

This is MOTLEY #2

published by Bjo Trimble, 5734 Parapet, Long Beach 8, Calif.

MOTLEY represents a project to write to deaf children who need love and contact with the world. Everyone who is now writing to a child will get a copy of each MOTLEY, which will in the future contain information about the schools and answer questions sent in to the editor. Copies will also be circulated through N3F and other agencies; extra copies available on request for greater publicity of the project and the idea behind it.

Deaf children are at a disadvantage, for they do not have the outward physical problems -- such as steel braces or crutches -- that other handicapped children have; and therefore deaf children do not so easily gain public sympathy. Many deaf children also have other handicaps, of course, but in most respects they look and act like ordinary children.

Except that one important contact with the world is missing, or almost so. Even the children who can hear slightly are hearing only extremes in sound, which can be as puzzling and frightening as no sound at all. And for the totally deaf, the concepts of words and sounds have little meaning. Consider that the idea of a personal name must often be taught to a deaf child entering school. Think how the concepts of "buy a car", "hit by a car", "the car was driven by", "the car went by" must be taught entirely by illustrations and signs.

The deaf children in most schools are intelligent and responsive; but it is locked inside the child, and must be reached and released by tedious teaching methods. Along with the lessons, the child must also be convinced that it is worthwhile coming out of his silent world into this world; and without a show of affection or at least interest from us, he can hardly think that the effort is worth the time and trial. In this child's loss of hope and interest, can be our world's loss; his intelligence and contributions are important to us. Any loss of intelligence today is a great one.

One person cannot handle this project without a great deal of money and assistance; and even then it would be an almost full-time job. There are at least one or more residential deaf schools in every state (or there should be, it is your duty to find out why your state does not have one!) In these schools are many children who need contact with people. With the aid of local clubs, churches or work groups, each of you could take on your own local school and attend to the existing problems. It would take some effort on your part, but the results would be gratifying.

Contact the administrator of the school first. Tell him of the idea, and ask for cooperation. Explain the basic project, or have him contact me for details on how it got started and how it is doing now. In most cases, you will find that he will listen to you, and check on what you say. Schools must be careful about giving out names, and information. However, once convinced that you are sincere and will be responsible about continuing the project, most administrators should be interested in trying the idea.

Keeping the project going on a small scale is fairly easy. Mostly it is a matter of keeping a cross-file on the children and the names (and addresses) of the letter-writers. It also helps to keep the children filed by classes, with the teacher's name on each card. In this way, a check may be kept on the writers, to make sure that they are continuing the notes and cards to their child. If they are not, then it is up to you to quietly

find out why the writer isn't sending letters and take care of the situation by either aiding the writer in some way, or finding another writer for the child. Under no circumstances should the child be dropped after he starts getting mail; this would be worse than no communication in the first place! With the cooperation of the school, this should not happen.

Your local Girl Scout troops will help you with this project; there are three Scout troops on the present project, with another one already requesting names to write to. Ladies' clubs are also good people to tell about this need.

Remember these things, however; do not try to start a "charity". The loving and giving should be sincere, or it will not work. The schools will resent being "patronized", of course, and the children will eventually realize that they are getting second-hand affection. For this reason, it is not good for a whole club to "adopt" one child from a school. The child will be showered with clothes and gifts, of course. But what of the other children in the class? They will feel even more neglected! It is much better for those who will, to "adopt" a child or two personally, to write to; and let the rest of the club contribute occasional party money for the whole class (or the whole school).

Also, remember that not all children in state-run residential schools are neglected and unloved. Some of them are, and need much attention; these children's names should be given to people who will really care for them. Many children in these schools just need mail, and are perfect for the Scout troops to write to, or for the younger members of your group. It is very lonely in a school, and parents who are loving at home tend to be thoughtless about mail. It is the communication that counts.

As usual, send stamped, self-addressed envelopes to "your" child, if you want an answer to your letters. And do not expect much in writing or coherence; remember that normal letter-writing is not expected of children until about age 9 or 10, and even then it is in short, usually incomplete sentences. With these children, letters are even more difficult.

The growth of the project is fantastic. People didn't realize the situation before, but now they have responded so fast that the first school mentioned in MOTLEY #1 is almost filled. News about the project is obsolete before it is published, often; and reprinted news is completely useless for public information. In something like 8 weeks, there has been over 115 responses to this project. It has grown in that short time to be too much for one person to handle without a great deal of extra backing. For those of you who wish to respond, I suggest you try your local school first. We will always, I suppose, have some names on tap, but they will be from either the first school or from the two California schools. I now have a list of a dozen or so older children.

It has been quite wonderful for me to discover how many loving and giving people there are in this ol' world! Thank you.

Meanwhile, there are questions, and information, and things to say, so MOTLEY will continue, and will be sent to anyone who wishes it. Any other projects started will be welcome to use MOTLEY as a contact, if they wish. MOTLEY will contain the most up-to-date news and information possible. No other "news" agency or published "facts" should be believed unless you check with MOTLEY first. That will prevent confusion and misinformation. When you start your local project, keep in touch; we're interested!