

# layman **action** for children

REPRINT FROM 20 YEARS  
AGO



While on an Exchange Teaching Programme in the United States of America I was assigned to a school in West Los Angeles, California. There I met, worked and talked with a group of educators, who, in addition to their teaching, had formed a group called "Layman ACTION for Children" aimed to aid financially needy children. Their special project was a Home in N.E. Mexico, on the outskirts of a small town, Ciudad Mante.

I became interested in their endeavours for "Casa Hogar" and with their help planned to visit the "home" during the Easter vacation.

Initially I took a flight to Mexico City where I was met by and taken into the home of Mrs. Ruiz, the originator and director of "Casa Hogar." She told me much about the home, the girls and the struggles to maintain them.

One night, later, Mrs. Ruiz and I took our seats on a bus that twelve hours and 300 miles later brought us to Ciudad Mante and "Casa Hogar" - - - - -



# "Our" children



## P O R   F A V O R - - -

The girls were running over the dirt heaps, out through the opening in the gaping fence and across the dust and rubble to where we were emerging from the car. They enveloped Mrs. Ruiz with loving arms, warm smiles and bright eyes. Having established that she was indeed coming to "Casa Hogar" they turned to gaze at me. My smile was returned shyly. The more curious came closer and as we passed through the "gateway" to the Home my hands, too, were held tightly by theirs.

I looked down at their shining black hair, their healthy bodies, their fresh, crisp dresses and recalled the children I'd seen earlier along the road, playing naked in the dirt outside their shack homes. Children with dull eyes, distended stomachs and matted hair whose father I'd probably passed among the others on the bridge waiting to be hired by the local sugar cane farmers. Their mother cooked over the open fire, their few pieces of furniture ranged in front of the hut, for it was outside in the dirt they lived, among the discarded cans and bottles, with the rats. So occupied, I was not aware of my entrance to "Casa Hogar" until a darkness fell over us.

I stared round the room and was appalled by its poverty. The place was depressingly small. We few had suddenly become a crowd. More girls appeared from the kitchen where they'd been preparing lunch for all of us, more from the bedroom where they'd been making up the "beds", more from outside where they'd been washing breakfast pots. I had an overwhelming desire to get out and leave for the hotel where some semblance of civilized living existed, as I knew it.

The girls smiled their welcome and returned to their pre-school "duties." Now I saw the tin roof resting on cracked and peeling brick wall supports, the worn plastic covered seats, the small posy of fresh flowers on the table and I realized how this home was cared for not only spiritually but with scrubbing, sweeping and dusting. I also realized that no matter how hard and often they scrubbed and cleaned, the place would always give off the appearance of grime and drabness.

So I sat, sticky with the heat and annoyed by flies as the story of "Casa Hogar" was told to me. Mrs. Ruiz who had, in the beginning, lived across the road from the Home was one day approached by a mother with three children, desperate because she could no longer feed them. The alternative was to put them out on the street where they would beg, steal, search jitter for life itself. This existence would, in the end lead to prostitution. The mother pleaded for help and so Mrs. Ruiz took in the three girls. Thus "Casa Hogar" began ten years ago.



Today there are 26 equally needy girls, but the project has extended from not only keeping them off the streets and giving them a standard of living but also providing them with an education to equip themselves for maturity and life.

One of the first girls is now in teacher training in Puebla, another studies to be a bi-lingual secretary. It has been a struggle, to say the least for Mrs. Ruiz and her few helpers, to make these two dreams possible. Even these are not finalized and there are another 24 girls! Each one with her own needs and problems - a deaf mute, a background of mental illness etc. Yet every day they walk the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles to school happy with the security that at the end of their  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles return walk their home will be there providing food, a bed, clothes and love. These, Mrs. Ruiz, her sister and friends, together with Cipriana, the matron who is their "mother" sewing, cooking, caring for them despite her twisted, painful, arthritic fingers, have given.

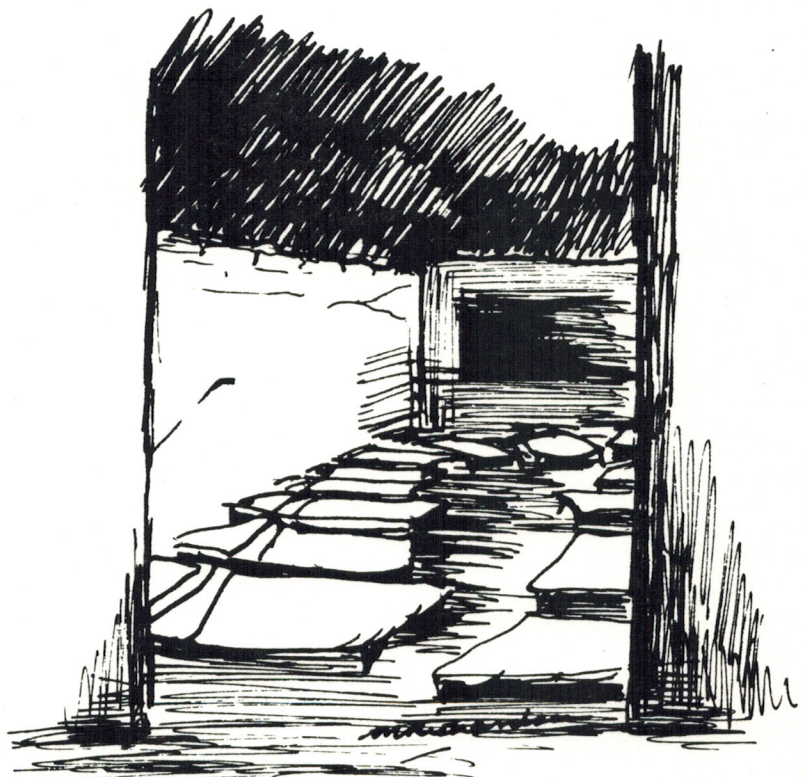
As the girls turned to wave on their way to school, their books under their arm, their checked gingham dresses fresh from their own duty, Mrs. Ruiz turned to me and said, "Not my children, alone, please God, but OUR children."

The facts are stark. There is sufficient money in the bank to support these children and their home for two months should no financial help be forthcoming. The people involved are struggling to make a regular income of aid.

WILL YOU HELP O U R CHILDREN - - - - - POR FAVOR ?



"The Dining Room"



The Bedroom



REPRINT FROM 15 YEARS AGO

how it all began and why

## WHO IS BEHIND THIS ?

This is a question people usually ask when they are confronted with a non-profit or charitable organization. WHO STARTED THIS? WHO IS BEHIND THIS? WHAT ARE THE CONTRIBUTIONS USED FOR, AND HOW ARE THEY ADMINISTERED? People have the right to ask these questions, and also to know that the donations are used properly and not squandered away.

The article "How Did it Begin?" tells about how the home "MAMA PAULITA" was started in Mexico. In this article we like to explain how the group "Layman ACTION for Children, Inc." was formed and how it also was introduced to the Scandinavian countries as well as individuals in England.

Supervising teacher Trygve D. Jansen was born in Bergen, Norway. His education was equivalent to junior college education when he came to the U.S.A. In Norway he had three years teaching experience, and he was very much involved in Christian student circles as well as in missionary work. When he arrived in Los Angeles he became a student at the University of California (U.C.L.A.) where he received the Bachelor of Arts degree and the Master of Arts degree. He became a teacher in the Los Angeles city school system.

At the school where he is teaching there are many children of Mexican decent. He became especially fond of these children. Many of them came from families with ten to fifteen children. And they were poor. Occasionally he felt he should help some of them, and he bought clothes and other things to help them out.

One Christmas the faculty had a party and they donated toys to needy children. They felt that this was a good way of showing the Christmas spirit. As time went on Trygve Jansen had become better acquainted with the conditions where the Mexican children came from - MEXICO.

In 1966 it came to our attention that a home for girls in Mexico needed help. A colleague of Trygve Jansen, who knows Spanish very well, investigated the situation. We found out that the founder of the home, Mrs. Ruiz, was on the brink of giving up. Several teachers at the same school, and some other interested people, got together and formed the corporation "Layman ACTION for Children, Inc.", in order to solicit funds legally, to help the needy children. As Trygve Jansen had had some experience in this line he was asked to direct the activities of the corporation.

To begin with it was mostly the teachers at the school who contributed. Later brochures and newsletters were printed. These were mailed out to friends and relatives as well as neighbors. Now donations are received from different individuals, <sup>And</sup> Some churches . . .

In 1967 we contacted friends and relatives in Norway. They were told about the need in Mexico. After pamphlets had been printed in Norwegian and distributed in Scandinavia we began to receive contributions from the Scandinavian countries.



## how this program is different

- contributions made to ACTION go directly to projects designated
- ACTION's personnel receive no salary or other remuneration for their efforts
- ACTION's main purpose is to better conditions for as many children as possible around the world
- ACTION's projects are interdenominational

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We are starting our twenty first year as Layman ACTION for Children, Inc. Your contributions and the volunteer work of our staff have affected many lives in Mexico. We have helped build two homes for children, big enough to house 100 boys and girls, one community trade school and several houses for needy families.

Most of you know of our accomplishments, but we wanted to summarize for the benefit of any new people who might be interested in future mission. The daily physical and spiritual care in the homes continues. We are expanding the support for the needs of young adults. After they leave the homes, they should know that we still care and will help with their vocational preparation. Right now, 40 such young adults are receiving money and guidance as a result of your gift. Eight of these students are in seminary preparing for full time ministry. Your seeds will bear fruit!

We also help families in remote regions when they have emergencies. Most of the time, these are Indian families which are outside the normal Mexican care system. We depend on missionaries assigned in these regions to tell us of the needs.

The money for these mission projects have come from individuals and some groups in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and U.S.A. This newsletter is published in Norwegian and English. The staff members of this organization do not receive pay for their services. They work to serve you and God's children in Mexico.