

Maylands
Children's

No. 3 in a series about
Tasmanian
Salvationists at work,
by
**CAPTAIN BARBARA
BOLTON**

RRANDY" was a very small girl when she arrived at the Maylands children's home in New Town, Tasmania. She had never lived with her own family; first there had been the hospital and then foster homes. She was "retarded" and society was short of a place for her.

Her new home was an old house, rambling, with a square tower. There were well-trodden lawns, sheltering trees, a fountain surrounded by flowers and playground equipment. The house rang with laughter and children's voices and in the garden the birds called to each other.

It was home for Randy. It was going to be home for a long time to come.

Exists For Children

Maylands exists for children who need a home. Sometimes their own homes have been broken by marital discord; sometimes their parents can't cope; sometimes they have never known a home.

So the children come to Maylands, the old ex-Victorian mansion in Price Street. Girls, boys, intelligent, retarded, teenage, small, the lively and outgoing, the withdrawn and introverted—all kinds of children come to form a new kind of family.

The home is run by Major Dorothy Hooper, the matron, and Captain Heather Moulden. They have the help of a domestic staff and some voluntary assistance with tasks like sewing, but fundamentally the responsibility and effort of managing Maylands falls on the two officers. The Major has spent 29 years and the Captain 10 in caring for other people's children. They know all about the problems of children from disorganised homes—they have learned through years of experience.

A HOME FOR RANDY

TV, and desks in bedrooms where students can do their homework. The children are coming home from school.

A 10-year-old stops the Captain to tell her with excitement of something which has happened at school.

A tall girl carries small Richards—who cannot walk and will never walk—apologetically.

Two little girls change into shorts and skirts and race outside to play on the trampoline.

Randy comes home from special school and runs up for a kiss.

Randy is 13 now. "A teenager," she reminds the officers each night when she is put to bed. But she will always be a child in her mind and she will always need care and she has no-one of her own to look after her.

It is the tragedy of society that there are so many children, like Randy.

But by the leavening grace of God there are also people like Dorothy Hooper and Heather Moulden.

(Names of children have been changed.)

for the Salvation Army) and talked to her about their home. When she told her husband of the encounter that night he suggested she should contact the home. That was how they became holiday parents to two children, Andrew and Sheryl. They have taken Andrew and Sheryl for weekends and holidays and Andrew's school work has lagged ahead with the extra individual attention. Andrew and Sheryl can't be adopted—as some of the other Maylands' children have been—but they have a sense of belonging to a family.

"They saved my sanity," says the holiday mother. Another couple took a child, Jenny, for weekends, went with her to Salvation Army meetings, became Salvationists and are now in charge of a corps. Jenny is now one of their family, their foster daughter.

Like all institutions today Maylands is expensive to run. Government payments for slates wards do not cover the costs of keeping the children and the home is subsidised by the red shield appeal and gifts from the community.

The costs would be considerably higher if the matron and Captain Moulden were paid at award rates. However, in common with other Salvation Army officers they receive only a living allowance. "Overtime" is not a word in their vocabulary. They work from early morning until late at night, sometimes seven days a week.

"You Have To Love"

Captain Moulden says, "You have to love children to do this kind of work. Otherwise you wouldn't exist."

Major Hooper feels that childcare workers must also have the gift of controlling children. Children, especially when they come from a background of insecurity, need the assurance of knowing that adults can cope. They need discipline based on understanding.

The children also need to feel they can confide in someone," says the matron, "and know that confidence won't be broken."

We leave the room where we have been talking and go out to see the home. There are bright colours, pretty curtains and pictures on the walls. There is a bright dressing room where older girls experiment with hair-styling, a games room, a typing room,

people can never understand or the family need not be left home alone.

Ask any over 60 member at a women's gathering, "How's your husband?" and she'll reply, "Oh, he's all right; he's home on his own. He doesn't mind being left alone."

I don't believe it, and what I observe of the patronage by the male community of these buildings which are often situated on prominent corners of any city or town tells me that men like company.

What's more, they like mixed company when it can be available to them—and it is available at the companion club. That's the place where men discover that women can talk about more than recipes and the supermarket prices, important as these topics are. Both men and women can enjoy playing carpet bowls and table-games and they can also appreciate hearing a speaker on a current topic.

Under the auspices of The Salvation Army, this club is open to men and women of any or no denomination, irrespective of racial or cultural background. Such a happy group of retired people attended the initial gathering of the companion club at the Melbourne T.H.Q. basement on a recent Monday evening. In the same place, on Wednesday evenings, persons who are still in the working-age group appreciate the activities of the red shield friendship club.—T.V.G.

CLUB VISITOR IN MELBOURNE



Brigadier Isabel Gale (right), who is responsible for the overseas activities companion club and the red shield friendship club, with a special guest at a friendship club meeting.