

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To All Parents:

With all of the "ado" in the "Letters to the Editor," I should like to come into your home in this issue of the "Pilot" and talk to you about a mutual problem of parents and the school, the development of delinquency patterns among children. In writing this article I do not claim to be an authority; I merely bring some of the observations of a few authorities on the matter.

This case study presented is the story of a school salutatorian. That is he should have been salutatorian of his class for his mental ability was somewhat lower than the valedictorian, but higher than the salutatorian. The case study presents many side lights on the problem.

This is the story. The boy came to the small town from one of the largest high schools in the state. This large high school had almost everything to offer—Principal, Dean of Boys, several supervisors, and a Director of Recreation. High School courses were almost unlimited. The boys carried shop courses along with the usual History and English. By the time he was halfway through his Sophomore year, he had failed one course, and received the lowest possible passing marks in several others. He had also, by then been sent home once for Truancy and once for an accusation of smoking. Each time the mother minimized the son's improper behavior; each time she blamed the school for not having had discipline which would keep her son out of trouble. "After all," she said, "It is really not my son's fault; the teachers always pick on him."

The family then moved to a small town with a crowded high school. The boy made no better and no worse adjustment in the small school than he had in the large city school. During the first year and a half in the small high school, the boy had failed in two courses, and received the lowest possible passing marks five times. By this time he had been absent from school many times, and very often tardy. Rarely ever did a note from home place any responsibility on the boy for his absence or tardiness. By this time, he had been sent home for smoking, and again his mother made arrangements for her son to return to school on "probation." Again she maligned the school and principal for their failure to teach discipline.

During the first half of the next year, the boy was absent several times, and tardy many times without accepting any responsibility in the matter. Explanations from home usually "excused" the son. Again the boy followed his previous pattern and was this time expelled for smoking. Again the mother maligned the school; her son had wanted to graduate, and the school had taken away his opportunity. Again neither the mother or the son accepted any responsibility for the boy's action.

During the same time the boy was having trouble at school, he was also having trouble with the local police. First, such things as "squirreling," loud exhaust noises in front of home late at night, and finally car theft. Each time the mother got the boy out of his "jam." Each time she sympathized with her son, that the police were "picking" on her son. But finally the son had gone through the "delinquency pattern" to where her complaining that the school and the police were unjust to her son had to be told to the judge.

The juvenile officer made several comments concerning the development of the case. His explanation was as follows:

1. The real trouble began when the mother minimized the first violation with the statement, "I did the same thing when I was a kid, but didn't get caught."

2. In the early treatment of the case, the mother developed the child was "framed" or "picked on" attitude on the part of the boy until he got to the place where he failed to accept any responsibility for his actions.

3. The mother had always gotten the boy out of the penalty for violation until the boy got to the place where he believed he could "always get away with it."

4. Since the mother developed the "he was framed" attitude on the part of the boy, he soon became antagonistic to any one who had any authority over him, whether teacher, principal, police or judge.

5. Smoking and truancy amounted to the same thing as far as the boy was concerned—both represented authority to the boy, and since he despised any one with authority, he showed his resentment by breaking a major rule.

6. When the boy got to the place where he failed to accept responsibility for his actions, and felt that others were always to blame for his action he had become a delinquent. It only remained for time and circumstances to work out the pattern.

Various writers have pointed out that delinquency has its beginnings at very early age, very often in the home, sometimes in the school, and continues in the home, the school, and the community. Groves, in his book, "Dynamic Mental Hygiene" calls attention to some of these factors: "Resentment toward all authority because of its mode of expression in the home and family appears to be the underlying factor in many cases of delinquency."

"The delinquent sibling was always an individual who had at some time in his development been blocked in his need for satisfying personal relationships within the family circle, while the non-delinquent included in the study escaped such frustrations."

"If parents have been lax in their discipline of their children, such children do not learn to govern themselves, and lack the ability to practice self restraint."

This presentation of the responsibility of the home is not intended to indicate that the school has no responsibility in the delinquency problem of youth, but rather to indicate a joint responsibility of the parent and the school. In the case cited above, however, the home factor made it impossible for either the local police or the school to work out a solution to the case. Actually throughout the several past years the mother had actually been contributing to the delinquency of her son.

Where anti-social behavior has persisted over a period of several years, it is hard for parents to face the evidence that apparently a delinquent pattern has developed. Sometimes the parent half faces the issue and decides to move to a new location to solve the problem. Here no one seemingly notices him. Then, in order to get attention, he again, commits the over act of disobedience, in order to get the attention he was failing to get. The mother, or father, too, may have missed the attention they had been receiving in the former community, and again commence the same rumpus, make the same accusations they were making in the former community. Thus they are again soon in their former practice of increasing the boy's delinquency.

Groves again points out that where a delinquency pattern develops over a period of several years that "there is danger that he will revert to the former mode of behavior when he again faces thwarting situation." On the surface parents tend to look only at the actual offense whether it might be smoking, or truancy, or drinking. Actually the significant situation is that the individual has reverted—broken over—to his mode of behavior.

Now that some of the delinquency pattern is indicated, I should like to indicate the non-delinquency pattern as far as the school is concerned. Send the school your child who is cheerful, well nourished, properly clothed, who wants to learn, who is taught at home to respect authority, and to cheerfully obey the regulations of the home and the school, and to accept responsibility for his own actions, and I'll guarantee that the child will gain a reasonably good education.

Send your child to school who is morose, crabby, adverse to work, with no respect for authority, and who does not cheerfully obey the regulations of the home, and is taught at home that it is not important to obey the regulations of the school, and I'll guarantee you that he can't get much from school. But he won't become a delinquent, he already is a delinquent.

When you sit down to write the next "letter to the editor" won't you ponder over the case study presented here? If the letter must be written, won't you get permission from the student and his parents to study the entire file, all the correspondence concerning the student, all the record of truancy, all of the attempts of the school to straighten out the student, all of the explanations of tardiness and absence? Won't you also take into consideration all of the time and worry that former teachers, the school, the principal, and in many cases the board, has spent in the attempt to help the student make the adjustment? Won't you also take into consideration the great percent of pupils who have had very little difficulty in making adjustment to school?

Groves also points out that "The community attitude is after all the sum total of the attitude of its citizens. He also points out unconscious motivation of delinquent behavior was the concerted form of public opinion condoning certain forms of lawbreaking, and attitude towards law and authority. Before you write your letter, won't you also take into consideration whether or not your letter will contribute towards such motivation? What will its effect be on the boy or girl with a delinquent pattern who is on the way back, and is hesitating at the crossroads?"

LYNN O. HAMPTON,
Superintendent, Brookings Schools.

Brookings, Oregon
April 1, 1954

I wish to deny the statement attributed to me by Mrs. McGinnis that I did not know the stiff penalty that pupils would be dropped from school for smoking. Mr. Hampton went over the matter in a faculty meeting in my presence the first of the year. Furthermore, I set up as training rules for athletes that there shall be no smoking or drinking by any member of the team, and that members violating the training regulation would be dismissed from the team.

ARTHUR W. GUTHRIE.

April, 1954

Dear Editor:

Now after all the other comment on the subject of the dismissal of a senior from school for

smoking, I'd like to comment too.

First I'd like to say that I realize that discipline must be quite a problem for the authorities at times. However, I feel that those in charge of our children should not only be trained, they should have the right kind heart within them. They should know what it means to not only love their own children, but what it means to love other people's children also.

Discipline is a word I feel many people do not understand. It is a subject which teachers and parents might discuss to try to find out its true meaning.

To me it seems that to have discipline one necessarily needs to punish. I'd be willing to bet that there are teachers whom the children admire and respect so much that there is no problem of discipline.

Once—a long time ago, when I was just through high school, I was left in charge of a small boy who made me furious because I could not make him mind. I had a wise aunt who told me that all one had to do to have discipline was to love enough. Many times I've thought of this. Perhaps we all have a different idea of what love is, but if we love we certainly care. We certainly want what is best for anyone.

It reminds me of the Ten Commandments. God gave those to man as rules to live by and they are still rules to live by, but when Christ came He said—Thou shalt

love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. St. Math. 22:37-40. To me that solves all the problems, but of course religion is not to be taught in public schools, so perhaps there are many who don't know about this.

Anyway, it seems to me that man made rules or laws are something to go by, but at times we must consider if it is best to be right or if it is better to be reasonable and understanding. In other words, to have enough love in our hearts to be able to show justice and not to just punish.

MRS. JAMES DONNELLY.



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From where I sit... by Joe Marsh

Easy Does It—Again!

Ladies Aid Society had their rummage sale the other night—and as soon as the doors opened, "Easy" Roberts was inside.

Without a word, he headed straight for the coat counter, picked out a shabby old tweed jacket, and paid for it. "Easy" told me a little later that buying his jacket back was getting to be a regular habit.

"That's been my favorite smoking jacket for years," he said. "And my wife talks me into giving it away regularly. Then I get to thinking how much I like

it and hurry down to buy that jacket back. This is the third time I've done it!"

From where I sit, everyone's entitled to his own likes—whether it's a sports jacket, a baseball team, or the beverage he likes for dinner. For example, the wife likes coffee along with Saturday night spaghetti while I like a glass of beer. We never try to "sell" each other on our personal preferences.

Joe Marsh

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RUN DOWN... DOG TIRED?

*These symptoms if due to a vitamin deficiency occur only when daily intake of vitamins B1, B2, and niacin is less than minimum daily requirements over a prolonged period. In themselves, they do not prove a dietary deficiency as they may have other causes or be due to functional conditions.



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