

CHILDREN'S STORY HOUR

He's not heavy, he's my brother

By Janaan Manternach
NC News Service

Father Flanagan sat at his desk thinking. "These figures are amazing," he said to himself. He was reviewing his studies of 2,000 homeless, hopeless men. They had passed through his Workingman's Hotel in Omaha, Neb.

"Nine out of 10 of these men grew up in troubled homes," he thought to himself. "I wonder if they would be living on the streets today, if they had grown up in homes full of love."

There was a knock on his door. He opened it and looked down at a small boy carrying a canvas bag full of newspapers.

"Can I stay here?" the boy asked.

"Of course," Father Flanagan responded. "At least for a few days, though this is a hotel for older people."

Within a few weeks there were five newspaper boys staying there. They had no homes. They had been living on the streets.

Father Flanagan felt that the

down-and-out men who came to his hotel had once been like these boys. He made a tough decision.

"I can't run two hotels, one for the men and another for the boys. There isn't enough money or time. I must help these youngsters to live better lives."

So Father Flanagan closed the Workingman's Hotel and found a home for himself and the newsboys. Soon he had 20 boys. He came to love them and believe in them. They grew in love for themselves and for Father Flanagan.

But few people believed in Father Flanagan and his Boys Home. No one would help him. He ran out of money. So he turned to publicity to attract attention and contributions to his boys.

"There's no such thing as a bad boy," he kept saying. Gradually the message got across.

More and more boys came to his home. Sometimes parents brought their boys to Father Flanagan.

Judges sent boys who were in trouble to the Boys Home in Omaha. He now had 200 boys to care for.

Father Flanagan bought a farm

outside the city and named it Boys Town. He believed that youngsters were basically good.

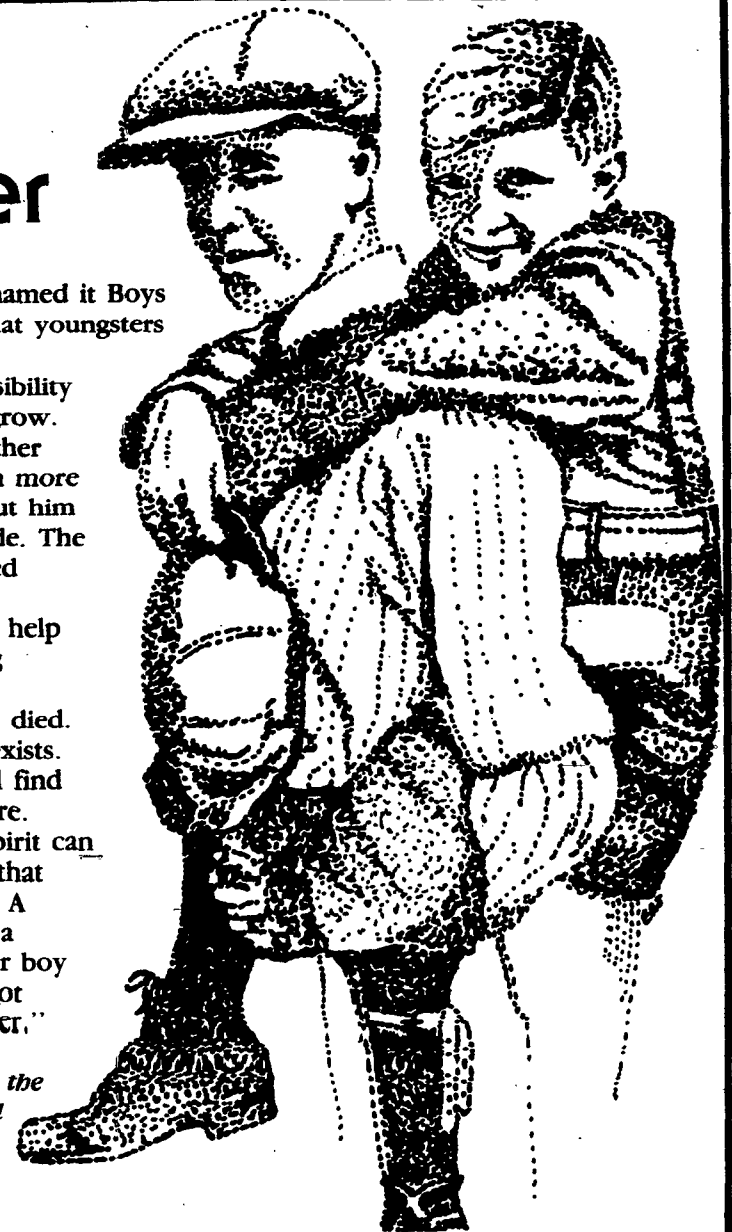
He gave them responsibility and trusted them to grow.

Boys Town and Father Flanagan became even more famous. A movie about him and his boys was made. The president of the United States asked Father Flanagan's advice and help in dealing with young people.

Father Flanagan has died. But Boys Town still exists. Hundreds of boys still find hope and a home there.

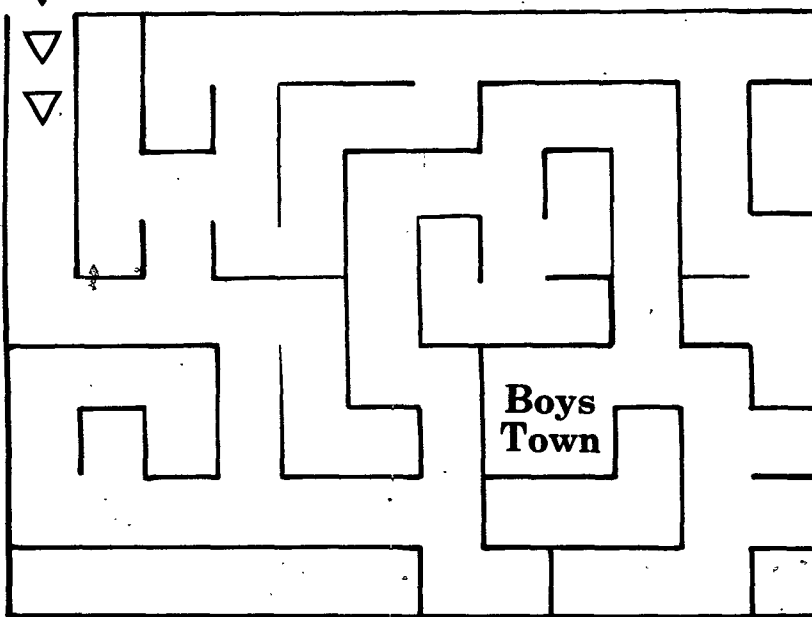
Father Flanagan's spirit can be sensed in a statue that stands at Boys Town. A young lad is carrying a smaller boy. The older boy is saying, "No, he's not heavy. He's my brother."

(Ms. Manternach is the author of catechetical works, scripture stories and original stories for children.)



Road to Boys Town

Start Choose the correct path to Boys Town.



HOW ABOUT YOU?

□ Make a poster about Father Flanagan of Boys Town. Draw your own picture. Underneath it write a sentence about the work of this famous priest.

Children's Reading Corner

"St. John Bosco" is a story in "The Saint Book" by Mary Reed Newland. John was the youngest son of a peasant farmer and his wife. When he was 2, his father died. John's mother was hard put to set anything at all on the table. But Margaret Bosco managed. And John grew up to win the hearts of hundreds of boys he served all over Europe. He also organized a community of women to staff houses for homeless girls. St. John Bosco is someone who was able to appreciate the lives and potential of youth. (Seabury Press, 815 Second Ave., New York City, N.Y. 10017. 1979. Hardback, \$9.95.)



Warmth

Using split logs in a wood-burning stove to protect against the rigors of a bitter winter, Sister Consiline Flynn brings the warmth of the Gospel message to children from the ranches of the high country surrounding St. John the Apostle Mission in Paisley, Oregon.

Sister Flynn helps children with the basics of Christianity in her religion classes in Paisley and adjacent missions that receive Extension Society aid. She is one member of a team of home missionaries who, in partnership with Extension, pursue the vital and urgent task of evangelization here in

the United States. But that team is too small to do the job without help. It needs new members. It needs you.

Join us. Become a member of the Extension team. Although you won't be present in the home missions personally, your impact will be felt in this holy effort. Together we will bring Christ to those living in the home missions.

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