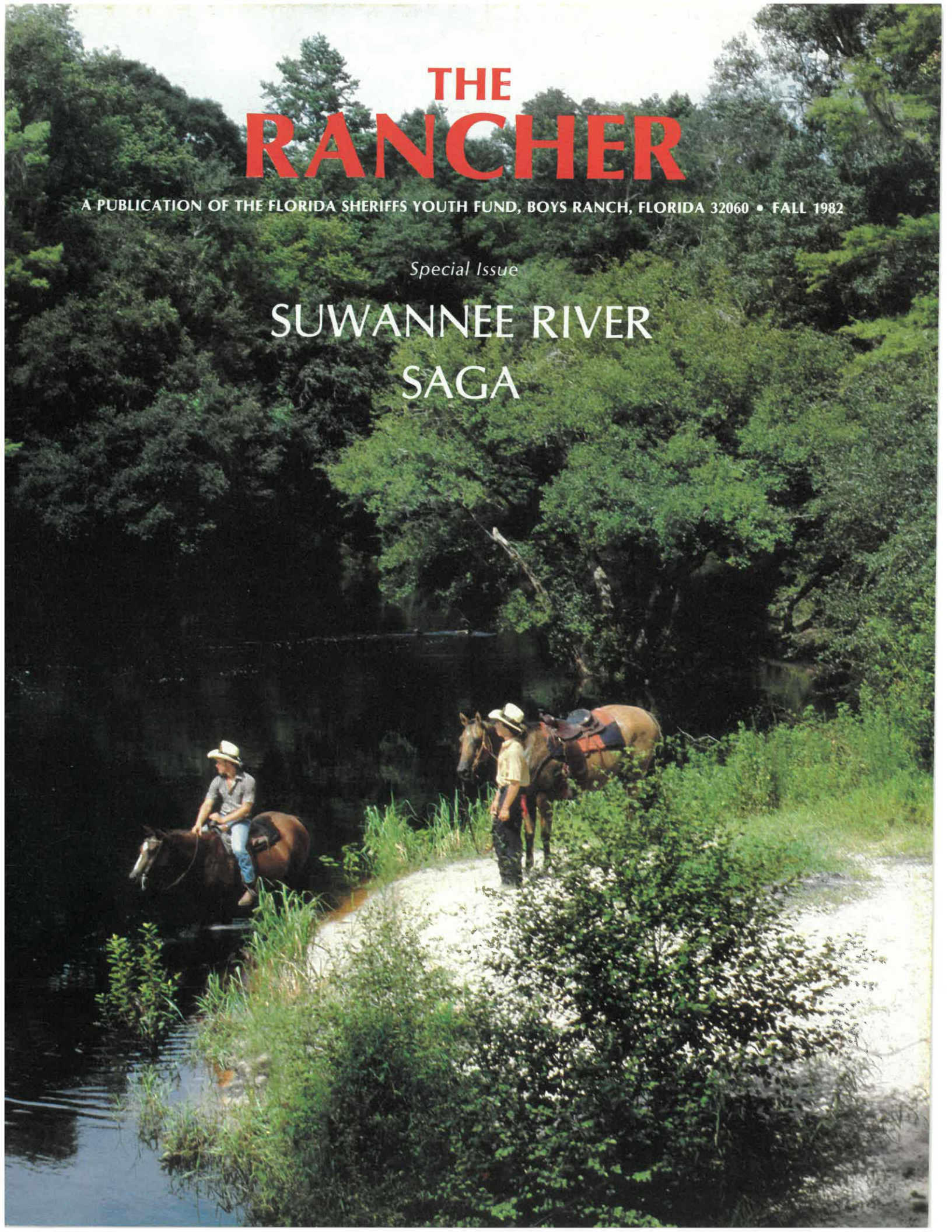


THE RANCHER

A PUBLICATION OF THE FLORIDA SHERIFFS YOUTH FUND, BOYS RANCH, FLORIDA 32060 • FALL 1982

Special Issue

SUWANNEE RIVER SAGA



We Celebrate!

**Public is invited to
25th Anniversary
Party at the Florida
Sheriffs Boys Ranch
October 1, 2, and 3,
1982**

The Florida Sheriffs Boys Ranch will be 25 years old on October 2, 1982, and we are going to celebrate with a three-day anniversary party that will be open to the public.

One of the big drawing cards will be a horse show in the Boys Ranch arena. It will begin on Friday, October 1, and continue through October 2, and 3. Primitive camping facilities will be available for competitors and spectators.

A Suwannee River barbecue will be served at noon on October 2, and there will be an outdoor worship service in the arena on Sunday morning, October 3. One of the highlights of the weekend will be dedication of a new cottage for boys which has just been completed and which will be named in honor of R. "Ed" Blackburn, Jr., one of the founders and first Executive Director of the Boys Ranch.

Former Ranchers and staff members and their families will return to the Ranch during the weekend for a reunion of the Florida Sheriffs Boys Ranch Alumni Association.

To focus attention on the anniversary celebration, this issue of THE RANCHER is featuring Suwannee River Saga, an eye-witness account of the 25-year Boys Ranch success story.



Duane Dowell and Dale Beeche admire one of our 25th Anniversary billboard posters. These posters are being displayed state-wide on over 200 billboards which have been provided rent-free by outdoor advertising firms.

A photograph of two young boys sitting on a large log in a river. The boy on the left is wearing a dark sweater and jeans, looking towards the right. The boy on the right is wearing a yellow t-shirt and blue jeans, gesturing with his hands as if talking. The river is surrounded by dense green trees under a clear blue sky.

SUWANNEE RIVER SAGA

A History of the
Florida Sheriffs
Boys Ranch

By Carl Stauffer

An air of ethereal unreality still hangs over the unspoiled, unchanging Suwannee River, intensifying the author's "old incredulous feeling."

That Old Incredulous Feeling



They say seeing is believing, but that ain't necessarily so. I have seen the Florida Sheriffs Boys Ranch more than a thousand times, and I still have difficulty believing it actually exists.

I have visited the Boys Ranch in every season of the year. I know its sights and sounds by day and by night. I have taken my morning jog through the dawn's rising mist; and I have watched late night campfires flickering at the campground near the horse show arena. I know all the moods of this extra special piece of real estate, and yet there is one skeptical corner of my mind that keeps telling me the Boys Ranch can't be real — that it must be just a pleasant dream, or some kind of tricky illusion.

The first time I came here the Boys Ranch didn't put any strain on my credulity. It didn't exist. I drove down a sandy, rutted trail through weed-choked fields and rugged woodlands to the Suwannee River. A little later there were paved roads to travel on and the woods had been thinned out. Still later there were buildings, and boys, and green, picture book pastures where horses and cows were grazing.

Finally there emerged, as though by magic, a self contained community that was pleasing to the eye and gratifying to the deepest stirrings of human compassion. The transformation was spectacular. I witnessed something that was great and good — but frankly, it has always seemed just too good to be true.

About the Author

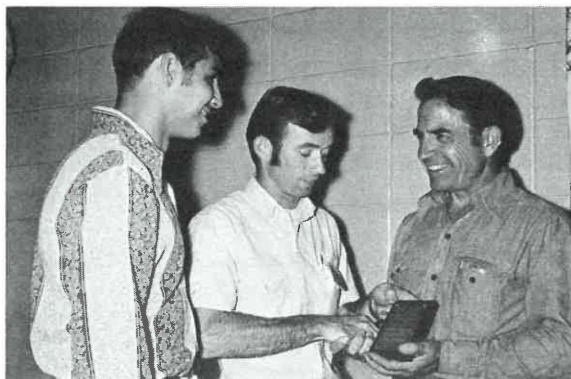
Carl Stauffer, the author of Suwannee River Saga, headed the staff of the Florida Sheriffs Association from 1957 to 1978, first as Field Secretary and later as Executive Director. Since 1978 he has been working part-time as editor of THE SHERIFF'S STAR, official publication of the Association, and THE RANCHER. This picture shows him (right) receiving the first annual "Our Friend" award from the Florida Sheriffs Boys Ranch Alumni Association in 1971. The award was presented by Bobby Malone (left) and Wally Edwards.

I know almost all there is to know about the Boys Ranch. I am programmed to recite a litany of its vital statistics: Founded in 1957. . . supported entirely by voluntary contributions. . . has cared for almost 800 needy and worthy boys. . . covers approximately 3,300 acres. . . has spun off two satellites, the Girls Villa and Youth Ranch. . . and on and on. . .

I have been connected with the Boys Ranch in various capacities ever since it was founded, and, because I am currently editing THE RANCHER, I am sometimes referred to as "the last survivor" — the only person who was here at the beginning and is still actively involved.

When Boys Ranch officials were looking for someone to write a short history of the project as part of their 25th anniversary celebration, I was the logical choice. To them, my credentials looked well nigh impeccable — especially since I carefully avoided telling them about that old incredulous feeling I get every time I visit this place.

Oh well, no problem. I will simply tell the Boys Ranch story the way I saw it happen, and disguise the fact that I am trapped somewhere between wonder and disbelief. My nagging malaise is not contagious, but I feel obliged to warn readers that anyone who chooses to visit the Boys Ranch is running a risk of developing my symptoms. They may discover that seeing is not always believing.



In The Beginning

When a group of Sheriffs went to the Suwannee River in search of a site for a proposed boys ranch in 1957, I tagged along. I was a former newspaper editor and reporter who had just been hired as the Florida Sheriffs Association's Field Secretary.

One of my duties was to observe Sheriffs in their natural habitat, and publish a tabloid newspaper, called THE SHERIFF'S STAR, which explained their behavior to the masses. Later the tabloid evolved into an award-winning magazine, and this "Sheriff watcher's" title was elevated to Executive Director.

I remember riding down a rutted trail to the river with six Sheriffs, one former Sheriff, a photographer and three local men. We were in Suwannee County, about 11 miles north of Live Oak, the county seat.

This was really out in the boondocks. Signs of human habitation were sparse. When we reached the wild and beautiful Suwannee River, it just kept rollin' along, sparkling in the sun and throwing off reflected colors.

I was impressed. So were the Sheriffs (I found out later), but they were playing their cards close to their vests and not saying much.

Hugh Lewis, the Sheriff of Suwannee County, was doing the best he could in his quiet, affable way to sell his fellow Sheriffs on accepting this site. Helping him with the low-key sales pitch were Tommy Musgrove, a prosperous Suwannee County farmer; and J. L. McMullen, a Suwannee County businessman with proven political skills.

Musgrove had formerly owned the riverfront property where we were standing. It was a 20 acre parcel he had given to the Live Oak Elks Club years earlier as a youth camp site. The Elks had not done anything with the camp project, and now both the Elks and Musgrove were saying they were willing to give the land to the Sheriffs. Musgrove, whose farm was nearby, was also offering to give the Sheriffs 120 additional acres adjoining the riverfront land.

The Sheriffs walked and looked and talked. They were merely on an inspection tour this day and had no authority to make a deal. The photographer took several random shots then lined up the Sheriffs and Suwannee County people on the edge of the river for a final picture. Just before the camera shutter clicked, Florida Sheriffs Bureau Director Don McLeod climbed out over the water on a willow tree limb.

The symbolism escaped me then, but now I know we were all going out on a limb symbolically. This was Camelot on the Suwannee, the beginning of something big, the start of an adventure weighted down with idealism, and none of us realized where this brief riverfront tableau would lead.

Sheriffs were impressed when they visited the proposed Boys Ranch site on the Suwannee River in 1957. In this group are (from left) Kelly Weaver and J. L. McMullen, from Live Oak; Sheriffs Jim Turner, Hugh Lewis, Bill Joyce and Willis McCall; Tommy Musgrove, original owner of the proposed site; Sheriffs Rodney Thursby and Ed Blackburn, Jr., and Florida Sheriffs Bureau Director Don McLeod.





SUWANNEE RIVER SAGA *continued*

When I looked at that riverfront picture recently I realized how much the ranks of these reckless idealists have thinned. Hugh Lewis and Don McLeod are dead. Sheriffs Jim Turner, Bill Joyce, Willis McCall, Rodney Thursby and Ed Blackburn, Jr., have all retired and are no longer actively involved in the Boys Ranch project. J. L. McMullen and Tommy Musgrove are also onlookers now, after giving generously of their time and talents to the development of the Ranch.

I was an onlooker then. Now they are the onlookers and I, as the editor of THE RANCHER, am acting out a minor role in the Boys Ranch drama.

I was watching from the wings when the curtain went up on act one, scene one, that far off day in 1957 on the banks of the Suwannee River. However, act one had been preceded by some prologue scenes that I did not witness.

One of these occurred in June, 1955, when Sheriffs Ed Blackburn, Jr., and Don McLeod went to Amarillo, Texas, to pick up two prisoners who had held up a supermarket in Ocala.

While they were in Amarillo, Blackburn and McLeod met Curtis Travis, a deputy sheriff who spent a day showing them the local sights. Travis casually mentioned a boys ranch, established by former wrestler Cal Farley, as an interesting place to visit in the Amarillo area. The two Florida Sheriffs didn't ask

Travis to arrange a tour, but the passing mention of a boys ranch stuck in their minds.

Next day Blackburn and McLeod started driving back to Florida with two teenage armed robbery suspects in the back seat. One prisoner was a 16-year-old girl who was pregnant. The other was an 18-year-old youth with a tube in his side draining a bullet wound he had received in an escape attempt. His leg was in a cast because he had also broken his ankle.

Perhaps the plight of the two young fugitives triggered a train of thought for the two Sheriffs. In any event, as they were riding along they began wondering out loud about the possibility of establishing a boys ranch in Florida.

"If an ex-wrestler could start on a shoestring and build a successful home for unwanted and neglected boys," said Blackburn, "surely the Florida Sheriffs Association could do the same thing." McLeod agreed.

After returning to Florida, McLeod and Blackburn continued to discuss a boys ranch from time to time. They also went to Palatka to look at Rodeheaver Boys Ranch, but their ideas continued to simmer on the back burner.

In December, 1955, when Blackburn finally brought up the subject of a boys ranch at a Florida Sheriffs Association Board of Directors meeting, no action was taken. The Board liked the idea, but there were no funds available to finance it.

During 1956 the financial situation remained unchanged. Sheriffs Association income was limited to the modest dues paid by Sheriffs, and a dribble of profit from advertising in a "yearbook" the Association had been publishing for several decades.

Early in 1957 the Sheriffs Association abolished the sale of advertising as a source of revenue, and launched a new fund raising project which allowed civilians to



Curtis Travis (center), the Texas deputy sheriff whose chance remarks in 1955 led to the founding of the Boys Ranch in 1957, was a special guest when the Boys Ranch celebrated its 20th anniversary. Pictured with him are former Sheriff Ed Blackburn Jr., (left) and Wrestling Promoter Eddie Graham, a Florida Sheriffs Youth Fund board member.

become dues paying honorary members of the Association.

Within a few months thousands of Florida citizens had paid \$10 apiece to join the Sheriffs Association, and Treasurer John P. Hall, the Sheriff of Clay County, began to use black ink exclusively in his ledger books.

By the time the Association assembled in Sarasota June 20 and 21, 1957, for its annual conference, there were surplus profits totaling \$5,000 and Sheriffs were looking for some worthwhile projects to finance.

Blackburn, McLeod and others quickly revived the dormant boys ranch idea, and a projects committee was appointed to study the feasibility.

Birth of Boys Ranch Was Fast-Paced Event

To fully appreciate what happened next, it is necessary to recognize that Sheriffs are men of action. They are accustomed to making quick decisions, and therefore when they were confronted with the boys ranch proposal they didn't waste any time making up their minds. A home for needy and worthy boys seemed like an excellent idea, so they simply went ahead and founded one in a burst of impulsive enthusiasm.

They were undaunted by the fact that they had only \$5,000 with which to start their project. They were unconcerned about their total lack of experience in the business of running a child care facility.

Less bold individuals would have hired professional planners, consulted financial experts, and conducted extensive surveys. But, the Boys Ranch founders were not built that way. A prudent, carefully weighed approach was not their style.

Instead, their fast-moving sequel of events went like this:

June 20, 21 — Boys Ranch idea discussed briefly at Sarasota conference.

June 29 — Projects Committee recommends that \$5,000 be placed in a special Boys Ranch Trust Fund. (Discussion time prior to making recommendation: less than one hour.)

July 23 — Sheriffs Association Board of Directors approves the Project Committee's recommendation and begins search for site. (Board meeting lasted about one hour.)

September — Search narrows to the Suwannee River location offered by Musgrove and the Elks.

October 2 — Sheriffs Association meets in St. Petersburg and passes a trust agreement putting the project in the hands of a board of trustees. Suwannee River site approved. Agreement reached to purchase 582 acres in addition to the 140 donated acres. (This was another short meeting.)

October 18 — Boys Ranch Board of trustees held first meeting in Live Oak. Sheriff John Spottswood elected chairman. Blackburn appointed non-paid executive director to raise funds and supervise preliminary work on the Ranch site; \$13,000 borrowed from each of two Live Oak banks in order to purchase 582 acres. Down payments made on property. Mortgages signed. Trustees gained possession of 722 scenic, unspoiled acres to build a dream on. (All this was accomplished in less than three hours.)

Looking back on this series of events 25 years later, it seems incredible that the Boys Ranch progressed from a nebulous idea to a full-blown reality in just four months. However, that's the way it happened, and the pace did not slacken.

Blackburn was partly responsible for keeping up the momentum. Although there were many responsibilities demanding his attention at the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Department, he somehow managed to devote a considerable amount of time to his duties as Executive Director of the Boys Ranch. He literally "stumped the



The Florida Sheriffs Boys Ranch Board of Trustees held its first meeting in the Gold Leaf Restaurant, Live Oak, on October 18, 1957. Present were (from left): Florida Sheriffs Association Attorney John A. Madigan, Jr.; Sheriff Hugh Lewis; Florida Sheriffs Bureau Director Don McLeod; and Sheriffs John P. Hall, John Spottswood, Maurice Linton, Odell Carlton, Hagan Parrish, Emmett Shelby and Sid Saunders.

state" making speeches, talking to the news media, buttonholing prospective donors, and otherwise spreading the word about the Sheriffs Association's new project.

Sheriffs backed him up by raising cash donations and soliciting gifts of livestock and farm supplies. Treasurer John P. Hall was soon able to report a steady flow of cash contributions.

Meanwhile, Boys Ranch roads were being built. Specialists from the University of Florida and government agencies were making soil tests in preparation for a full-scale agricultural program. Eighty acres south of the riverfront were being cleared of scrub trees and undergrowth. Pasture fences were being built, and Gainesville architect Myrl Hanes was working on a master plan to determine the location of the first buildings.

On the fund raising front, ideas were germinating at



SUWANNEE RIVER SAGA

continued

an accelerating rate. The first publicity poster, a photograph of a Sheriff leading a young boy through the Boys Ranch entrance, was approved by the Board of Trustees. Acting on suggestions from Blackburn, the Board also approved awarding "Founders' Club" certificates to donors who gave \$100 or more in cash or materials; and Florida Sheriffs Association Lifetime Honorary Memberships to those who contributed \$1,000 or more.

A 1958 ruling by the U. S. Department of Internal Revenue that Boys Ranch donations were deductible for income tax purposes also stimulated the flow of gifts. So did the creation of a Memorial Fund which permitted donors to give gifts in memory of deceased friends and relatives.

When April, 1958, rolled around, Blackburn announced: "The pastures are green. Bring on your livestock." Farmers responded with donations of cattle and hogs. Two miniature Shetland ponies pulling a miniature chuck wagon were also delivered to the Ranch by Col. Tom Parker, manager of singer Elvis Presley. There were no boys available to ride the Shetlands at this point. Nevertheless, they generated valuable publicity for the Ranch by appearing in numerous parades around the state.



Construction of Boys Ranch roads began in 1957.



Miniature Shetland ponies pulling a miniature chuck wagon were donated to the Boys Ranch by singer Elvis Presley and his manager Col. Tom Parker; and we received a "bonus" when one of the Shetlands gave birth to a colt. Sheriff Hugh Lewis (left) accepted the gift from Col. Parker (right). The driver is "Pop" Barrett, builder of the chuck wagon.

The first publicity poster depicted a Sheriff (George Watts) leading a boy (Robert Stauffer, son of the Sheriffs Association's Field Secretary) into the Boys Ranch.

A Place "Where Unwanted Boys Will Be Wanted"

By the middle of 1958 there were roads, pastures and a scattering of livestock to give evidence that the Boys Ranch was getting "on the map." There were no boys or buildings yet, but this deficiency was soon to be remedied.

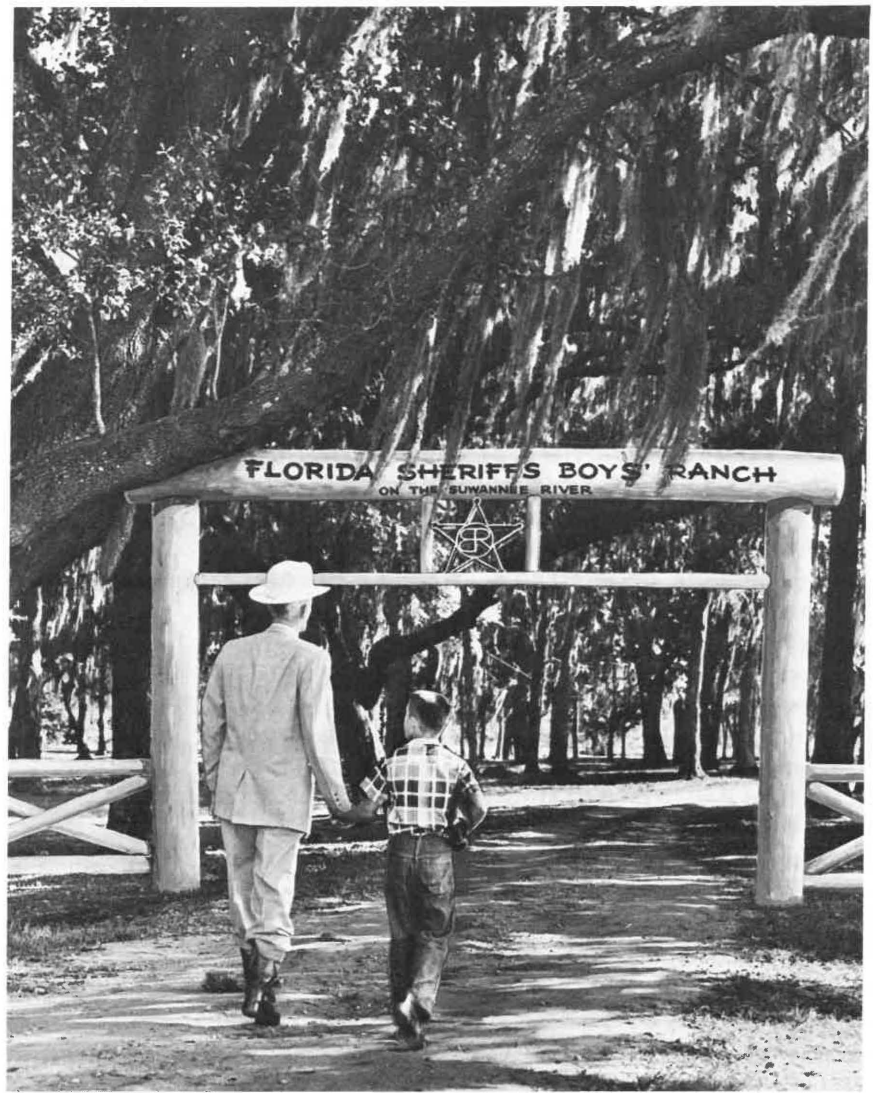
Armed with a long-handled shovel painted bright gold, an aggregation of Sheriffs — most of them Ranch Trustees — gathered at the Ranch site on August 1, 1958, to break ground for the first building.

It was to be a residence cottage for 20 boys under the care of a married couple employed as cottage parents, and the estimated cost was \$60,000.

The ceremony was simple, but laden with historical significance. It opened with an invocation in which the Ranch was described as an effort "beyond the call of duty to make a better world." Cub Scouts raised the American flag on a new pole erected by the Live Oak Elks Club, while a small audience of Sheriffs and interested citizens sang the National Anthem.

Looking out over land freshly scarred by clearing operations, Sheriff John Spottswood, Chairman of the Ranch trustees, delivered a short address. "This site," he said, "is destined to become a home for the homeless where the unwanted boy will be wanted, where the needy child will be needed, and where the friendless will find a friend.

"Here, with God's blessing and the continued help of the people of this community and state, will come the unloved youngsters who at worst face a life of crime, and at best a future of futility."



Spottswood said the Ranch would not be a detention home or a reform school for delinquents, but rather a haven where unfortunate youngsters would find "guidance, a sense of belonging, and a home of their own to help them avoid the pitfalls of delinquency."

Sheriff Blackburn was given the honor of turning the first spadeful of earth. Then the shovel was passed on to Spottswood and other members of the Board of Trustees.

Next day, August 2, 1958, Vincent M. Jones, a farm-bred vocational agriculture instructor from Live Oak, went to work as the first Resident Manager of the Boys Ranch. The Trustees had hired him to develop a scientific farming program and plan a detailed child care scenario with vocational overtones. However, supervising construction of the first building was to be his number one priority.

Jones wasted no time getting started, and when the Trustees returned on October 3, 1958, to celebrate the first anniversary of the Boys Ranch, the construction project was about 40 percent completed.



SUWANNEE RIVER SAGA

continued

The anniversary celebration featured a ceremony dedicating the first building in memory of Pinellas County Sheriff Sid Saunders, who had been a founder of the Ranch and served briefly as President of the Florida Sheriffs Association before his sudden death in February, 1958. Governor LeRoy Collins and Juvenile Court Judge Marion W. Gooding were the principal speakers.

Judge Gooding declared that juvenile misbehavior was the gravest problem facing our country, and he described the Boys Ranch as "a tremendous stride in the direction of the proper handling of a portion of the problem."

Governor Collins told the dedication audience that most people think of sheriffs as "rough and tough men," but the Boys Ranch project showed that they were actually (in the words of songwriter Stephen Collins Foster) "dear hearts and gentle people."

"They have conceived here," said Collins, "a project that will help needy boys to become fine men."

Widely acclaimed, the Boys Ranch was rapidly approaching the most important day in its history — the day when the first boys would arrive and Sheriffs could announce: "We are open for business."

But, in the closing weeks of 1958 there were many preliminary details that still needed attention. An accountant was employed to perform an independent audit of the financial records and set up an efficient bookkeeping system. An admissions committee began screening applications in order to select the first boys to



Ground was broken for the first Boys Ranch building on August 1, 1958, with Sheriff Ed Blackburn, Jr., accepting the honor of turning the first shovelful. Trustees awaiting their turns are (from left) Sheriff Hugh Lewis, W. F. Edwards, Sheriff Leslie Bessenger, Sheriff John Spottswood, and J. L. McMullen.

be admitted. Construction workers were being pushed to complete the first residence cottage.

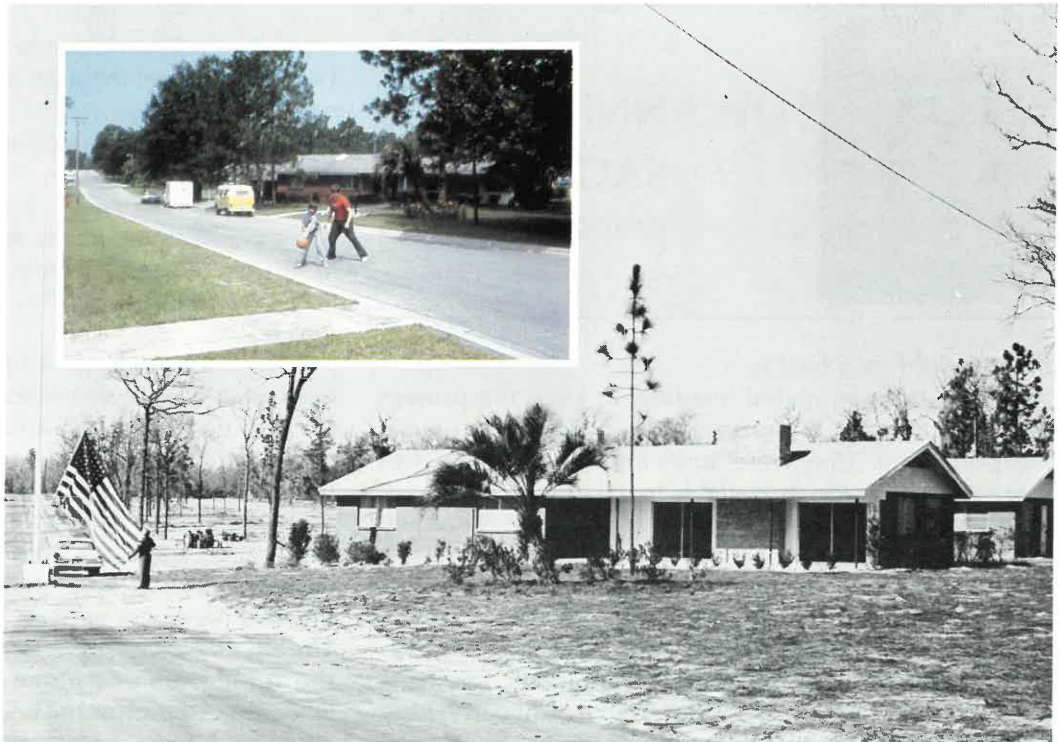
In January, 1959, the first cottage parents were hired and moved into a small apartment in one wing of Saunders Cottage. The remainder of the large H-shaped building was being readied as living quarters for 20 boys.

The great experiment — the first venture of its kind orchestrated by law enforcement officers — was about to begin, and Sheriffs were in a buoyant mood as they gathered in Orlando, January 14, 15, and 16, 1959, for the Annual Mid-Winter Conference of the Florida Sheriffs Association.

Past-President John Spottswood presented a progress report in which he listed many accomplishments of the Sheriffs Association. "In these things we take great pride," he said "but closest to our hearts . . . is the Florida Sheriffs Boys Ranch. To me this project exemplifies the



Dedication rites for Saunders Cottage, the first building constructed at the Boys Ranch, were held on October 1, 1958.



The landscape was bleak and unattractive when Saunders cottage was completed early in 1959. What a contrast to the color picture of the same cottage taken in 1982.

spirit in which our Association is facing up to the responsibilities of modern law enforcement.

“On the rolling acres of the Ranch we intend to provide a home where worthy and needy boys can learn to better serve their state and nation as good citizens. We feel that in this and other ways it is our duty to do everything possible to curb the steadily rising teen-age crime rate.”

During conference business sessions Spottswood was elected Chairman of the Association’s Board of Directors, while Blackburn was elected to succeed Spottswood as Chairman of the Boys Ranch Board of Trustees. Blackburn was also requested to continue his duties as the non-paid Executive Director of the Boys Ranch and he agreed to do so.

The Trustees elected Pinellas County Sheriff Don Genung as their Secretary and J. L. McMullen as their Treasurer. They also voted to purchase for \$50 an acre, a 40-acre tract described as “the hole in the doughnut” because it was surrounded by Boys Ranch property. This purchase gave the Ranch an unbroken expanse of 762

acres and set the stage for a banner year of steady progress.

In February, 1959, the first boys arrived. In March, the Trustees published a financial statement showing that cash and non-cash donations were averaging over \$10,000 per month — enough to pay operating costs and continue the construction of new facilities.

Additional boys were admitted during the spring and summer, and the end of August the enrollment totaled 24. Ranch Manager Jones and his small staff had their hands full trying to develop a well rounded program that balanced work and play, a good education and religious training. Fortunately they were getting some help from the nearby community of Live Oak where the boys attended public school and the churches of their choice.

Four new buildings were completed during 1959. These included a second residence cottage for boys, a Ranch Manager’s residence, a Farm Superintendent’s residence, and a metal warehouse that functioned as a rudimentary vocational training center.

Days of Doubt and Despair

When members of the Board of Trustees met on December 29, 1959, to adopt an ambitious budget for 1960, optimism prevailed. They provided \$72,968 for operating funds, estimating that this amount would allow the enrollment to be increased to 32 boys. They also appropriated \$20,900 for farm and soil improvement; \$30,000 for swimming pool, baseball diamond and tennis courts; and \$40,000 to build residence cottage number three.

There were no serious financial headaches in those

days. Sheriffs had discovered that raising funds for a Boys Ranch and building facilities for a Boys Ranch were relatively easy. However, they were soon to find out that running a Boys Ranch was something else — an experience that could try men’s souls.

Management problems seemed to multiply during 1960 and 1961. The Ranch had four different managers during that period, all of them well endowed with energy, compassion and dedication, and all equally inexperienced in the difficult business of running a resi-



SUWANNEE RIVER SAGA *continued*

dential child care facility.

The Trustees struggled manfully to keep the project moving forward on an even keel, but they too were inexperienced. They were adrift in uncharted seas and there were no manuals available to tell them how to raise boys in a group setting.

Ironically, the four most active members of the board had no experience in raising boys. Three of them had each raised a daughter, and the fourth was childless. However, it is doubtful that personal experience as fathers of sons would have helped very much. The Trustees were discovering a vast difference between raising children in a normal home, and raising boys from diverse backgrounds who had suffered abuse, neglect, poverty and lack of parental guidance.

At times Sheriffs actually discussed the possibility of getting rid of the Ranch. Some times, while traveling home from one of the Trustees' meetings, they would speculate about asking the State of Florida or some private agency to take over. To contemplate defeat seemed to ease their frustration, but they never quite became desperate enough to take positive steps toward abandoning the project.

Instead, they sought the advice of experienced

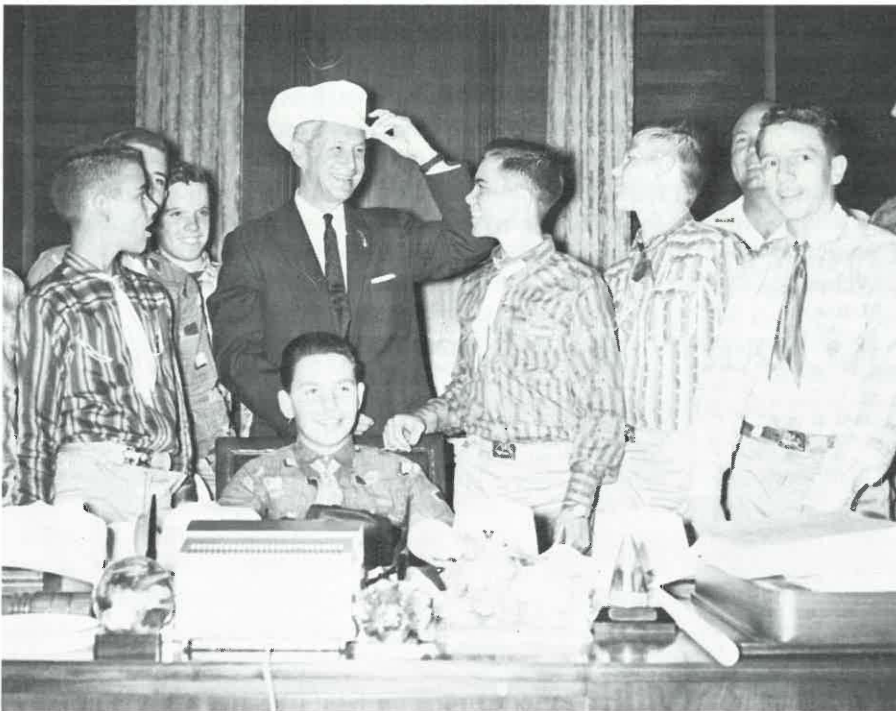
experts and they tried to profit from their own mistakes. They persevered through many days of doubt and despair, and the Boys Ranch survived.

An important turning point came in December, 1961, when Harry K. Weaver, 32, a federal court probation officer from Tallahassee, was hired to run the Ranch. He was a graduate of Florida State University and had been in charge of the industrial arts program at the Florida School for Boys, at Marianna, before becoming a probation officer.

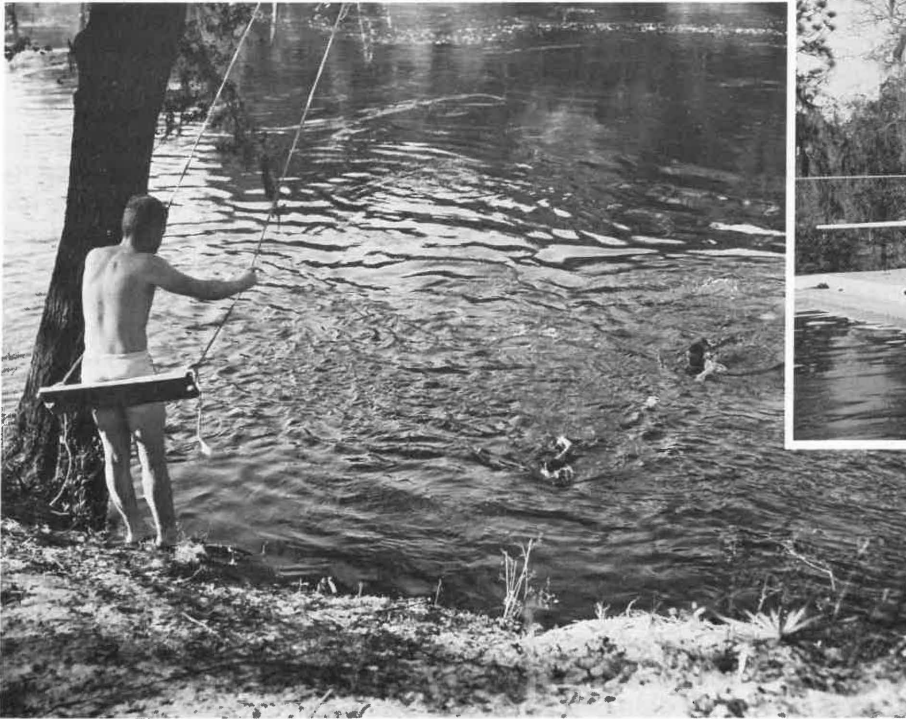
Weaver's title was Administrator, but he actually became a jack-of-all-trades as he worked night and day to "pick up the pieces" and get the Boys Ranch running smoothly again. He had come to the Ranch looking for new challenges, and he found them exploding all around him like land mines — in the laundry, in the kitchen, on the farm, and in the residence cottages.

The Ranch was understaffed. Morale was low. Some of the staff members had not had a day off for six months. The situation was just short of chaos and consequently the Administrator's office chair began to gather dust while the Administrator bounced from crisis to crisis. He alternated between washing clothes in the laundry, cooking meals in the kitchen, running the farm, and playing foster father in residence cottages thrown in disorder by the energy and mischief of 44 boys.

For a while Weaver functioned as "relief man" for anyone who needed a day off, and he managed to hold back a staff mutiny with one hand while reaching out with the other in search of additional qualified personnel. Eventually the staff was brought up to the desired level and there were whole days without a major crisis. By the end of 1962 the Ranch had settled into a pattern of stable progress that is still continuing today.



Governor LeRoy Collins was inducted as "honorary Rancher" when youngsters from the Boys Ranch visited Florida's Capitol in 1960.



Swimming in the Suwannee River was great fun, but dangerous, and Boys Ranch Trustees give high priority to building a pool which was completed in 1961. Photo was taken in 1965.

The Salubrious Sixties 1961-1969

Don't bother to look it up. Salubrious simply means "conducive to well-being; wholesome; healthful." A better, but less alliterative, word could be found to describe this "golden age" of Boys Ranch progress. However, histories tend to become dry recitations of facts and an occasional arcane word accomplishes two things: (1) It spices up the rhetoric; and (2) it gives a scholarly sheen to the historian's image.

Sheen. . . spleen. . . vanity and all that rot aside, the sixties were a time when it was fun to just sit back and watch the Boys Ranch grow.

In 1961 we built the third residence cottage and dedicated cottage number two in memory of Marion County Sheriff F. L. McGehee. For our boys the most exciting event was completion of a \$30,000 olympic-size swimming pool. They had been swimming in the Suwannee, but tricky currents, occasional flooding and shifting sand bars made that a risky business.

This was the year we filmed our first color-sound movie of the Ranch. We did it experimentally, hoping it would be helpful in fund raising efforts. It worked, and we have since updated it numerous times. Rocky III is currently being hailed as a motion picture phenomenon. We invented the sequels genre more than 20 years ago, and we are now showing Boys Ranch VI,

which we call "The Road Ahead."

Some Alabama Sheriffs dropped in for a visit in 1961 and apparently liked what they saw. Next time we heard from them they were starting the Alabama Sheriffs Boys Ranch. Georgia Sheriffs were our first imitators. Alabama was number two.

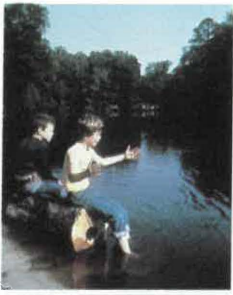
We heard from Elvis Presley and his manager, Col. Tom Parker, again. This time they were offering us a rustic, backwoods style house that had been used in the filming of an Elvis movie in central Florida. We accepted with alacrity, and Levy County Sheriff Jim Turner arranged to have the building moved to the Boys Ranch free of charge.

1962 was a year of "firsts." We got our first taste of nation-wide recognition when the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge awarded the Boys Ranch a George Washington Medal for typifying "the American Way of Life."

Rancher Lloyd deGerald completed training at Tallahassee Barber College and became the first boy to go out into the world on his own.

Our first large bequest (\$28,441) was received from the estate of onetime Polish immigrant Agnes A. Torrey, who died childless in Monticello.

We purchased our first big bus in 1962, and the way we



SUWANNEE RIVER SAGA *continued*

paid for it demonstrated once again that Sheriffs are impulsive men of action.

On two different occasions Boys Ranch Administrator Harry Weaver had told the Trustees that a bus was urgently needed for educational and recreational trips, but each time he had gotten the same answer: "Sorry, no funds available."

After the second turndown, Sheriffs Ed Blackburn and Rodney Thursby came to the rescue by pledging to raise the necessary \$6,000.

Thursby decided to carry out his part of the deal by selling Boys Ranch bumper strips in Volusia County. He launched the campaign with a 15-minute trial run in which he sold 18. Then volunteers fanned out county-wide and speedily reached their goal of \$3,000.

Across the state, in Hillsborough County, Blackburn raised his half of the purchase price without delay by sponsoring a benefit softball game and jalopy race.

Soon Weaver was getting assurances from Blackburn and Thursby that he could go ahead and order the bus.

Another 1962 acquisition was a residence cottage donated by Col. Robert Pentland, Jr., Miami banker,

sportsman and financier who developed a strong affinity for the Ranch, and served it in many ways for many days. We dedicated the new cottage in memory of his mother on November 4, 1962.

This was the second substantial addition to Boys Ranch facilities in 1962. The first was a dairy science building which was dedicated on February 24, in memory of Max Weintraub, a Roumanian farm boy who came to America at the age of 16 to seek his fortune.

Mr. Weintraub believed America was the land of opportunity, and proved it by climbing the ladder of success in true Horatio Alger fashion. After he died in Miami Beach, in 1962, a substantial bequest from his estate provided the funds we needed to start a dairy science project.

Our tide of good fortune was running strong and a unique offer from members of the Jacksonville Dental Society helped it along. They told us if we would take our boys to Jacksonville periodically, they would give them free dental care.

We snapped up their offer in a hurry, and had no difficulty working out the logistics of it, now that we were the owners of a new 66-passenger bus. Nineteen years later we are still scheduling dental care trips to Jacksonville, and the value of this gift now totals at least six big digits. We'll never know the true value because we never receive any bills.

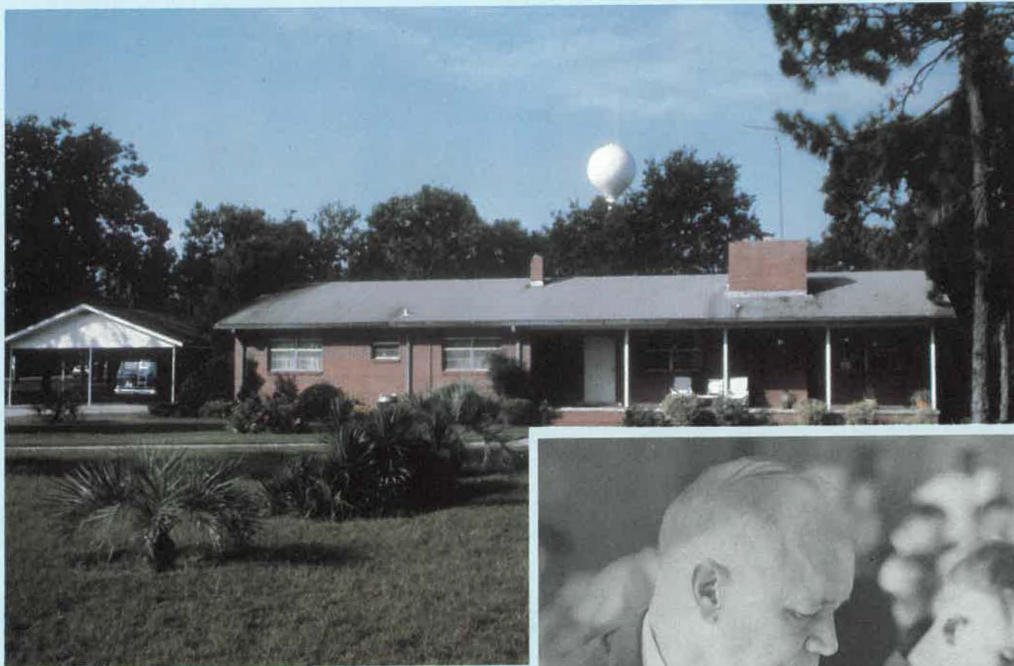
News that they were going to get free dental care didn't excite our boys, some of whom had never been in a dentist's chair before coming to the Ranch, but a 1963 visit to the Florida Legislature, in Tallahassee, certainly did. They received an ovation from the lawmakers and ate lunch with Governor Farris Bryant.



The rustic building donated by singer Elvis Presley and his manager, Col. Tom Parker in 1961, was used as a barber shop and canteen until 1976 when it became the headquarters of the Boys Ranch Alumni Association.



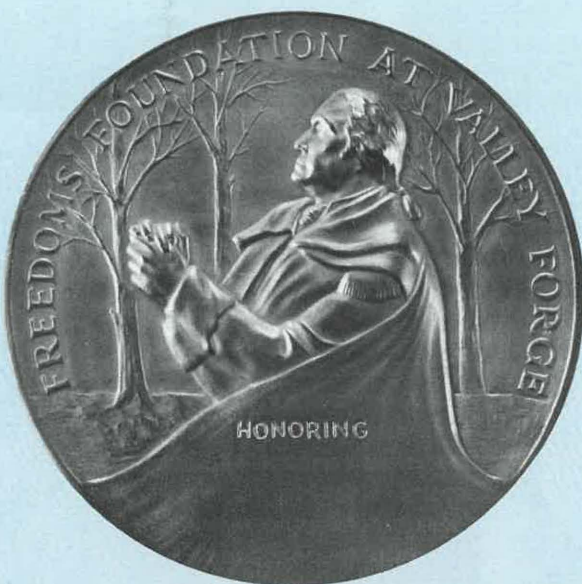
Our first big bus solved many transportation problems and enabled us to schedule educational and recreational trips.



Pentland Cottage was dedicated on November 4, 1962. This is a current picture of it.



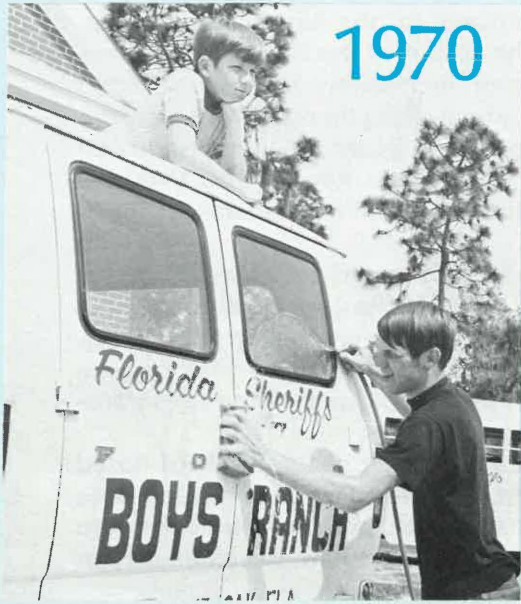
Eating lunch with Governor Farris Bryant was one of the highlights of a 1963 visit to the Florida Legislature.



In 1962 the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge awarded a George Washington Medal to the Boys Ranch for typifying "the American Way of Life."

The Way We Were

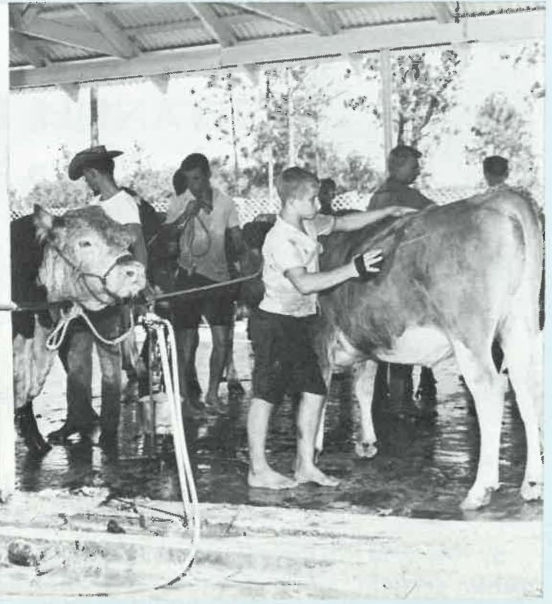




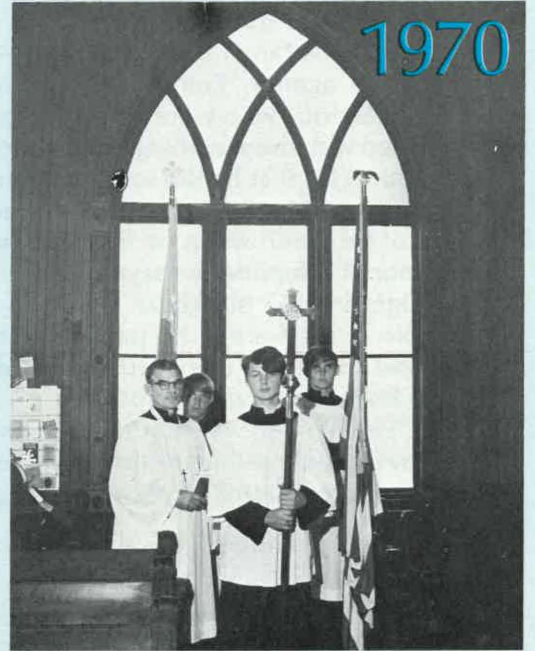
1970



1967



1971



1970



1973



1974



SUWANNEE RIVER SAGA *continued*

'Tis The Best of Times — If Everything Rhymes

By this time the Boys Ranch was receiving widespread public acclaim, and a steady flow of contributions. The management problems that had formerly caused deep concern had been solved. There was no more talk of turning the Boys Ranch over to the State of Florida or some private agency. Enthusiasm was running high among the Sheriffs who were actively supporting it.

So pleased with the way things were going was Sheriff Ed Blackburn, Jr., that he did something entirely out of character; something he had not done since the court-ing days of his youth when he had been noted for less than immortal valentine messages.

One night in 1963 Blackburn sat down at his dining room table — sat there in his pajamas just before bed-time — and composed a poem that summed up for him what the Boys Ranch was all about.

Titled "The Winner," Blackburn's poem was reprinted many times to help publicize the Boys Ranch, and it is still being quoted almost 20 years later. It goes like this:

It's every boy's hope
To reach up his hand,
And find there a grip
That he'll understand.

In every boy's heart
There's a burn running deep
For a friend tried and true,
Whose love he will keep.

And should the boy win
This goal of his life,
His soul soon will lift
From its moment of strife.

But finally when passed
A trophy from above,
The real winner will be
Him who gave love!

Blackburn's enthusiasm for the Ranch is still strong, and he, too, like the author of this history, sometimes displays symptoms of incredulity. In a letter dated December 29, 1981, announcing his retirement from the Florida Sheriffs Youth Fund Board of Directors, he said the present status of the Boys Ranch, Girls Villa and Youth Ranch "far exceeds the wildest dream that any of us ever had."

The Boys Ranch brought out the dreamer in Blackburn and aroused deep wellsprings of emotion that might not otherwise have been exposed to public view. It was that kind of catalyst, and those who became involved with it ran the risk of having their lives transformed in surprising ways.

The Boys Ranch was capable of turning hard-nosed Sheriffs into sentimental softies; underprivileged boys into bright, eager achievers; and ordinary folks into extraordinary philanthropists. I saw this chemistry at work. I remember it well.

I enjoy recalling the many heart-warming things that happened to nurture bonds of kind affection between the boys at the Ranch and the loyal friends all over Florida who were sustaining the Ranch with their dollars, their prayers and their deep concern.

Hundreds deserve special mention, but the brevity of this history makes that impossible, and I will have to be content with one or two typical examples.

Teresa Terhune is a name that pops up immediately when I snap my memory to attention and call the roll of Boys Ranch benefactors. In 1965, when I first heard about her, she was an 81-year-old widow living in a Clearwater nursing home. Under these circumstances she should have been content to drift serenely into the twilight of her lifetime, but she wasn't — not by a long shot! She was too busy keeping in touch with the 60 Ranchers she had "adopted" to do any serene drifting.



From the beginning Ranchers were taught to work and play, study and pray. In this 1963 photo they were cleaning up the debris around a construction site.

Every boy living at the Ranch at that time could expect to receive a birthday card from "Mother Terhune" with a quarter enclosed. And, between birthdays he could also count on receiving Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving cards.

In her room at the nursing home "Mother Terhune" had a "Boys Ranch Desk" where she kept pictures of her boys and a record of their birthdays. Many hours of many days she spent there writing notes, addressing envelopes, signing cards and wrapping quarters.

An aging woman with less spirit and grit would have found these labors too burdensome to sustain, but keeping in touch with Ranchers seemed to stimulate rather than exhaust "Mother Terhune." It gave her a reason for living and may have accounted for the fact that she had an active life well into her 80s.

Eventually the cards stopped coming, but memories of this uncommon silver-haired lady continued to stay alive. Long after her death some of her boys (they were men now with families and adult responsibilities) got together at a meeting of the Boys Ranch Alumni Association and voted to give her the Association's coveted "Out Friend" award posthumously. There was a feeling that a message was sent to her that day, but not through the U.S. Mail.

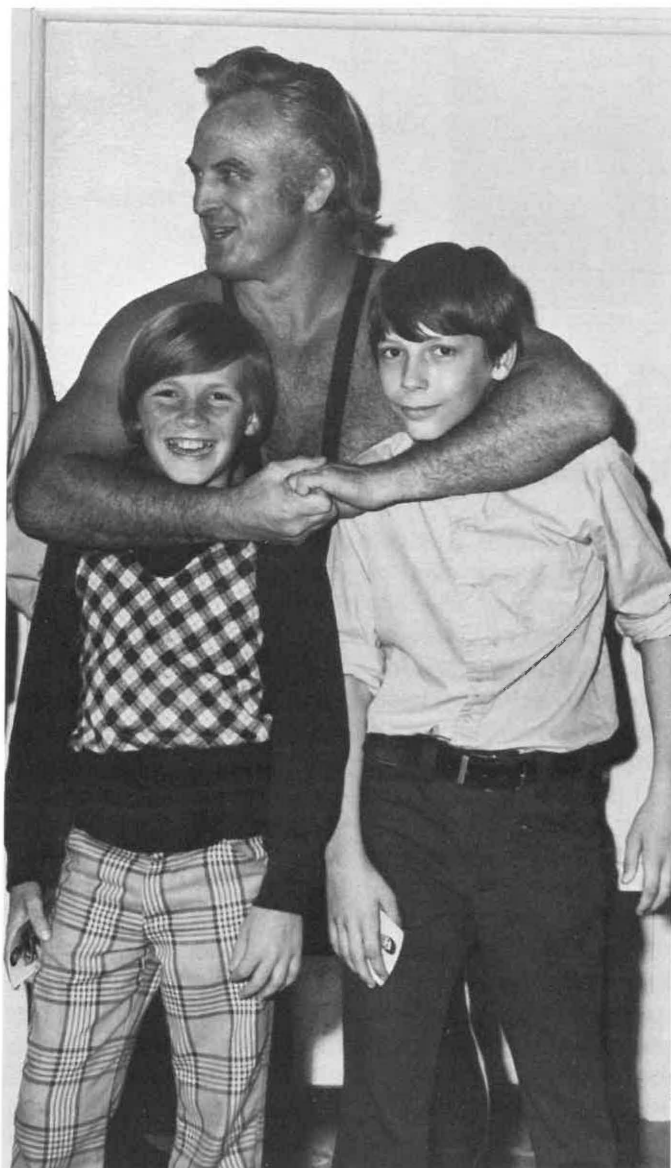
On a par with "Mother Terhune" in my catalogue of caring, sharing friends is a man the Ranchers called their "secret Santa Claus." In the 1960s this modest fellow would send the Boys Ranch sufficient five-dollar bills to provide one for each boy's Christmas stocking. And, to conceal his identity, he would arrange to have the cash delivered by Sheriff Dale Carson.

Year after year the five-dollar bills arrived on schedule, even though our growing enrollment increased the donor's annual outlay from \$100 to \$500. Our curiosity also continued to grow, and it was at a high pitch in 1967 when Major A. D. Tomasello, a Bartow resident, decided to reveal his identity so he could establish a \$10,000 scholarship fund at the Boys Ranch in memory of his wife, Dodie. We learned later that she had been an admirer of the Boys Ranch and had originally suggested the cash Christmas gifts.

When our Ranchers discovered the identity of their benefactor, who was the dean of lobbyists in the Florida Legislature and also the Director of Public Relations for the Florida Trucking Association, they wondered if the unmasked Santa would continue to put five-dollar bills in their Christmas stockings.

The next Christmas he did, and the Christmas after that. Then came the sad news that "the Major" had died, and everyone assumed the "secret Santa" story had come to an end.

It hadn't, however. Some of the Major's business associates established a \$25,000 Christmas Fund and requested that the income be used each year to provide the customary Christmas stocking cash. So, although the Major was gone, memories of his generosity continued to linger on.



Our boys have never doubted that Wrestling Impresario Eddie Graham is their loyal friend.

Wrestling impresario Eddie Graham is another long time friend of the Ranch who occupies a special niche in my memory. During the early days of the project, the benefit wrestling matches he promoted provided a substantial source of income for the Ranch. These fund raisers have continued up to the present time, and they, together with other activities, have produced more than \$75,000 for the Ranch and Youth Fund.

It seems metaphorically correct to say that the Boys Ranch has had a "hammer lock" on the interest and concern of Eddie Graham for almost 25 years, and he has responded by contributing his time and talents in many ways.

He served for many years on the Boys Ranch Board of Trustees and the Youth Fund Board of Directors. He has encouraged other members of the wrestling fraternity to become active supporters of the Ranch, and he has demonstrated to our boys in many ways the fact that he is their loyal friend.



SUWANNEE RIVER SAGA *continued*

Those Peanut Salesmen — We Remember Them Well

Wally Edwards was living at the Boys Ranch in the 1960s and has a clear recollection of “Mother Terhune’s” cards, “The Major’s” stocking stuffers, and Eddie Graham’s involvement. He also remembers June 3, 1963, when he became the first Rancher to graduate from high school. Three months later he enrolled at North Florida Junior College and became the first Rancher to enter the realm of higher education.

This was exemplary progress for a young man who just a few years earlier had been a sidewalk huckster facing a bleak future. Prior to 1960 Wally and his brother, Mike, had sold boiled peanuts on Tallahassee sidewalks and up and down the corridors of state government buildings.

They were attractive youngsters and as they made their rounds carrying baskets of peanuts they made many friends. One of these friends, Mrs. Mildred Scott, told Sheriff Bill Joyce about them. She said they needed a good home and a secure future. Joyce agreed and made arrangements for them to live at the Boys Ranch.

Both boys turned out to be achievers. Mike was acclaimed as an outstanding high school athlete and a leader among his peers. Wally made his mark as a student, and in 4-H Club work. He was the elder of the two and had an advantage over Mike when it came to “firsts” such as first Rancher to get a junior college degree, first Rancher to be married in the Boys Ranch chapel, first Rancher to have his child baptised in the Boys Ranch chapel, etc. However, both brothers have given us many reasons to be proud of them, and their names are bound to crop up again as this history progresses.

My recollections of the 1960s are dominated by happy memories, but August 5, 1963, belongs on the sad side of the ledger. On that date a heart attack struck down Suwannee County Sheriff Hugh Lewis, a gentle, fatherly man who had played a major role in the founding and development of the Boys Ranch. His sudden death was a tragic loss to many friends and associates — and also to a small boy from the Boys Ranch I shall call Barry to protect his real identity.

During burial rites, as a large crowd of mourners gathered at the graveside, I noticed Barry standing alone some 40 or 50 feet away, looking nervous and uncomfortable. It was unusual for a boy to voluntarily attend a

funeral alone. I was surprised to see him, but I knew immediately why he was there. Hugh Lewis had been his best friend in a short lifetime largely bereft of friends.

Months earlier this youngster’s mother had put him on a bus to Live Oak, hoping that Boys Ranch officials would find him there and take him in. It was a mindless gamble and it didn’t work out as planned.

When Barry reached Live Oak he became a vagrant and Sheriff Lewis eventually found him sleeping in an old, abandoned school bus. After efforts to find the boy’s mother were unsuccessful, Sheriff Lewis took him out to the Boys Ranch and asked the staff to let him stay there for a few days.

Those few days stretched into weeks, and Boys Ranch officials reminded the Sheriff that something had to be done about Barry. He had been accepted as a temporary visitor, they said, and it was a violation of regulations to let him stay on indefinitely. They ruled out the possibility of enrolling him as a Boys Ranch resident because that would involve a detailed screening process and court procedures.

Furthermore, admitting him on short notice would mean putting him ahead of qualified boys who were waiting to be admitted as soon as vacancies occurred.

Barry’s plight looked hopeless, but several things were working in his favor. During his brief stay he had captured the affections of boys and staff members alike. He



Sheriff Bill Joyce taking Mike and Wally Edwards to the Boys Ranch in 1960.



Construction of the Boys Ranch chapel was begun in 1964. Color photo was taken in 1982.

was small for his age, downright cute, and it appeared that a wholesale mutiny might develop if he were forced to leave.

No one wanted to see Barry kicked out, least of all his good friend Hugh Lewis, who was a Boys Ranch trustee, so Barry just stayed on and eventually became a full-fledged Boys Ranch citizen.

I can't say that any rules were bent or broken to admit Barry "through the back door." Nobody told me exactly how the crisis was resolved. All I know is that, when Hugh Lewis was asked about it, he merely smiled and said, "That boy needed a home."

Hugh Lewis contributed mightily to the success of the Boys Ranch, and his efforts were acknowledged with appropriate ceremony on April 5, 1964, when residence cottage number three was dedicated in his memory.

On the same date, with Live Oak bankers John A. Adicks and George W. Harmony looking on, Treasurer J. L. McMullen burned the mortgages that had been negotiated to buy property in 1957, and the Boys Ranch became debt-free.

1964 was off to a salubrious start, and the effervescent mood was destined to persist. Early in the year the trustees had announced plans for a \$200,000 building boom that was to include a \$90,000 cafetorium, a \$50,000 all-faiths chapel, a \$10,000 cattle and horse barn, and a \$50,000 residence cottage.

They didn't have the necessary funds, but they forged ahead with characteristic aplomb, and, as usual, the money simply materialized as needed from unexpected sources.

Right about this time I began to get sudden seizures of that old incredulous feeling. I suspected that I was caught up in some grand illusion. The flow of cash was uncanny.

There was something downright spooky about the fact that preparations for a "moon shot" at Cape Kennedy wiped out the North Canaveral Chamber of Commerce



and produced a windfall for the Boys Ranch. Officials of the defunct Chamber held a final meeting, voted to give their bank balance to charity, and the Boys Ranch netted \$12,000.

The timing was perfect for us — too perfect to be shrugged off as coincidence — but the trustees handled it with casual savoir-faire. They simply added the \$12,000 to contributions that had accumulated in the Boys Ranch Memorial Fund, and, presto, sufficient funds were available to build and furnish the all-faiths chapel.

Financing the horse and cattle barn was equally simple. Alachua County Sheriff Joe Crevasse, Jr., told the trustees he could come up with a major portion of the necessary cash by turning over to the Boys Ranch funds that had been raised through horse shows sponsored by the Gainesville Roping Club and the Alachua County Junior Deputy Sheriff League. He said raising the balance of the money would be no problem since it had already been pledged by various Gainesville donors.

The Way We Were





1976



1977



1977



1978



SUWANNEE RIVER SAGA

continued

Lewis Cottage was dedicated in 1964. Photo was taken in 1982.



Committee Raised \$90,000 In Fifteen Minutes

Raising \$90,000 for the cafetorium wasn't quite that simple, but it worked out in a way that placed additional stress on my credulity.

To accomplish the task, Sheriff Ed Yarbrough, Chairman of the Trustees, had the benefit of some expert coaching from Col. Bob Pentland, our faithful benefactor from Miami, and Joe Diaz, a Tampa businessman. Joe was the husband of Frances Diaz, the first woman appointed to the Boys Ranch Board of Trustees, and he was a real fireball when it came to promoting the Ranch.

Yarbrough's first move was to appoint a cafetorium fund raising committee composed of men who were widely known for their business success and philanthropic gifts — men like A. D. Davis, chain store executive; Cecil Webb, milling magnate; Syde Deeb, a big time building contractor; Col. Pentland; and Diaz.

Persuading busy men of this calibre to attend a meeting was not easy, but Diaz volunteered to do it and, after many phone calls, he managed to get the committee together in Jacksonville on February 5, 1964, during the annual Mid-Winter Conference of the Florida Sheriffs Association.

Sitting in on the meeting were members of the J. J. Swick family who had just accepted a memorial resolution passed by the Sheriffs. Mr. and Mrs. J. J. Swick, owners of Copeland Sausage Co., had recently perished in Jacksonville's Hotel Roosevelt fire, and the resolution cited them for their past generosity toward the Boys Ranch.

Following a game plan he had suggested to Yarbrough, Col. Pentland led off the meeting with a large pledge. Reluctant to be outpledged, other members of the committee offered even higher amounts. Then the Swick family members said they would donate a large



Interior view of Cafetorium taken in 1965.

amount to the project if the trustees would agree to name the cafetorium in memory of the elder Swicks killed in the hotel fire.

This offer was accepted and the committee meeting adjourned. In just 15 minutes the committee had raised \$90,000. Boys Ranch officials were jubilant, but I just sat there, struggling to keep in touch with reality.

Not long afterward additional pledges provided adequate financing for residence cottage number five, and thus, within less than a year after they announced a proposed \$200,000 building boom, the trustees had attained their fund raising goals.

Construction work began immediately, and on September 27, 1964, a festive crowd of some 2,000 people gathered at the Boys Ranch to dedicate the \$90,000 Jim

and Rena Swick Cafetorium.

Jacksonville Mayor Haydon Burns, who was then running for governor, delivered the dedication address. James Swick, Jr., cut a ribbon to officially open the new building, and Suwannee County Sheriff Duke McCallister supervised the serving of a traditional Suwannee River barbecue.

This special day bequeathed to me a legacy of good memories and some eloquent phrases I garnered from an invocation delivered by Sheriff Ed Blackburn, Jr.

"Lord, bless the many who have done so much for those who are so little," Blackburn said; and, as he neared the end of the prayer he added: "Endow us, dear Lord, with the ability to complete this great vision."

A little later, as though in answer to the prayer, Blackburn happened to encounter a long time friend, Charles Mendez, while he was walking through the crowd.

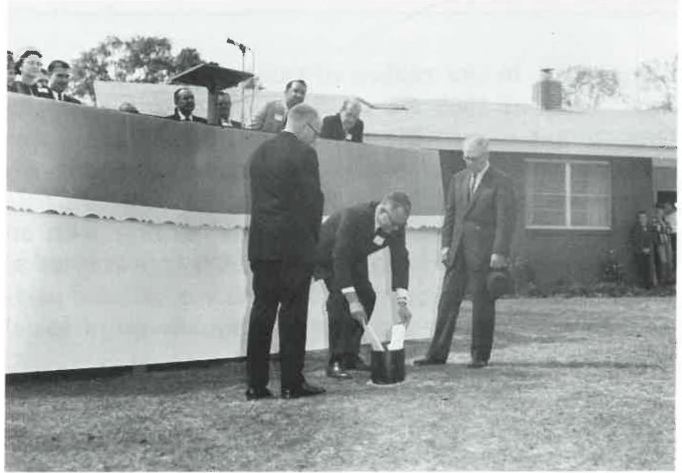
Mendez, who was a wealthy trucking firm executive from Tampa, pointed to an unfinished building nearby. "How much would it take to finish that cottage over there?" he asked.

"About \$30,000," said Blackburn.

"You've got it," said Mendez, and later backed up his pledge with \$30,000 worth of stock.

The salubrious sixties were rolling along salubriously and we were steadily increasing our enrollment capacity. As soon as we were able to serve meals in the new cafetorium, we phased out the temporary dining room in Lewis Cottage. Then we renovated the cottage so that it could fulfill its intended purpose as a residence for 20 boys. By the end of 1965, one hundred boys were answering roll call.

The Boys Ranch was growing, and improvements were



With bankers John A. Adicks and George W. Harmony as witnesses, Treasurer J. L. McMullen burned the Boys Ranch mortgages on April 5, 1964. The Ranch was then (and remained) debt-free.



Dedication rites for the Jim and Rena Swick Memorial Cafetorium were held on September 27, 1964. Color inset is a 1982 picture of the Cafetorium.





SUWANNEE RIVER SAGA

continued

being made in the calibre of care we were giving our boys. Early in 1965 we created a new Social Service Department to provide counseling, screen applicants for admission, and otherwise enhance our ability to give youngsters "a better break."

Jim Strayer, a well qualified social worker with an MSW degree from Florida State University, was hired as the first Social Services Director. He was assisted part-time by his wife, Betty, who had equally good social work credentials.

Annual in-service training workshops were also initiated for the Ranch staff as part of a trend toward greater professionalization. Consultants from the Uni-



During a trip to Washington in 1964 Ranchers had lunch with (from left) U.S. Representative Don Fuqua, Sheriff Ed Blackburn, Jr., Speaker of the House John McCormack, Sheriff Don Genung and Senator Spessard Holland.

versity of North Carolina School of Social Welfare were brought to the Ranch to lead workshops.

We had come a long way since the early trial and error days, and now, as the Ranch approached its 10th Anniversary, we were following a carefully structured scenario.

Hurricane Dora Wasn't In The Script

Well — most of the time we were following a carefully laid out plan, but occasionally there were unexpected departures from the script. One of these occurred when Hurricane Dora roared through North Florida, dumping torrential rains and raising the Suwannee River to record flood levels.

Electrical power was cut off. Telephone service was knocked out for several days. The corn crop was ruined.

When rising floodwaters isolated the Ranch and threatened some of the buildings, heavy duty pumps

were pressed into service and crews of men and boys were put to work filling sandbags.

Contingency plans were made to evacuate the boys by boat, but fortunately the river crested before this was necessary and the crisis passed.

A few days later, after roads to the Ranch were open again, a visitor asked one of the boys, "What was the worst thing that happened when the hurricane hit here?"

"The power went off," said the boy, "and we couldn't watch television."

Elsewhere in the news, (as television anchormen are accustomed to saying) new chapters were being written in the saga of Wally Edwards, the former Rancher noted for being "first with the firsts."

In 1965 Wally was graduated from North Florida Junior College and became the first Rancher to obtain a college degree. Then he was sworn

When Wally Edwards was graduated from North Florida Junior College in 1965 the cheering section included three couples from the Boys Ranch staff. They are, from left: Mr. and Mrs. Jim Strayer, Mr. and Mrs. John Schmutz, and Mr. and Mrs. Jim Brettingen.





Wally Edwards, now a U.S. Marine headed for Viet Nam, was married to the former Joyce Hilton in the Boys Ranch chapel on November 12, 1966. Theirs was the first wedding in the chapel.

in as a U.S. Marine, completed his basic training, and on November 12, 1966, became the first Rancher to be married in the recently-completed Boys Ranch chapel. His bride was the former Joyce Hilton, of Clearwater.

Year's end found Wally in Viet Nam, which gave us one more reason to be concerned about the course of the undeclared war over there. We had at least ten former Ranchers in Viet Nam at that time, and they were "in the thick of it."

One of them, Spc. Royal E. (Buddy) McHenry, was awarded the Purple Heart and Bronze Star for heroism in 1966 after he helped to repel a Viet Cong guerrilla attack on enlisted men's billets in Saigon.

Buddy was wounded by weapons fire and a bomb explosion, but he insisted on helping to take care of other wounded servicemen, and would not allow his own wounds to be treated until all of the casualties had been evacuated.

Former Ranchers Bob Malone (left) and Mike Edwards visited the Boys Ranch after serving in Viet Nam. Mike was awarded the Purple Heart and transferred to the U.S. for treatment of wounds. Bob was one of our most decorated Viet Nam veterans.



Former Rancher Buddy McHenry was awarded the Purple Heart and Bronze Star for heroism in 1966, while serving in Viet Nam.





SUWANNEE RIVER

SAGA

continued

In 1966, dedication rites were held for the Nellie G. Laws Memorial Building, which is a laundry and supply storage facility.



In August, 1967, we learned that former Rancher Mike Edwards, brother of Wally, and one of our star athletes, had been wounded in both legs while serving with the U.S. Marines in Viet Nam. He was transferred to the U.S. Navy Hospital at Charleston, S.C., for surgery and skin grafts, and was awarded the Purple Heart.

After Mike returned to the States, Wally remained on duty in Viet Nam and kept in touch with us by letter. In our replies we enclosed copies of THE SHERIFF'S STAR, official publication of the Florida Sheriffs Association, to keep him informed about the progress of the Ranch.

Wally's buddies were reading the STAR too, but we were not aware of this until one of Wally's letters arrived with a donation to the Ranch in memory of Joe Costello, Wally's platoon sergeant, who had been killed in action. Wally's buddies had agreed a contribution to the Ranch would be an appropriate way to honor a young Marine whose death had touched them all deeply.

Staff Sgt. Bob Malone ranked as one of our most decorated former Ranchers. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1967, and was sent to Viet Nam as a paratrooper. After his first tour of duty ended, he reenlisted, requested to be returned to Viet Nam, and was assigned to the famous "Green Berets."

Later, when he visited the Boys Ranch, he was wearing an imposing cluster of ribbons on his chest that included the Air Medal, for 150 helicopter missions; the Purple Heart, for being wounded in action; the Bronze Star with Valor "V", for heroism under fire; the National Defense Ribbon; a Vietnamese Service Medal; and a Good Conduct Medal with overseas bar.

When anti-war protests were reaching their peak in the United States, Pfc. Jim Barnhart, a former Rancher serving in Viet Nam, responded with a bitter poem that was widely circulated in Florida. He seemed to express

the sentiments of many former Ranchers with these lines:

*"You burn your draft cards and march at dawn,
And paint your signs on the White House lawn.
For there is nothing better for you to do,
And I'm supposed to die for you.
For you I heard my buddy cry,
I'll remember 'til the day I die.
It's a hard price to have to pay,
Not to live for another day.
He had the guts to fight and die,
He paid the price, but what did he buy?
He bought your life by losing his,
But, who gives a damn what a soldier gives?"*

The war was on the other side of the world, but never far from our thoughts and prayers.

In 1968, former Rancher Jerry Willard was pulling extremely hazardous duty making air drops of supplies to ground forces under heavy anti-aircraft fire. On one of these missions he narrowly escaped death when the Air Force C-130 on which he was a crewman was shot down in flames.

News of the crash was disconcerting, but we were proud to learn that Jerry had been recommended for the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart and the Air Force Cross.

Home He Came, With Matrimony on His Mind

The next time we heard from Jerry he was returning to the Ranch on a non-military mission. This handsome young fellow wearing the stripes of an Air Force sergeant had matrimony on his mind, and the object of his affections was a girl who had grown up at the Ranch.

The bride-to-be was Jeanne Schmutz, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Schmutz. The Schmutzes had been Jerry's cottage parents when he lived at the Ranch and they were still on the staff.

Jerry completed his nuptial mission in the Boys Ranch chapel on December 27, 1969, with Wally and Mike Edwards giving him moral support as attendants. The Edwards brothers were out of the Marines by this time. Wally was in the printing business, and Mike was employed as a deputy sheriff in Hillsborough County.

The wedding was unique because the parents of the bride were former foster parents of the groom. It also served as a festive fadeout for the Salubrious Sixties, which, through war and peace, hurricanes and growing pains, had never lost their salubrity.

What a decade this had been! In the beginning the Boys Ranch had been a faltering, problem-plagued "home" for needy and worthy boys with 737 acres of land, limited facilities, and a questionable future.

And now, at the end of the decade, it was a self-contained community with its own telephone system, water system, sewer system, firehouse, gymnasium, medical and dental clinic, chapel, recreational facilities, city hall (administration building), paved streets, fire hydrants, street lights, landing strip, laundry and agricultural industries.

In ten years, the campus had almost tripled in size and now covered 2,537 acres. The enrollment had increased to a record high of nearly 100 boys.

Spectacular growth had been our dominant theme during the 1960s but, now that we were on the threshold of a new decade, the time had come to make some difficult decisions about future growth. These were decisions labeled "Handle With Care," and rightfully so. They were destined to cause sweeping changes in the breadth and depth and diversity of child care activities sponsored by the Florida Sheriffs Association.

We publicized our 10th Anniversary by entering this float in a parade that followed the inauguration of Governor Claude Kirk, January 3, 1967. Deputy Sheriff Buddy Phillips, who later became Sheriff of Suwannee County, and Rancher Donny Michael rode on the float.



Jerry Willard and Jeanne Schmutz were married in the Boys Ranch Chapel, December 29, 1969. Pictured with them are Mr. and Mrs. John Schmutz, parents of the bride and former cottage parents of the groom.





SUWANNEE RIVER SAGA

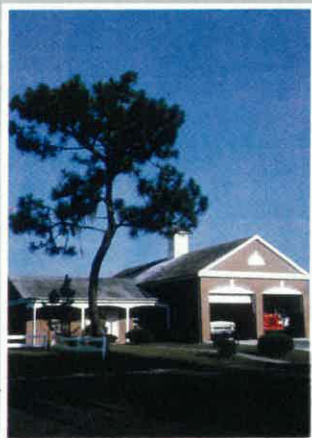
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Mr. and Mrs. James P. Towey, benefactors responsible for the James P. Towey Foundation Memorial Medical and Dental Clinic posed for a picture in front of the clinic when it was dedicated in 1968. Color inset shows the clinic as it appears today.



Dedication rites were held on October 1, 1967, for the Boys Ranch Fire Station, which was built with funds raised by the Florida State Firemen's Association. Color inset photo was taken in 1982.





In deference to “Little Sister” we repainted the sign on our surrey to include the Boys Ranch and Girls Villa before entering it in a Tallahassee parade in 1971.

Our “Little Sister” Makes Her Debut

Florida’s Sheriffs entered the 1970s with their minds made up. After many months of talking, planning and debating, they had decided to start a second child care facility that would offer to needy and worthy girls the same benefits the Boys Ranch was giving to needy and worthy boys. And so, on January 7, 1970, they chartered the Florida Sheriffs Girls Villa.

This was not an impulsive gesture. The idea of establishing a “little sister” facility modeled after the Boys Ranch had been kicking around for quite a while.

Former Pinellas County Sheriff Don Genung recalls it was mentioned for the first time around 1967. A small group of women organized as the Sunshine State Women’s Chamber of Commerce (SSWCC) had been hosting a fun-in-the-sun weekend for a busload of boys from the Boys Ranch. The boys had had a ball playing on the beach, staying in motels, eating in restaurants and sightseeing. Everything had been free — donated by businessmen the ladies from the SSWCC had contacted.

When Sunday morning arrived, the boys began boarding their bus to return to the Ranch. Genung and some of the ladies from the SSWCC were on hand to bid them goodbye.

One of the ladies was in tears. The littlest boy in the

group had spent the weekend as her house guest and had thoroughly captivated her. Now as he and his buddies began waving from the bus windows and yelling “see you next time,” the woman’s tears really spilled over.

“My goodness,” she sobbed, “I wish there was something else we could do.”

“There is,” said Genung as the bus pulled out. “You could start raising money for a place for girls. Have you thought of that?”

She hadn’t, she said, but as soon as she started walking away, dabbing at her tears, the idea of a home for girls started percolating. Later she shared her thoughts with other members of the SSWCC, and they too began turning the idea over in their minds.

“That thing caught fire,” Genung recalled recently. “Those women got excited and they thought that a place for girls (they started calling it a Girls Villa) could be built here in Pinellas County.

“They began raising money. They had cake sales, and they had ‘white elephant’ sales, and they had square dance jamborees. It wasn’t easy. They worked hard to get it.”

Eventually, said Genung, the women’s group came up



SUWANNEE RIVER SAGA *continued*

with \$10,000 and contacted the Florida Sheriffs Association. They had begun to realize that their small organization was not capable of raising sufficient funds for a child care facility and they wanted the Association to take over the Girls Villa project.

Sheriffs Association officials said they had their hands full with the fast-growing Boys Ranch and they weren't financially able to take on another project.

The SSWCC didn't give up. The ladies continued to raise money, and they continued to talk to Sheriffs individually about the Girls Villa. Don Genung had been sold from the beginning. Boys Ranch Executive Director Harry Weaver was an early convert. As time went on, and as the SSWCC persisted, influential Sheriffs began getting on the bandwagon one by one.

Interest picked up within the Sheriffs Association. Boys Ranch Executive Director Weaver, Sheriffs Association Executive Director Carl Stauffer and Sheriff Genung were sent to Texas to look at residential child care facilities for girls. They came back with a favorable recommendation and, on September 19, 1969, the Sheriffs Association finally voted to adopt the Girls Villa project.

Public reaction was enthusiastic. Unsolicited contributions started coming in despite the fact that the Girls Villa had not been widely publicized. A search began for a suitable building site.

Many friends who had been supporting the Boys Ranch now began to split their contributions, with part for the Ranch and part for the Villa. The Ranch and Villa each had Memorial Funds, and separate accounting systems. Financial records began to get unwieldy and Executive Director Weaver saw problems developing. He told the Boys Ranch Trustees a separate legal entity was needed to streamline the handling of Ranch and Villa funds. He suggested a "Florida Sheriffs Youth Foundation," but no immediate action was taken.

Meanwhile, the Girls Villa project was gathering momentum. A Villa Board of Trustees was appointed by the Florida Sheriffs Association, and on February 18, 1971, Don Genung became its first chairman. The Board named Weaver as the Executive Director of the Villa (a duplication of his Boys Ranch title), and also hired Bob Haag, an experienced child care professional, as the first Resident Director.

While Haag was going through an indoctrination period at the Boys Ranch, the search for a Girls Villa site was continuing. A number of locations were considered in 1971, but none of them quite measured up to the



The Joe and Frances Diaz Administration Building was completed in 1969.



Generous contributions from Mr. and Mrs. Fred Conn, of Tampa, made possible the construction of Conn Cottage at the Boys Ranch in 1969.



The Carleton and Suzanna Tweed Gymnasium, a \$230,000 gift to the Boys Ranch, was dedicated on October 12, 1969.

specifications.

Early in 1972 Polk County Sheriff Monroe Brannen, who was a Boys Ranch Trustee and also Chairman of the Florida Sheriffs Association's Board of Directors, asked the search committee to take a look at Peace River Park, a public recreation area owned by the City of Bartow and maintained by Polk County under a lease agreement.

Girls Villa Site Was “Made to Order”

The committee, composed of Sheriffs and Villa Trustees, took a look and was impressed. The park, with its lakes, paved streets, landscaped grounds, outdoor amphitheater and city utilities, seemed to be ideal.

City and county officials said they were willing to offer a 99-year lease on 75 acres of the park immediately, and make 50 more acres available for leasing within five years. Sheriffs Association and Villa officials accepted the offer without delay, and a lease was signed on April 19, 1971.

After the signing of the lease, the SSWCC turned over to Villa officials \$81,635 in cash and some other assets, including several bequests. Mrs. Esther Mowry, of St. Petersburg, who was serving as President of the SSWCC, also donated some property appraised at \$50,000.

Ground breaking ceremonies for the first Villa buildings were held on August 27, 1971, and Bartow celebrated the occasion with a “Girls Villa Week” that included golf and tennis tournaments, a beauty pageant, a charity ball and a country-western concert.

This celebration was so successful that “Girls Villa Week” became an annual fund raising event. It also served as an early indication of the enthusiastic support Bartow citizens were going to give the Villa.

“Little Sister” had made her debut with a flourish and had momentarily stolen the spotlight from “Big-Brother-up-North-on-the-Suwannee.” However, 1970 and 1971 had been good years for “big brother” too, and there was no cause to worry about a sibling rivalry.

Near the beginning of 1970 professional consultants had completed an evaluation of the Boys Ranch and had given it a high score. The principal change they recommended was to reduce the number of boys in each residence cottage. Ranch officials agreed. Harried cottage parents applauded.

Ranch officials and stamp collectors remember 1970 as the year the Boys Ranch post office began functioning. The first “Boys Ranch, Florida 32060” postmarks went into the mail June 26, 1970.

This was also the year in which former Ranchers, now numbering over 100, decided to organize a Florida Sheriffs Boys Ranch Alumni Association and hold annual reunions at the Ranch.



The Girls Villa campus as it looks today.

The Boys Ranch amateur radio station (WB4PHT) went on the air October 4, 1970, aided by gifts of equipment and technical advice provided by the Florida Sidebanders Association. More than 50 ham radio operators from all over the state responded by sending congratulatory messages to the Boys Ranch Amateur Radio Club.

The big surprise of the year came during the Christmas season when the Clay County Mavericks Saddle Club, a family-oriented organization from Orange Park, came to the Ranch and built a \$6,000 horse show arena complete with catch pens and an announcer's booth.

The club members, who had previously raised \$15,000 for the Ranch through various benefit events, brought equipment to clear a site on the south side of the Ranch property. They also supplied materials and labor.

On October 2, 1971, the Mavericks returned to help us



The Boys Ranch amateur radio station WB4PHT went on the air October 4, 1970.



SUWANNEE RIVER SAGA

continued

Near the end of 1970 the Clay County Mavericks Saddle Club built a \$6,000 horse show arena at the Boys Ranch. They provided labor, supplies and equipment. Horse shows in the Mavericks Arena have become a traditional feature of Boys Ranch anniversary celebrations.



The Boys Ranch acquired its own post office in 1970 and the first "Boys Ranch, Florida 32060" postmarks went into the mail on June 26.



The Hans F. Heye Memorial Arts and Crafts Building was dedicated in October, 1972.

celebrate the 14th anniversary of the Ranch, and to participate in a formal dedication of the arena. They brought their horses and families with them and put on a jam up good horse show. After that the Maverick horse show became a regular feature of Boys Ranch anniversary celebrations, drawing hundreds of visitors from a wide area. When we developed camping facilities near the arena the crowds increased.

Serving a noon barbecue on the banks of the Suwannee River also became a tradition. Later on we added a Sunday morning sunrise worship service in the arena, and frequently we held dedication rites to focus attention on some new facility.

At our 15th anniversary party in 1972, we dedicated the Hans F. Heye Memorial Arts and Crafts building which opened up new opportunities for boys to explore wood-working, ceramics, photography, electronics, model

building and many other areas of craftsmanship.

In 1973 we focused attention on the Minella Cameron Automotive Center, which included a modern auto mechanics shop, a small motor repair shop, an equipment shed for our growing fleet of Ranch vehicles, and gas pumps.

In 1975 we praised the benevolence of the late A. W. (Bud) Smith, former publisher of the Lakeland Ledger. He had given a substantial bequest to the Ranch and a portion of it had been used to finance badly needed paved streets.

When we celebrated our 19th anniversary in 1976 we held double-barreled rites to dedicate farm improvements financed by the Ed Van Ness Trust, and a new educational center made possible by a generous bequest from the estate of Henry H. Beck, Gainesville philanthropist.



Former Rancher Leonard Russek was the featured speaker at Hauer Cottage dedication rites. The insets show him at age 12 and "at the mike."



We Knew Him As a Tyke, Now He's

At The "Mike"

Residence cottage No. 7, financed by a bequest from the late C. U. Jellison, of St. Augustine, and named in honor of him and his brother, the late Capt. L. S. Jellison, was dedicated when we celebrated our 20th birthday in 1977.

An address by Leonard Russek, former Rancher, added a special flair to dedication rites for residence cottage No. 8, which were held during our 23rd anniversary celebration in 1980. The cottage had been financed by a generous bequest from the late Harry M. Hauer, of Miami Shores, Florida, and was named in his honor.

Russek, a Past President of the Boys Ranch Alumni Association and the first Rancher to serve on the Boys Ranch Board of Trustees, not only praised the generosity of Mr. Hauer, but also aimed a message at the boys who were then living at the Ranch.

He urged them to take full advantage of the many opportunities the Ranch offered so they could make right choices about their futures.

Russek could have held himself up as a prime example but he didn't. It wasn't really necessary, because nearly everyone in the audience already knew that he was a successful certified public accountant and had established his own investment consulting firm. His words of advice were convincing because they were backed by experience.

We held numerous dedication ceremonies during the 1970s and they demonstrated to the public that the Boys Ranch and Girls Villa were continuing to grow at a steady pace.



A mammoth birthday cake with simulated flaming candles was constructed near the horse show arena in 1977 to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the Boys Ranch.



SUWANNEE RIVER SAGA *continued*

However, those of us close to the inner workings of the Ranch and Villa were equally impressed with other more subtle signs of progress resulting from the activities of our social workers. We had begun calling them family workers and we had written our child care script to give them more important roles.

This was an era when families were breaking down and breaking up at an alarming rate. Many of the youngsters who were victims of these tragedies were turning to us for help and, unfortunately, our ability to help them was severely limited.

If we had vacancies at the Boys Ranch, Girls Villa or Youth Ranch, we could help them, If there were no vacancies, as was usually the case, we could not help them. Many were turned away. Others were added to our long waiting list.

We were giving shelter, security and a better life to over 100 youngsters, but we were not satisfied. We wanted to reach out beyond our child care institutions

to help youngsters on the outside — especially those unfortunate kids we had been turning away or putting on “hold.”

We were searching for a way to increase our outreach, and we found it when we adopted an old custom almost abandoned by the medical profession. We began sending our family workers out on “house calls” to help youngsters on a person-to-person basis.

Helping them often meant trying to strengthen, salvage or mend troubled families — a delicate business at best, nevertheless, we began to see results.

Family workers spent their working days tiptoeing through mosaics of failure and success, but the rewards were gratifying. We were reaching and helping more youngsters than ever before.

Statistics compiled in 1980 revealed what was happening. At that time we had 123 youngsters living at the Boys Ranch, Girls Villa and Youth Ranch; but almost twice that many were living at home and receiving counseling from family workers.

Family workers are now assigned to seven regions which cover the entire state. Their caseloads include families of children in residential care, youngsters who have left residential care but are in need of aftercare counseling, and families with youngsters who have requested help.

Sending family workers out on “house calls” has increased substantially the number of youngsters we have been able to help, and it has added a new dimension to our child care activities.



The Boys Ranch Education Center was dedicated in memory of Henry H. Beck, Gainesville philanthropist, on October 3, 1976.

The Elvis Presley building formerly used as a canteen and barber shop became the Boys Ranch Alumni Association headquarters in 1976. Alumni Association volunteers are shown sprucing it up with a paint job.



Youth Fund officials inspecting the administration building at McGregor Smith Boy Scout Reservation.

Camping Adds Another New Dimension to Our Venture

The same can be said about a new camping program that not only provides wholesome recreation for homeless, dependent and neglected youngsters, but also gives them an opportunity to cultivate amiable relationships with the deputy sheriffs, junior deputies and law enforcement explorer scouts who serve as volunteer counselors.

Erasing any hostility troubled youngsters might harbor toward law enforcement is one of the goals of this unique program. We started it in 1981, by enrolling 40 boys in two one-week camping sessions held at the Boys Ranch, and we were so pleased with the results that we decided to make camping a permanent part of our child care spectrum.

This year (1982) we scheduled eight one-week camping sessions at Boy Scout and Girl Scout reservations scattered around the state, and made plans to enroll 256 boys and girls.

A small full-time staff headed by an experienced camping director was hired to travel from campsite to campsite and supervise the volunteer counselors. In the fall this staff will establish a base and a wilderness camp so that the benefits of rugged outdoor living can be offered to youngsters on a continuing year-round basis.

Camping will increase dramatically the number of youngsters whose lives we can touch in a constructive way. It will expand our outreach and establish one more landmark along the path Sheriffs chose to travel when they founded the Girls Villa in 1970.

I doubt they were fully aware of the possible consequences when they decided to offer girls the same child care benefits they had been giving to boys for over a decade. Nevertheless, this was a crucial turning point that permanently changed the status of the Boys Ranch,



Florida Sheriffs Youth Fund President Harry Weaver (right) explains the camping program to Sheriffs Charles S. Dean, James L. "Jamie" Adams, Jr., and Don Moreland. They were making an inspection tour of the McGregor Smith Boy Scout Reservation to evaluate it as a future camping site.

opened up new horizons, and gave Sheriffs an entirely new perspective of their future goals.

Prior to 1970 Sheriffs focused on the Boys Ranch exclusively. After 1970 the focus gradually shifted to a new concept that made the Boys Ranch merely the oldest and largest link in a state-wide chain of child care centers.

To adopt this concept may not have been the Sheriffs' original intent, but one satellite child care facility led to another, and eventually they found themselves caught up in the potato chip syndrome (who can eat just one?).

They were also encouraged by an enhanced flow of contributions that reflected growing public approbation. Uncannily, it began to seem as though their decisions were dictated by public mandate, and a certain element of inevitability, as much as they were by choice.

After the Girls Villa was lofted into orbit, the next step toward a galaxy concept of child care was the chartering of the Florida Sheriffs Youth Fund, Inc., in 1973. This new legal entity was established to generate, receive and disburse funds contributed for the benefit of the Ranch and Villa. It was designed to serve existing child care

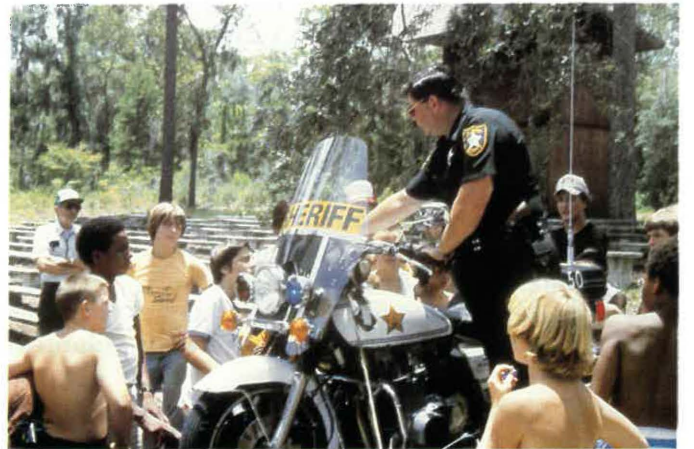


SUWANNEE RIVER SAGA

continued



Camping activities included swimming, marksmanship training and motorcycle safety demonstrations.



projects as well as future projects, and it improved our financial procedures substantially. Unfortunately, it also added to the complexity of our organizational structure.

We now had three legal entities; the Ranch, Villa and Youth Fund, each with its own governing board, budget and program. By 1976, with a Youth Ranch near Clearwater being discussed, a fourth entity with another board, budget and program, seemed imminent. That was the proverbial straw. Our corporate structures were becoming unwieldy and prompt action was necessary.

The obvious answer was to consolidate, and that is precisely what we did on October 1, 1977. We merged the Boys Ranch and Girls Villa into the Youth Fund, making the Youth Fund the sole legal entity responsible for managing and operating present and future youth projects sponsored by the Florida Sheriffs Association. When the Youth Ranch opened in 1978, it became the third facility operated by the Youth Fund.

Unwieldy no more, this streamlined corporate structure is working smoothly and efficiently in 1982. Fifteen members, including Sheriffs and laymen, have been appointed by the Florida Sheriffs Association to run the Youth Fund Corporation. They in turn have elected a board of directors which is responsible for the month-

to-month decisions.

Harry Weaver, who formerly wore three hats as Executive Director of the Boys Ranch, Girls Villa, and Youth Fund, is now the President of the Youth Fund and has abandoned all of his former titles. He has not abandoned, however, the workaholic routine he adopted more than 20 years ago when he had to do laundry, cook meals and babysit with rambunctious boys to hold the Boys Ranch together.

The Weaver of 1982 still has his hands full. He holds the ultimate "buck-stops-here" responsibility for a far-flung child care network that holds title to or leases 3,455 acres of valuable real estate in three Florida locations; employs 170 persons; operates its own data processing system; owns facilities valued at approximately \$7,000,000; and is currently giving professional services to over 850 youngsters and families. The breakdown at last count was 455 youngsters and 403 families receiving help.

He is also actively involved in preliminary planning for a fourth child care facility which the Youth Fund expects to establish in south Florida and a camping site in the central part of the state.



When is Someone Going to Pinch Me?

Youth Fund progress, like the Suwannee, just keeps rollin' along, and people like Weaver who are in the mainstream roll right along with it. They seem to have no mental hangups about accepting the reality of it.

Me, I'm different. When I contemplate the Suwannee River Saga in all of its complexity, I want somebody to pinch me. I'm convinced I gotta be dreaming. I keep telling myself there's no way all this could have resulted from a casual trip some Sheriffs took to the banks of the Suwannee River back in 1957.

I have seen it all happen, and yet I have trouble believ-

While the writer of this saga was struggling with his "old incredulous feeling" preparations were moving ahead for the 25th Anniversary celebration at the Boys Ranch. In this particular instance Ranchers were posing for an anniversary poster that was displayed in Sheriff's offices and other locations statewide.

ing it. I can't shake that old incredulous feeling, and I keep waiting for the dream to end. I am absolutely certain someone is going to poke me and say, "Hey, wake up, we're leaving."

Then I'll rub my eyes and discover it is still 1957 and I have been snoozing on the banks of the Suwannee. The Sheriffs who just had their picture taken on the riverfront will be walking back to their cars. The photographer will be packing up his camera equipment. Don McLeod will be climbing down from the willow tree, and I will be telling myself, "Gee, what a lovely dream!"

President's Perspective

A message from
Harry K. Weaver, President
of the Florida Sheriffs
Youth Fund



This anniversary coming up on October 2, is a big thing for me. Maybe it's because I've been so close to the Boys Ranch for nearly 21 of those 25 years.

I've seen it in bad times, and I've watched it grow. I've seen young lives changed for the better, marveling at our ability to do such wonderful things, only to be stung by defeat at another time with another child.

A thousand memories flood my mind and a thousand faces flash past — faces of young people, staff members, and others who have made their mark on the Boys Ranch and upon me. I'm filled with such memories, and they are treasured memories.

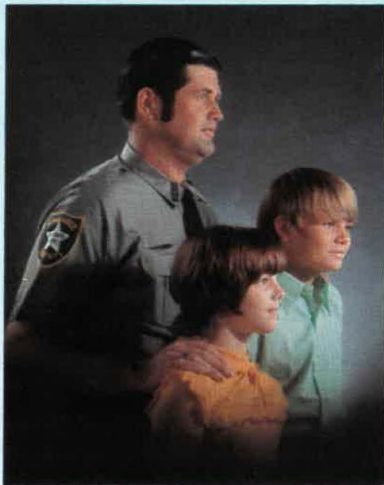
I'm grateful for the privilege of being a part of the Boys Ranch and all that has evolved from it. I look forward, with great expectations, to being a part of the future of the Florida Sheriffs Youth Fund.

The future of the Youth Fund must incorporate vitality, service, and growth. The need is great, and it seems to be getting greater all the time. The complexities and uncertainties of contemporary life are causing problems for today's families, and the children are so very often the innocent victims of crisis in the family.

We can't help all of them right now. There are just too many... but we can help a lot of them. We can help more and more of them as we grow and expand our programs. Each and every one that we do help is a major victory for us and for our American communities.

At a time when many human services agencies are in trouble, due to their dependency upon government funding, which is being cut back, the Florida Sheriffs Youth Fund is "looking good." We have never asked for direct federal or state funding, and we are blessed with the friendship and support of a lot of generous people.

Construction projects currently under way at the Boys Ranch, Girls Villa, and Youth Ranch will bring those programs to completion before the end of next year. The new construction will enable us to bring up to 50



BOYS RANCH IS . . .

A residential group child care program for dependent, neglected, or homeless boys between the ages of eight and eighteen. It is not an institution for juvenile delinquents. The Boys Ranch is sponsored by the Florida Sheriffs Association and operated by the Florida Sheriffs Youth Fund. It was founded in 1957 and currently has approximately 108 boys in residence at any given time. The Boys Ranch is located in North Florida, about halfway between Jacksonville and Tallahassee and nine miles north of the town of Live Oak on County Road 795.

THE FLORIDA SHERIFFS YOUTH FUND IS . . .

A charitable, non-profit corporation, sponsored by the Florida Sheriffs Association, to manage and operate the Boys Ranch, Girls Villa, Youth Ranch, Camping Program and any other youth programs that might later be developed by the Florida Sheriffs Association. An important function of the Youth Fund is the raising, receiving, budgeting, and disbursing of funds for its programs. The Youth Fund and its programs are supported almost entirely by voluntary gifts. Gifts and bequests can be made to the Youth Fund for the exclusive benefit of any single program, such as the Boys Ranch, Girls Villa, or Youth Ranch, or they may be made without restriction to be distributed among existing programs as most needed or to be used for the development of new programs at the discretion of the Governing Board. Youth Fund Central Offices are co-located with the Boys Ranch.

MAILING ADDRESS — Florida Sheriffs Youth Fund, Boys Ranch, Florida, 32060
Telephone: AC-904 842-5501

GIRLS VILLA . . .

A similar program for girls located two miles east of Bartow, Florida, on Route 60. Originally conceived by the Sunshine State Women's Chamber of Commerce of Madeira Beach, Florida, the Girls Villa was adopted as a project of the Florida Sheriffs Association in 1970. The first buildings were completed and the first girls admitted in 1972. There are approximately 50 girls in residence at any given time. Mailing address and telephone number for the Boys Ranch, Girls Villa, and Youth Ranch are the same as for the Youth Fund.

YOUTH RANCH IS . . .

The most recently developed residential group child care program of the Florida Sheriffs Youth Fund. Also sponsored by the Florida Sheriffs Association, it was opened in 1978. It is located just east of the intersection of the McMullen-Booth Road and County Road 102 near Clearwater, Florida. The Youth Ranch has approximately 30 boys and girls in residence at any given time. It provides care in a homelike environment for brothers and sisters who are dependent, neglected, or homeless. Mailing address and telephone number are the same as for the Youth Fund.

additional boys and girls into residential care at any given time.

Last year, we operated a small-scale pilot summer camping program at the Boys Ranch involving about 40 boys. This year, our camping program served more than 250 boys and girls at four different sites which we leased from the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America. Next year, we hope to have about 500 young people in our camping program and to acquire our own Youth Fund camping facility.

Additionally, we will be developing a "wilderness program" so that we can work with youngsters who are too emotionally disturbed to fit into the more structured framework of residential group care.

We are searching in South Florida for suitable property upon which to develop another Youth Ranch. We truly need a residential program in South Florida, because so many of our children come from that area of the state.

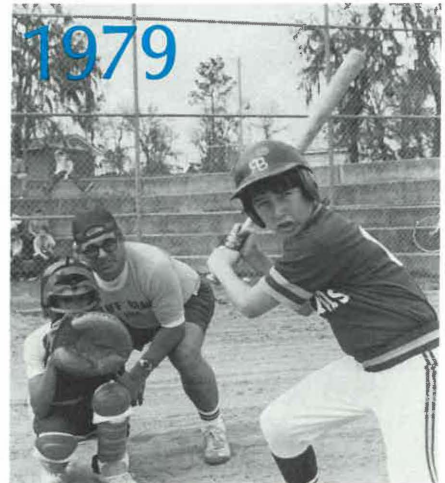
South Florida will not be a stopping place, however, because our goal is to establish residential programs nearer to areas of dense population throughout the state and to improve, still further, our family counseling services which already serve the entire state.

The Youth Fund has an exciting and meaningful future, not only for those of us who are in the child care profession, but for those children and their families who now and in the future will have need of our services.

There are others, also, who are vitally interested in the Youth Fund, and they are VIP's for sure. They are the people who care what happens to dependent, neglected, and homeless boys and girls. They are the people who foot the bills, through their generous gifts, so that the Youth Fund can continue to exist and serve.

I think about these good people when I think about our 25th Anniversary. Without them, we just never would have made it. Thank you.

The Way We Were. . .





Florida Sheriffs Girls Villa:

An Outstanding Child Care Center Blessed with Superior Facilities

The early history of the Florida Sheriffs Girls Villa is described in Suwannee River Saga under two headings: " 'Little Sister' Makes Her Debut," and "Girls Villa Site Was 'Made to Order.' "

Much progress has been made since those early days, as evidenced by the pictures on these pages. They show the 1982 status of an outstanding child care facility that is currently approaching its full potential.

Two residence cottages for girls which are now under construction will complete a master plan originally developed in the early 1970s. The Villa will then include five residence cottages for girls, an administration building, tennis courts, two staff residences, a horse barn and pasture, and a multi-purpose activity center that provides a chapel, a learning center, a large recreation room and a swimming pool.



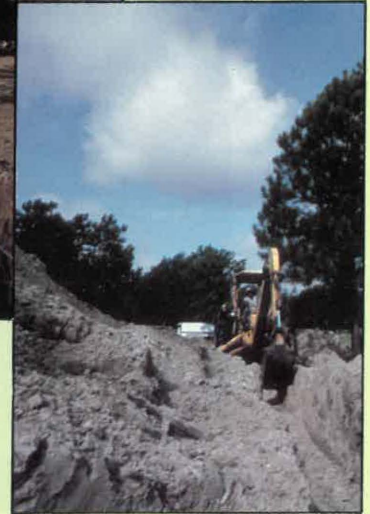
Three residence cottages for girls are now in use.



Below is the Villa administration building.



Current construction work will add two more cottages.



The activity center is a multi-purpose facility.





Multi-purpose activity center is expected to be completed before the end of 1982.

Youth Ranch Nearing Completion

**Plans Began to Jell
Seven Years Ago
When We Went to See
A Man About a Cow**



This spacious building will be residence cottage No. 3.

Not long after the Florida Sheriffs Girls Villa opened for business in 1972 we began to see the need for a new facility where brothers and sisters could live together. It was one of our high priority goals, but it remained out of reach financially until an 80-year-old Clearwater man by the name of D. A. Salls got in touch with us and said he wanted to talk about giving a cow to the Boys Ranch. That was in 1975.

When Youth Fund President Harry Weaver and Vice President Don Genung went to see Salls, they discovered that he and his wife, Catherine, lived in a large house on a substantial piece of property between Clearwater and Safety Harbor.

It turned out that the Salls were financially well off and raising cattle was a hobby, rather than a business. It also became apparent that they had more than an idle interest in the Boys Ranch and Girls Villa. They asked many questions, and the first visit developed into a whole string of visits.

As the talks progressed, the Salls' offer of one cow was increased to three cows, and eventually they decided to donate their entire herd of 54 Charolais cattle to the Boys Ranch.

After the cattle were transported to the Boys Ranch the dialogue could have ended, but it didn't. The Salls held further talks with Weaver and Genung about the



Former Salls home was renovated for use as the first residence cottage.



Two staff residences will complete the campus master plan.

proposed Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranch. They liked the idea that it would bring together brothers and sisters who seldom had an opportunity to see each other because they were housed some 200 miles apart at the Boys Ranch and Girls Villa.

“Our house is too big for just the two of us,” they told Weaver and Genung, and they wanted to know if it could be converted into a residence cottage for boys and girls.

Weaver said it could, and the talks began focusing on arrangements for the Salls to donate their home and surrounding acres as a Youth Ranch site. Once these details were worked out, additional land was purchased adjoining the donated land, and by 1976 the Youth Ranch was an actual project, rather than just a proposal.

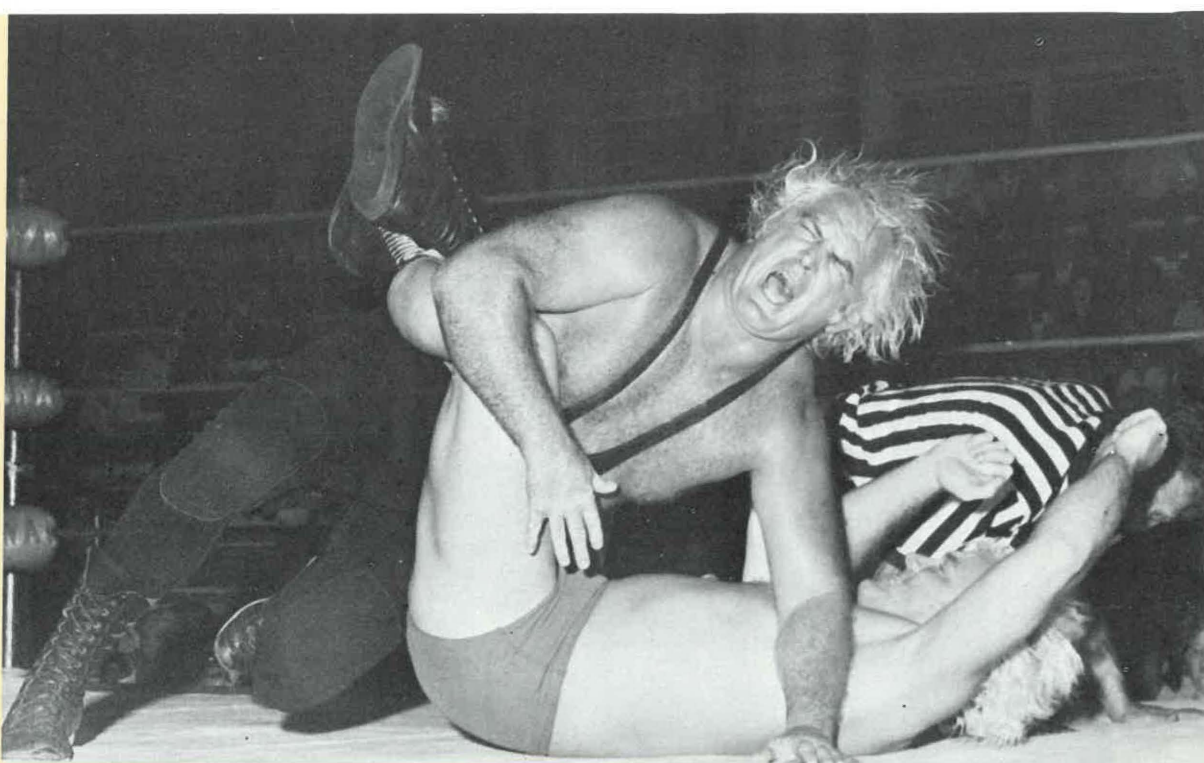
After the Salls moved out, their home was remodeled

to accommodate ten youngsters and a married couple employed as cottage parents. The first youngsters were admitted in 1978, and we immediately began adding facilities.

When current construction projects are finished, the campus will be complete. It will include three residence cottages for boys and girls, an administration building, two staff residences, and a multi-purpose activity center which will provide a chapel, swimming pool, learning center, library, arts and crafts center, and large recreation room.

Thus, by the end of 1982 the Youth Ranch will have completed its amazing transition from drawing board sketches to completed buildings.

How difficult it is to believe that all this began just seven years ago with four people discussing a cow.



Pain without profit.

Gifts and Givers — An Endless Variety

Dieters do it, so do wrestlers, musicians, runners, butchers, bakers, race car drivers, real estate developers, club ladies, Sheriffs, widows with diamond rings, Governors and people from all points of the human spectrum.

We could write a book — volumes in fact — about the generous people who support us with gifts and services. But for now, time and space will permit only a few examples chosen at random. We offer them to emphasize that we are totally dependent on voluntary contributions for our survival.

Among our good friends, for instance, is a central Florida man who asks dieters to sign a pledge. They agree to send the Boys Ranch \$25 if they cheat.

We reserve a special place in our affections for those bruised and battered professional wrestlers who, from time to time, slam each other around the ring and then send the profits to the Boys Ranch.

There are some elderly musicians who call themselves the Crosswinds Musical Rascals. They play for parties in the Clearwater area, and give their profits to the Boys Ranch and other charities.

Sheriffs have gone to great lengths to support our programs, even to the extent of putting on boxing and wrestling exhibitions.

Escambia County Sheriff Vince Seely is doing his bit for the Ranch too. He stages an annual benefit marathon, and runs in it. Other Sheriffs are following his lead up to a point. They are willing to fire starter pistols, hold stop watches and give runners a motorcycle escort, but running is out!

Sheriff Don Genung once squeezed his frame into the seat of a micro-midget racer to publicize a race for the benefit of the Boys Ranch.



George Chain, 82, William Sommerton, 91, and Arnold Cummins, 88, harmonize on their harmonicas for the benefit of the Boys Ranch. They are members of the Crosswinds Musical Rascals.



Governor LeRoy Collins (right) gave a miniature gas-powered automobile to the Boys Ranch in 1958. It was accepted by (from left) Florida Sheriffs Bureau Director Don McLeod and Sheriffs Bill Joyce, Ed Blackburn, Jr., and Leslie Bessenger.

An elderly widow in a retirement community sold her diamond ring — a treasured memento of a long marriage — and gave the money to the Boys Ranch.

“When my husband put that ring on my finger 51 years ago, it was with the hope of a future family,” she wrote, “and we did have a very happy family by adopting two lovely, otherwise homeless, boys. Now I feel we would both like to have the ring continue its work by helping some other homeless boys.”

A Lake Wales man arranged to have two new houses auctioned off, with the proceeds going to the Boys Ranch.

The Sea Gulls, a club in the Clearwater area, has been raising money for the Girls Villa for many years, principally with an annual fashion show and card party. To date they have raised over \$30,000.

A state prison convict sent money and a note. “If there had been a Boys Ranch when I was growing up,” he wrote, “I might not be where I am today.”

From time to time various fraternities at universities in Florida have offered to donate a day’s labor. We have always accepted gratefully, and we have also managed to give them a vigorous workout.

When Governor LeRoy Collins was given a miniature gas-powered automobile as a gift, he turned it over to Sheriffs so it could be auctioned off for the benefit of the Boys Ranch.

We never cease to be amazed at the loyalty of our generous supporters, and the endless variety of their gifts. They are the real heroes of the Suwannee River Saga, for without them our child care projects would have ended up on the trash heap of broken dreams many years ago.




College fraternity members got a vigorous workout.



Sheriff Don Genung and Largo Police Chief Charlie Wetmore (with flag) helped to publicize benefit micro-midget race in 1958.



Start and finish of the First Annual Sheriffs’ Marathon held at Mount Dora, April 3, 1982, and sponsored by Sheriffs John Polk, Lawson Lamar and Noel Griffin.



Many hands

This special issue of THE RANCHER is the handiwork of many hands. Jim Mason, Director of Public Relations for the Florida Sheriffs Youth Fund, took the cover picture. His assistant, Linda Mathews, helped with the historical research and took some photos. Frank Jones, the Florida Sheriffs Association's Art Director, used his skills on the graphics — especially the page layouts. Al Hammock, Director of Promotions and Publications for the Florida Sheriffs Association, made certain that deadlines were met. Carl Stauffer played his usual role as Editor of THE RANCHER. He wrote the text and took some of the photographs. Our own Carol Jens set the type, and The Printing House, a Tallahassee firm, produced the final result.

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Boys Ranch, Florida 32060
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