homes as well.

The success of the project is in part due to the kids themselves. "We create an incentive to motivate the boys and girls in their project," states Evans. Hopefully the child will benefit and be able to face more realistically, problems encountered after leaving the village.

"When it is time for him to leave the village, the village will help him with his further education," said Evans, "but he can always come home or can work within the village." The village will also provide for the house mother when it comes times for her retirement furnishing her with a house as well as a pension. She then becomes the "granny" of the family.

However ideal this may seem, it cannot materialize out of the air. "We are in desperate need of one quarter of a million dollars to set up the village facilities properly and build new houses. I foresee this idea spreading and am looking for young university students to become involved," says Evans, who together with a small group of boys, started off.

Although they endured living in a lean-to in winter, they have now progressed to houses on their own land but they need much more.

"It is a chance for young upcoming social workers to get their hands dirty," challenges Evans. "We are calling out to our fellow Canadians for their help and understanding. I believe it is great to help those overseas but what about those

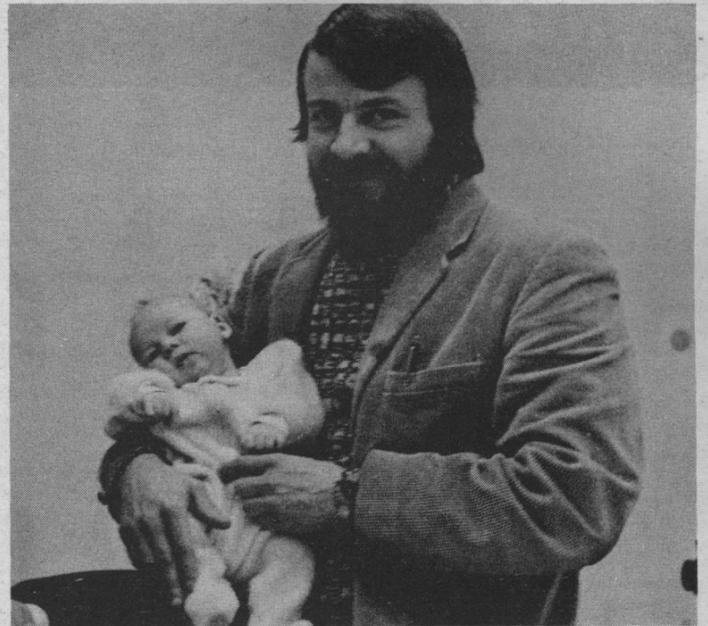


Photo - Brent Hallett

John Evans, founder of the Yukon Youth Center, is just a person who cares about our children. And he needs our help.

Canadians who live under appalling conditions. Let's start in our own back yard."

For further information on the non-profit organization

which provides living expenses and has negotiable salaries, contact: Yukon Youth Center: A Village for Children, Box 4331, Whitehorse, Yukon.

USAF Officer threatened with dismissal

(ENS) - A career Air Force Officer who wanted to make sure that adequate safeguards existed against nuclear war has gone to Congress for help in fighting efforts to throw him out of the military.

Major Harold Herring of Mount Vernon, Illinois, raised several "questions of conscience" while training as a nuclear missile operator. He asked his commanders to confirm that adequate checks and balances existed at the national level to keep an irrational or mentally ill President from ordering a nuclear war.

Instead of providing the information, his superiors at Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming convened a board of

inquiry which ruled that Herring should be dismissed from duty for having a defective attitude toward his duties.

Herring, a twenty-year veteran with a Distinguished Flying Cross, maintains that he has not refused to launch nuclear missiles. He just wants to make sure that any launch would be authorized properly. Air Force officials admit the case is unprecedented, and a review of the dismissal order is underway.

Herring has written the House Armed Services Committee asking for help after a personal plea to President Ford for White House intervention was turned down.

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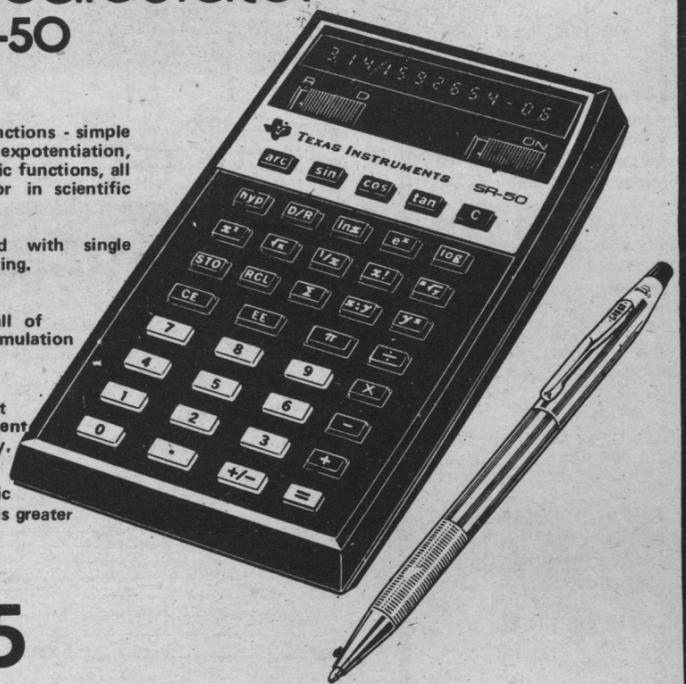
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