



Hendrick Home for Children 1939-2009 Our 70th Year, *David W. Miller*

A few weeks ago, my thoughtful garage-sale crazed brother-in-law found and purchased for my wife a bonanza estate sale of 500 to 3,000 piece puzzles, made impossibly complicated for even the most sophisticated puzzle maker. Elaine has since completed one of those puzzles. The created 1,000 piece picture suggests a serene, heavenly landscape that relieves me momentarily from all earthly concerns. Even with the individual lines and crevices around each piece that are visible but not seen, the beauty of the puzzle presents me with a motif that shouts out loudly that life is good, elevating my earth-bound limitations to a renewed spiritual resonance; and, I remain impressed that somebody, namely my wife, had the patience, fortitude and determination to achieve such beauty against challenging odds.

A brief session of research for a self-appointed assignment of summarizing the 70 glorious years of Hendrick Home for Children reminds me of Elaine's puzzle. As I look at seventy years of world events, social changes, budgets, rules, activities, facilities, programs, employees, exes, administrators, trustees, and children who make up the history of Hendrick Home, I am reminded of the veracity of the Christmas sign we post over the Home's entrance each Christmas that reads, Miracle on 27th Street. As one looks carefully at the history of the Home, we know that the challenging pains of life existed throughout our first 70 year history. We can see the human-side of the lines and crevices, the pain that children have experienced, the pressure of possible bankruptcy Mr. and Mrs. Hendrick felt even as late as age 63, or the day-to-day trials of house parenting, or the growing restrictive nature of governmental regulations. But still, as one looks at the big picture of our 70 years, you are reminded that God has used the hands of man and the events of history, such as the unexpected discovery of oil, to achieve our Father's heavenly goal for children He knew would need the safe refuge of Hendrick Home for Children. Look with me if you would at a few of events and people that represent some of the historical pieces of our 70th Anniversary puzzle.

The first and biggest piece of the puzzle involves Mr. and Mrs. Thomas G. Hendrick and their designated resources. Mr. and Mrs. Hendrick established and endowed the Home in 1939. According to the Abilene Reporter News, they placed "a few million dollars" of cash investments, land and buildings into a permanent trust with a bank in Ft. Worth. From those resources, the Home realized an income stream in that inaugural year of just \$21,387, with an expenditure of \$19,727. Fifty years later, in 1989, the income had increased to \$1.5 million. This year, our Board has approved a budget of \$ 2.4 million for 2009-10. The Hendricks' loved children and were wise in how they have been able to aid 7 generations of children with unlimited number of children yet to come to their Home.

The three administrators of the Home add three more pieces to the puzzle. Mr. Hendrick gave the Home the money it needed to have a good beginning. He also provided the general outline of his vision for the Home as a nondenominational agency; but it was Tom Hendricks's selection of the second Tom, Tom Roberts, that created a solid foundation for the new Home. Tom Roberts was an insurance agent who came to Dr. Rupert Richardson, professor and president of Hardin Simmons University, seeking advice about starting a new professional career of working with young people. Before Roberts could start a new degree program, Mr. Hendrick offered Roberts the new post. Roberts was a man of great Christian values, mild natured but firm as necessary, omnipresent and omnipotent toward the children, especially when they had erred. From 1939 to 1977, Roberts took charge of all financial matters.

On a Sunday night after church in 1966, Roberts invited Claude Hicks to coffee across the street from First Baptist Church, at Mac Eglin's, to discuss Hicks' possible interest in becoming Robert's administrative assist. Two weeks later, following a weekend visit with Tom and Faye Roberts and Claude and Jenny Hicks at the Brazos River Ranch, Hicks accepted the position. Hicks worked with Roberts as new licensing rules were being established as law. Hicks also had a vision for the need to build new facilities and renovate the original structures. In 1973, Roberts had gained confidence in Hick's leadership, so he retired as Superintendent and took the role as President, elevating Claude as the Administrator of the Home. Roberts gave all of the operation responsibilities to Claude with the exception of finances, which Roberts kept until his death in 1977. Under Hicks, the Home experienced tremendous changes, both in child care practices and facility changes. The new laws required that one single house mother could no longer care an indefinite number of children as during Roberts' years. Only 8 children per adult would be permitted. This law meant major changes in personnel as well as facility space for the children. Direct child care couples had to be hired and home-like cottages were built. By early 1977, many of these changes had been made, including the building of the gymnasium, swimming pool, two cottages, and major renovation of the main building, most projects being paid from the sell of the Presidio Ranch, netting the Home \$2.9 million. Hicks was a stickler for details. Willie Turnerhill once said of Mr. Hicks: "If anything goes wrong, it won't be long before he catches it." Claude also was known as an "idea" person, particularly after having gone on long driving trips. His vice presidents generally had a long "to-do" list upon his arrival. Clearly, Hicks moved the Home forward in the midst of a changing culture in the child care industry. He retired as President Emeritus on January 1 1994, a position he held for yet another year. In all, Hicks served the Home for almost 30 years. Upon his recommendation, the Board hired David Miller as his predecessor.

On January 1, 1994, David Miller was promoted from Vice President of Community Development to be just the third president of the Home, now spanning over 70 years. David came to the Home in June 1989, following administrative responsibilities at Hardin-Simmons University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. David has been at the Home for 20 years, and like Roberts and Hicks, serves as a deacon at First Baptist Church and followed them as a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University.

A fifth piece of the 70 year puzzle includes IRS rule changes. From 1939 to 1969, very few federal regulations were placed on the Home. In a 1969 effort by the Treasury Department to stop a tax loophole, a new law was imposed on all private endowments, requiring that they become Private Operating Foundations, meaning that by law, the Home would have to spend 100% of all of its income from principle and that the trust would have to provide as income no less than 5 ¾% of the principle back to the supported agency, either from its interest earnings and/or principle if necessary. The effect of this law meant that the Home through the Trust could no longer build its endowment according to the Homes established needs and plan. A second Tax Reform in 1986 required the Home to divest itself from any active income from ranching. The new law required the cattle to be sold within 10 years and that income from the grassland could only come from passive income, meaning the Home could only lease the grassland. In effect, the cowboy ways of the ranch boys had changed forever.

A sixth historic puzzle piece involves special programs focused to assist special needs of children. In the early 1970's, both boys and girls were moved from the Abilene campus to the Hendrick River Ranch. By 1976, the ranch became an exclusive facility more suited for boys only. In 1978, the Home experimented by partnering with the Texas Department of Human Resources by establishing an Emergency Group Home for children infant to 17 over an 8 county region. A foster care license was also granted to the Home for a family in Cross Plains. In an attempt to help latch-key children, the Home opened the Rhodes Child Development Center as an after school program. Another program, called Family Aid, assisted a total 278, mostly minority families, with financial aid, helping families to be able to keep their own children in their own homes by paying for utilities and food. The Home invested over \$350,000 into this program in the 1970's. Since 1996, the Home has operated a Family Care program, offering an on-campus apartment to single parents and providing food, utilities and customized counseling for each family member as needed. In return, the single parent is required to gain a job skill, stay employed and care for their own children. The Home serves 45 residential clients through this program.

Bill and Margaret Turnerhill is a central piece of the 70 year puzzle. Bill was awarded a horse statue trophy by the Home for 30 years of service, with an inscription that summarized his attributes to the Home, Mr. Hendrick, and all three administrators, succinctly stated: "Churchman, Chauffeur, Cowboy, and Chef." Margaret was a second mother to the children at the Home, to whom many of the kids would confide. She used to say she would never tell the administration what a child told her unless it needed to be told. Both Willie and Margaret were honored by naming the dining room in their memories.

The eighth piece of the Home's historic 70 year span includes trustees who have spent most of their lives serving the needs of the Home through their governing responsibilities. The first Board members were three: Mr. and Mrs. Hendrick and Tom Roberts. Only 12 other community leaders held that position for the first 50 years, namely, Lewis Ackers, Val Canon, O.P. Thrane, E.M. Collier, Carl Springer, Roscoe Blankenship, Oliver Howard, Walter Johnson, Boone Powell, Claude Hicks, Kenneth Murphy, and three current trustees Leland Kelley (1976 to present), Howard Wilkins (1980 to present), and Amber Cree (1982 to present). Of that list, Oliver Howard served as trustee for more than 30 years, beginning in 1966, and served as chairman for over 20 of those years. In the early 1990's, the Board was expanded to 9 members, adding in recent years Grady Barr, Lee Hamilton, Darlene Stevens, Joe Crawford, Dusty Rhodes and Buddy Napier. Leland Kelly's current 33 years as trustee makes him the longest serving Board member in the 70 year history of the Home.

With these eight and hundreds of other significant pieces in the history of the Home yet untold, the collection of facts, figures and events creates an unparalleled fingerprint of the work of God in the lives of men, women and children who have lived a portion of their lives at and with the Home. The providential story of how oil was accidentally discovered, avoiding certain bankruptcy for Mr. and Mrs. Hendrick, who in turn established the Home in later years, is reflective of story after story of how God works in the lives of His people.

As the Hendrick Home epoch continues over the next 70 years and thereafter, there will be new stories to come that will be equally important, but none more important than what already has been witnessed. The Home's 2020 Vision strategic goal of doubling the number of children served sheds a hint into the broad strokes of what will likely occur in the near future. But unsuspected and exciting new challenges and opportunities will come as God supplies new insight into the needs of the Home, our community and our world as the linear dream of Mr. and Mrs. Hendrick continues.