

LIFE BEGINS AT SEVENTY

On a sultry July afternoon in 1953 I was in a troubled mood.

On my desk lay a huge pile of bills which I couldn't pay. The end of the month was approaching when salaries and wages were due. Our bank account had reached the vanishing point. I was really desperate at seventy years of age.

I called my secretary and said, "I want to give you a letter to the editor of one of our weekly magazines". As a boy I earned my way through prep school securing subscriptions for the publishers of this magazine. I wrote to the editor and told him of this and then said, "You have promoted many good causes. You would do a tremendous thing for us if you would publish a story about the Church Farm School." He could promise me nothing, but he set to work. The story was written, many pictures taken, and finally our story was published.

The immediate effect was that people began to take an interest in giving our boys a chance. I was able to pay my bills and meet my payroll. Down in Australia a woman picked up the magazine in a doctor's office and read the story of the School. She wrote me at

once and wanted to come with her four children to live with us. I had all kinds of interesting experiences. Three months after the story was told in the magazine a stranger visited me saying, "A Foundation wants to do something for your School, what do you need?" I told him I needed \$25,000 to complete the payment of \$185,000 on the 300 acre farm that I was buying adjacent to the School. His reply was, "You can easily get that - what else do you want?" I said, "I want the next farm". He asked me the price and I told him \$175,000. To my amazement he responded, "We will give you that farm."

That was the beginning of the most wonderful ten years of my life, my seventies. Other adjacent farms were offered in the course of the next few years and our friends supplied the money to purchase them. Today the Church Farm School owns 1700 acres in the fertile, historic Chester Valley, Paoli, Pennsylvania.

We needed a gymnasium. Six of our Alumni lost their lives in the Second World War. A Memorial Gymnasium caught the imagination of forty of our friends and the gymnasium was built. When the Bishop of the Diocese dedicated the gymnasium, I asked the 400 people present to come back a year later, for the dedication of the

trade shops. At that moment I didn't have a dollar toward the erection of the shops. My wife thought I had lost my mind to invite all those friends to return in a year when I had no prospects, only Faith, that it was God's will. In six weeks time I called on one of the leaders in the Pharmaceutical world. He said he would build the shops and gave us \$200,000 to do so. That meant that beside an academic and agricultural training, our boys would learn to operate wood working and mechanical machinery.

I came from a broken home and from the time I was fifteen years of age I began to realize that Almighty God had a purpose for my life. One person after another helped me to get an education and put opportunity before me, placing me on the next rung of the ladder.

I believe with all my heart that every child born into the world is given a talent. It takes some of us longer than others to find their talent, but I began to realize that my talent was to help people as I had been helped. And so there evolved in my mind a School for boys whose mother was their sole support.

The Rector of my Parish, who took a tremendous interest in me and had sympathy with my dreams of helping boys, urged me to study for the ministry of our Church. As my three years in the Divinity School drew to a close I went to the Bishop and told him I wanted to start a school. His advice was very simple and direct, "It can't be done until you have experience. You must carry on the day to day ministry as the Rector of a Parish Church." So I resolved to spend seven years in Parish work believing that at the end of that time I would be able to start my School and thus it proved to be, almost to the day. May 1, 1917 we took over the first farm on which to start the School. I had no money, just the belief that this was what God wanted me to do.

I bought the first farm on two mortgages. The man who owned the farm took the first mortgage, a friend took the second. My friend, the real estate man, was talking to me over the telephone while one of his clients sat at his desk. She asked, "What are you talking about?", and he answered, "A young clergyman wants to start a school on a farm for poor boys." Her reply was, "I'll give you \$500 to pay the taxes."

I stood in the pulpit of my Church and asked the congregation how many would give me \$25 a month to purchase the equipment and food to make a start. There was a good response. I proceeded on the belief that I had plenty of money. I soon found how mistaken I was and in two years time I was hopelessly in debt.

⇒ I have found that if you live one day at a time and trust tomorrow and the day after to Almighty God, He has a miraculous way of making the path clear and giving you the courage to overcome all obstacles. No one can tell me that miracles no longer happen; "We can't explain miracles," my friends say. Well explain me if you can. All I am trying to do is "pass on" to boys whose mothers must provide for them, the same kind of opportunity that was given to me. In "passing on" I am in someway "giving back" and how important that is.

Each of our 150 boys comes from a broken home and needs a chance in life. The Church Farm School is trying to provide that chance so that each boy may become the kind of young man his mother dreams him to be.

The letters that come to my desk day after day from distraught mothers tell tragic tales of the way so many husbands and wives treat each other. You know the divorce statistics, but you don't know the causes of divorce and you don't know what happens to the children in the families of divorced men and women. We get the direct results day after day.

For instance, here is a father and mother who have brought nine children into the world, three died in infancy. Discord and confusion, neglect and extreme cruelty, was the atmosphere of their home. Finally the mother took her five youngest children and went to her father's home. It was impossible to keep them there so relatives came and took three of them. Two were left for the mother's care. They were put out to board until the mother could rent two rooms. The mother took the next to the youngest child with her and tried to raise him, with no support and no help from any source. I took that boy and found him to be keen, intelligent, and ambitious to get ahead. He entered our Junior School at ten, he was in the Middle School at 12, and in the Upper School at 14. He graduated at 18 with a high school education and anxious to

make good. This young man has gone from one success to another. Today he has a responsible position and his own family. He is making the world a better place to live in because he has had his chance. He tells me that everything he has, he owes to the fact that he entered the Church Farm School and got his chance in life.

Nearly 1000 boys of similar background have gone through the Church Farm School. The vast majority have been amenable to our way of life. With others we have failed miserably. I believe in a full life and I believe in WORK. Some of our boys start the day at 4:30 a.m. in our dairy barns. Breakfast and cottage chores, followed by Chapel, are next. High School College Preparatory curriculum is our classroom standard. Classes are held from 8 a.m. to 12:15. Dinner is next in this busy schedule after which the vocational program takes place from 1 to 4. Athletics from 4:15 to 6 with supper at 6:30. A supervised two hour study period from 7 to 9 preceeds a 9:30 bed time. A hard busy schedule you say. Agreed, but isn't this the kind of life that builds initiative, character, intestinal fortitude that many of our youth today are so sadly lacking.

Among our Alumni are doctors, clergymen, lawyers, architects, businessmen, career service men, college professors, and many other walks of life. I wish there was time and space to tell you about many of them.

Many of our boys were in the Second World War. Some enlisted, others were drafted. They advanced rapidly. A large percentage of them became officers. Everyone wrote me of their experience and without exception said something like this, "We have advanced more rapidly than the average draftee and we owe it to our training at the Church Farm School where we learned to work and obey".

Between the First and Second World Wars, from 1917 to '42, we built our School - eight cottages, a chapel, administration building, infirmary, houses for faculty, and for the third and last time we pulled ourselves out of debt. For the next ten years, between the Second World War and the Korean episode, we went along robbing Peter to pay Paul. A terrific struggle.

I had come to my 70th birthday. My friends and my family told me to retire. I thought long and hard and decided that with the new vision God had given me for saving boys now was the time to

really do things. These last ten years have been the most wonderful years of my life. The impossible has happened time after time. I have had a wonderful time.

What a great thing it is to see your dreams come true, your vision become reality, and your destiny being worked out day by day. Through all these years, my seventies, I realized more keenly than ever before that my job was to attempt great things for God and expect great things from Him.

Now we want to increase the School to 200 boys. That seems to be another miracle but I remind myself that if God gives you a vision He also gives you the ability to make the vision become reality.

Now that I have completed my seventies and have seen the impossible happen time after time, excitedly I am looking forward to my eighties. There is still so much to be done and with my past experience before me, I have every confidence that my eightieth span of life will afford greater opportunity than ever before, to give more opportunity to more boys.

"I have seen lovely flowers grow in desert places
I have seen good deeds done by men with ugly faces
The gold cup won by the worst horse in the races
So I trust too."