

Children of Haiti

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for the children a much-needed sense of security.

The Missionaries of Charity did not believe Geilenfeld's proposal was in harmony with their spirituality. After spending a year in prayer and discernment, he left the order and returned to Haiti with little more than his ideas and \$1,000 raised by family and friends.

Geilenfeld said he chose Haiti because of a curious kind of "Oliver Twist" innocence he found among the children there, in contrast to an economic picture every bit as bleak as that in Calcutta.

"With the kids (in Haiti), you don't have the drug problems, the prostitution and the gangs you find in some of the other places I've been," he said. "But there's not much chance of getting out of (poverty) . . . You see people on the street selling single matches, buttons, glasses of water, and you know they're trying to support a whole family."

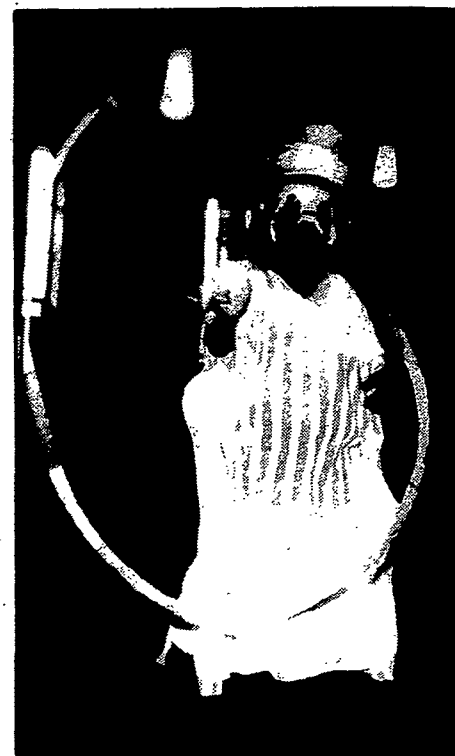
Geilenfeld began with one small house and six boys gathered from the dumps, the streets and the detention center. He supported the house through donations and by renting rooms to volunteers, such as a group of parishioners from St. Joseph's in Penfield who spent a week-long working retreat there in April, 1986.

The day-to-day routine he has established is like that of any large, loving family. Each boy has chores and school, although no boy can attend public school until he has obtained a birth certificate — a costly and complicated process. Until then, the boys are taught at home.

What the routine at St. Joseph's produces,



Lindsay Swan, 5, left, laughs with Teran Tadal, 4, after they were invited up onto the stage to dance.



A dancer twirls a ribbon during an exhibition of native dancing.

however, is nothing short of "a whole new creation."

"(The boys) are the same, and yet so different because they know someone cares about them," he said.


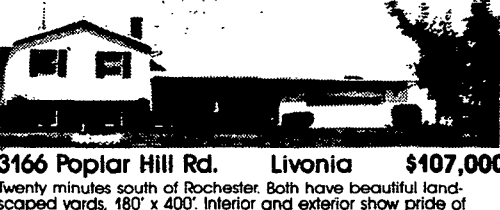
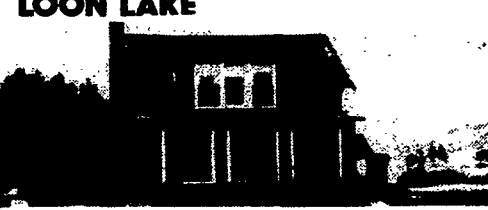
As each boy reaches 17 or 18-years of age, Geilenfeld helps him locate a small apartment or room and a job. After opening a second-home for a dozen more boys last year, he was

able to appoint two of his graduates to oversee it.

If Geilenfeld's progress were measured in inches, Haiti would still have miles to go. Tourism is down. Prices are up. He has observed rising anti-American sentiment among Haitians as the U.S. government continues to send military rather than economic aid, as businessmen exploit the country's low labor costs, and

as hopes raised so high by the departure of former "president-for-life" Jean-Claude Duvalier remain unfulfilled.

"You can get very depressed if you look at the whole situation," Geilenfeld said. "But you can make a difference with one individual. Mother Teresa is very strong on that. She says that even if you help only one person, your effects have been worthwhile."

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