

Kodak Caribbean Program

Cameras Give Boost to Catholic Group

Picture growing up in one of Puerto Rico's slums. For the last five years, hundreds of teenagers in La Playa, a slum section of Ponce, Puerto Rico, have been doing just that — using cameras to record and share their lives.

A recent exhibit at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art featured some of the best of their work, about 70 dramatic black and white prints.

The young photographers represented are members of the Center for Orientation and Services (COS) photography workshop which was launched in 1971 when Kodak Caribbean donated cameras, film, darkroom equipment and supplies to the community-based organization.

Some of the teens are school dropouts; others have been in trouble with the law. All are poor. Their photography, however, is more than snapshots of surroundings and people. They are portraits of life textured with feelings of sadness and joy, frustration and hope.

Ponce, Puerto Rico's second largest city, is on the island's parched southern coast. From the streets of Ponce, the island's green mountains, sugar-cane fields and cool blue Caribbean seem like taunting mirages. The central mountains pierce and drain the clouds before they reach Ponce, leaving the city only hot, dusty winds and caked, cracked earth.

La Playa is the wharf section of Ponce where 18,000 people live shoulder to shoulder in one of Puerto Rico's worst slums.

Salt-eaten lumber scraps are stuck together to form huts that lean against each other like pastel



Nelson Garcia-Santos, left, graduated from student to teacher in the Center for Orientation and Services photography workshop. On photo field trips like this one, teens scout the neighborhood for pictures of La Playa's buildings, people and animals.

dominoes. In the sweltering afternoons, goats lie listlessly beneath ramshackle porches. Curly-haired children swarm to their playground — a pyramid of tin cans, garbage and rusty automobile hulks.

This is the reality of life in La Playa. But creativity, education and hope are part of the picture, too. In the last five years, while juvenile delinquency has soared across Puerto Rico, the delinquency rate in La Playa has been cut in half to a level of 9 per cent. About 900 school dropouts have returned to classrooms. Half the children who faced court and possible institutionalization after a first brush with the law have been counseled by youth advocates and channeled

into constructive educational programs.

Behind these successes stands the Center for Orientation and Services (COS), a community-based program founded in 1969 by Sister M. Isolina Ferre, her staff at St. Anthony's Dispensary and citizens from La Playa. COS is run by community volunteers and nuns of the Missionary Servants of the Blessed Trinity, who rely on technical assistance from the Youth Development and Delinquency Prevention Administration and Fordham University. Funding comes from the Puerto Rico Crime Commission, the Department for Prevention of Drug Addiction, the Church, private contributions and sizable donations from in-

dustrialists like the Ferre family and companies such as Kodak Caribbean.

More than 1,500 people are involved in COS activities. Alternative education programs include photography, ceramics, cosmetology, gardening and vocational training. There are basic education classes in math, science, Spanish and English. COS also provides tutoring, health, counseling and legal aid services.

"There's no central school," says Sister Rosita Bauza. "Classes are held in community-built shacks which are scattered among La Playa's 18 barrios or sections. The education is open and informal. These children are with us because they couldn't learn and survive in the disciplined environment of a six-hour school day. Our first objective is to get them off the streets — away from crimes, prostitution and drugs. Then, we try to get them into a basic education program; if not regular school, then classes which could lead to an equivalency diploma."

"Take youngsters who join the photography workshop," she says. "Suddenly they're in the darkroom and realize they don't know how long to leave the film in the developer because they can't tell time. Well, in private, the teacher explains how to read a clock, or how to make a mathematical calculation, or helps them to read an instruction sheet. At the same time, the teacher encourages them to attend basic education classes. About 15 students in the photo project have returned to regular school because of just this kind of motivation."

According to Sister Bauza, the photography workshop is the most popular alternative education program at COS. Each year about 100 youngsters, aged 12 to 21, take part in the workshop.

The photography program began in 1971 when Kodak Caribbean donated 50 Kodak Instamatic cameras and more than \$2,000 in darkroom equipment and supplies, including enlargers, timers, trays and chemicals. Jose Rivera, Kodak sales manager for Puerto Rico, came to La Playa from the Kodak headquarters in San Juan to help lay out and design the COS darkroom. Since then, Kodak has donated more materials — printing paper, additional enlargers and darkroom equipment, as well as photo supplies needed for special projects like the Metropolitan Museum exhibit. Each month, Kodak also gives COS a \$100 credit to be used for film, chemicals and other photo supplies. Rivera also has continued to provide technical assistance.

Two professional men, Edward Miller and Manuel Ramirez, serve as volunteer instructors.

A third instructor, Nelson Garcia-Santos, joined the COS photography workshop when he was 19. Unlike many of the young people, he had finished high school. He was troubled and alone in the world when he came to COS. Now he hopes to make photography his career.

Manuel Ramirez cautions, however, Garcia-Santos is one of the exceptions in the photography program. The primary goal is not to teach photography as a vocation.

"Let other agencies worry about making them tailors or doctors," says Ramirez, "and let us worry about their inner happiness. We're trying to help them develop their sensitivity and awareness. We want them to discover that realities can be wonderful — that it's good to be in touch with the world around you. We are trying to teach them a scale of values in which beauty, tenderness and love are top priorities."

World Hunger Their Problem

Auburn Parish Aiding Chile Children

By MARY ANN GINNERTY

Auburn Sacred Heart parishioners have become involved in the problems of world hunger through a project which provides support for the maintenance of a lunchroom for children in Santiago, Chile. The lunchroom is served by Sisters of Mercy from the Rochester Diocese.

For most of the children who come daily to the lunchroom, it is the only substantial meal they receive during the day, explained Sister Margaret Mungerford, home on-leave from Chile.

Sister Margaret spoke at Sacred

Heart after the parish human development committee decided to do something about the problem by adopting the parish lunch program as an ongoing project. It is a consistently sustained effort through a bi-annual collection with other awareness and money-raising efforts now in the planning stages. These are intended to build the sense of community, not only among the parishioners, but in extending the hand of Christian love in a concrete way which is being felt in the daily lives of the children.

Sister Margaret explained that the Rochester Sisters initiated their mission work in Chile following

Pope John's plea that all orders provide 10 per cent of their personnel for missionary work in South America.

The representatives from this Diocese, now numbering six, are involved in preparing catechists and parents. Their work concerns training an adult population to carry on the work of Christian living in the family, the basic training ground for religious values.

Catholic Schools Set Registration

Elmira — The Elmira Consolidated Catholic School System has scheduled registration for the September, 1976 term as follows: at St. Mary's, Southside, Sunday, Feb. 15, 2-5 p.m. and Tuesday, Feb. 17, 7-9 p.m.; at St. Casimir's, Wednesday, Feb. 18, 7-9 p.m. and Sunday, Feb. 22, 2-5 p.m.

Any pupil may be registered at either place. Registration is required of all both newcomers and those continuing in the system.

Apalachin Parish Offers Retreat

Apalachin — A four-day retreat conducted by Father James Fallon of the Endicott House of Prayer opens at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 16, at St. Margaret Mary's. Topics on the program are Love, Repentance, Scripture and Prayer. A coffee hour and discussion will follow each session. Father Elmer J. Schmidt, pastor, invites all adult parishioners and high school students to take part.



Special Day

An excited young man toured the Monroe County Safety Building recently. Jason Steitler, the 1976 Monroe-Wayne County March of Dimes Poster Child, was escorted through the facilities by Sheriff William M. Lombard. Jason, who was born with Spina Bifida (open spine) would like to be a policeman when he grows up. Lt. John P. Leszynski demonstrated to Jason, and his father, Edward Steitler, the communications center operations. Sgt. William Foman showed them the unoccupied holding cells, chief auditorium, dining hall, etc. Jason's interest and bright inquiries delighted everyone, even while being back there. Sheriff Lombard also presented Jason with the hat the sheriff wore while serving as the Rochester chief of police.

Hospital Runs Stamp Drive

The Recreation and Volunteer Services Department of Monroe Community Hospital will be conducting a top-value stamp drive to purchase portable ovens and cooking equipment. This equipment will be used to develop meaningful leisure time activities for residents and patients of Monroe Community Hospital. The

goal is 100 books of Top Value Stamps. Collection points will be established in the two lobbies of the hospital from Feb. 5 through Feb. 29. Stamps can also be mailed to The Recreation and Volunteer Services Department, Monroe Community Hospital, 435 East Henrietta Road, Rochester, N.Y. 14603.

POIRIER DIES

Brest, France (RNS) — Archbishop Francois Poirier, a Roman Catholic prelate whose expulsion from Haiti in 1960 climaxed long-standing Church-state tension in that country, has died at the age of 71 near this Brittany city.

The France-born prelate, who was appointed archbishop of

Port-au-Prince, Haiti in 1955, was expelled by the government of the late President Francois Duvalier for allegedly having given financial aid to students accused of agitating for the overthrow of the dictatorial regime with the backing of Communists. Archbishop Poirier branded the charges as "completely groundless." The Vatican strongly protested the government action.