

She Loves Kids—



Even "Unsuitable" Ones

"ROOM FOR ONE MORE" became, in turn, a popular book, movie, television show. But the woman whose life story was the basis for all three was a well-loved legend in our town of Upper Montclair, N.J., long before outsiders ever heard of her.

For years, my neighbor, Anna Rose Wright, has been doing more to give prospective parents-by-adoption a healthy, workable approach to that delicate relationship than any dozen "experts" put together.

Besides three children of their own, she and her chemical-engineer husband raised and put through college five little "visitors" who came for a few weeks—and stayed to join the family. These youngsters were no bargains. But as Anna Rose points out cheerfully, "Children aren't very suitable anyhow, so you may as well take the unsuitable ones and go on from there."

Those the Wrights took under their roof proved their unsuitability with gusto. Instead of retaliating or cracking down, however, Anna and Arthur Wright and their own children simply overwhelmed the unhappy rebels with love, warmth, and welcome.

Thirteen-year-old Jane, for example, was the unwanted daughter of parents who had remarried. A defiant tantrum thrower, she wouldn't lift a finger at first, or even smile. But the fun-loving Wright household proved too much for her. "Somehow I couldn't laugh as easily as the Wrights, but before I knew what was happening, I'd learned!" recalls Jane, who is now the contented mother of three children.

By rearing five homeless waifs in addition to her own children, Anna Rose Wright lived the idea that there's always "room for one more"

By JAMES C. G. CONNIFF

Another addition, Jimmy John, was even worse. A tiny, polio-stricken orphan, he used the little strength he had to kick and bite. The Wrights' answer was to pour on more of the love they had so much of. Coupled with years of surgery, it inspired Jimmy John to fight his way back to health so successfully he became an Eagle Scout.

Then there was Joey, an ill-mannered, grimy little illiterate with adenoids. Today he is a courteous, clean-cut young man. Says a close friend, "Out came Joey's adenoids and tonsils, and in went the miracle life with the Wrights." The family's friendly, rough-and-tumble ways in time had the same painlessly civilizing effect on two more rough diamonds named Paul and Albert.

ANNA ROSE is very down-to-earth about the whole thing. She warns that anyone who takes a disturbed or destitute child will find that in the beginning "they lie frantically, brag unbearably, scream nightly in wild nightmares, and wet the bed." But grownups who love them enough to hang on will see definite improvement in six months, she believes—"although it takes at least a year before a child really settles down."

During her leisure hours Anna Rose has taught swimming to children at the Y, given sailing lessons to Girl Scout Mariners, run a high-spirited Episcopal boys' choir—and written such books as "Room for One More," "Barefoot Days," and "Summer at Buckhorn."

A distinguished critic calls them "children's books you will keep and remember long after you have thrown away dozens of the shabby, arty, frightened little volumes currently being acclaimed as literature." Part of the reason is that every line Anna Rose put down on paper was tried out on volunteer audiences of neighborhood children before the publisher ever saw it.

"I felt a book ought to be able to make a child forget his supper," she says. "I wrote for this effect and read it aloud before meals to see whether it could hold them against a little hunger."

All Anna Rose's children now are grown and gone, but as other children read her immortal books, they come knocking at her door to visit with the wonderful lady who wrote them.

She welcomes them all with a smile like morning sunlight—for, in this woman's heart, there always will be room for one more.

COVER:

This outdoorsman, photographed by Jim Pond in Conway, New Hampshire, is engaged in ice fishing—a fast-growing winter sport in northern areas of the country.

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