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VINCE EDWARDS—
as Ben Casey he's making
money while he can

September 8, 1963

The Rich Schoolteacher

She made a million—just to help unfortunate children

by DELL ROENSCH

LOS ANGELES, CALIF.

One Christmas week back before World War I, an enterprising young schoolteacher here named Ettie Lee was appalled at the troubled children who would have no Christmas at all and no hope of future happiness. "I want so to help them!" she cried to a friend.

The friend shrugged. "There are too many. You'd have to be a millionaire."

Ettie looked thoughtful for a moment and said, "All right, then, I'll be a millionaire." And so, here in 1963—because Ettie did make a million—several hundred "no-chance" boys and girls are assured not only of Christmas cheer but of having a real chance in life.

She deals only with youths labeled incorrigible, vicious, headed for prison—the "hopeless." But her pattern of redemption has been so successful that the Intermountain Juvenile Court Institute not long ago cited her for "distinguished service to youth," and said she may well be the nation's foremost enemy of delinquency.

Recently a young man named Jody Barnes drove 400 miles to kiss "Aunt Ettie" on her birthday and give her a corsage. He was 19, heading the honor roll at a great university and president of his class. But before Ettie took charge of him at age 15 he had been Los Angeles' Number 1 delinquent. His parents operated a brothel. Six policemen, a judge and even a bishop had labeled Jody a hopeless psychopath.

But Ettie Lee had taken the boy and hugged him! "She held me in her arms a long while," Jody recalls. "Nothing like that had ever happened to me before. Soon she drove me out to a big beautiful ranch. There a foster Mom and Pop met me with a smile, and I was hugged again. In a week I was part of a family, I was loved, I belonged. Can you possibly imagine what that means?"

That ranch was Ettie Lee's, one of several she operates in California, each with a carefully chosen "Mom and Pop." The Jody Barnes story has been repeated by an endless stream of such "hopeless" boys and girls.

How Ettie earned her million is as astonishing and as heartening a story as what she did with it.



Affectionate hug is bestowed by Ettie Lee on reformed delinquent as he leaves for home after stay at one of her ranches.

Half a century ago she was eking under \$200 a month. By making herself live on less than \$100, she saved the difference for a year, then hunted for a way to invest it. Near-by she found a house of four apartments for sale—and talked the owner into accepting a small down payment.

She'd bounce out of bed at 6 A.M., rush over there and start cleaning, painting and sewing. Soon she had those four units shining, hung out a FOR RENT sign. After school, she'd work some more, often until midnight. Once the apartments were rented, she personally did the maintenance—repaired the plumbing, wiring, broken windows.

CLEAN, PAINT AND PROFIT

Ettie sold the house at a substantial profit, promptly bought an apartment building with 13 units—and pitched in once more to clean, paint, sew and restore. She never let her work as a teacher lag, either; her school rated her one of their best. Saturdays she'd haunt the public auctions for old furniture. Then she'd paint the pieces, reupholster them and move them into her apartments.

Ettie sold the 13-unit building and bought another—of 66 units, covering half a block! Friends said she was crazy, because other landlords in Los Angeles were going bankrupt.

Ettie couldn't handle the 66 units alone, so she hired the first of several business managers. "I want you to help me work," she warned, and he did. Together they cleaned and refurbished, and leased their units. Ettie Lee's bank account grew.

That became Ettie's pattern for making a million dollars. Buy, improve, sell. Scrimp, work hard, save, invest. Soon she owned one big unit clear and was paying on two others. When she owned 5 big buildings—including a 99-unit apartment at Hollywood and Vine, one of America's most famous corners—she had enough steady income to retire in luxury. But meanwhile she had been ranging out into the California countryside.

where it was easy to feel God's nearness, His love for us. So I bought that ranch."

With her know-how, restoring it was easy. And she found a young married couple old enough to be Mom and Pop and deeply religious enough to be kind without being stuffy. She put them in charge. Next week Ettie showed up with two frightened boys whom the courts had labeled "highly dangerous." She used her hugging technique. Instead of lecturing, she offered gentle guidance, undergirding it with prayer. The boys stared wonderingly at her for two days and walked around the ranch grounds confused. Mom and Pop exerted no pressure. By the end of the week the boys were doing a little work, were eating heartily, sleeping well and had lost their look of wariness. At the end of a month, they seemed to have undergone a miraculous change.

LOVE IS A MIRACLE WORKER

"Love does work miracles," Ettie Lee explained. "I hug each boy and gently teach him to pray. That's about all I do. Good food, wholesome family fellowship, clean environment do the rest."

Businessmen and bankers find Ettie most unconventional; whenever a problem faces her, she is likely to stifle them by saying, "Just give me a moment of quiet, so I can pray." As they wait, Ettie prays; presently she finds a solution—and it's usually the right one.

She does not crowd the ranches, but holds the number of boys and girls to about 12, plus the foster parents, to encourage a big-family atmosphere. Thus she has needed an increasing number of ranches. One day she heard of a fine location near Hemet, Calif. It was for sale cheap because the owner had been unable to find sufficient water to operate it. Ettie bought it despite the warnings of other ranchers.

She hired an engineer, who picked several spots that just *might* show water if he drilled, but he guaranteed nothing. Ettie fasted one whole day, then prayed, and walked out onto the ranch grounds and picked an entirely new spot on her own. The engineer scoffed; but he drilled—and water gushed. It is still gushing, on what she named Waterflow Ranch.

She prefers old, homey-looking ranch houses, with possibilities for restoration. The foster parents and the young folk enjoy refurbishing such a place; sawing and hammering, painting and digging, planting and cultivating and harvesting are superb therapy.

"Each group works as a family," Ettie explains. "There is no regimen of punishment, although reasonably strict standards of discipline are maintained as in

any well-ordered home. If any newcomer gets out of line, he or she loses certain privileges and rewards. Most of all, we offer hope and encouragement. We work with the strangers as if they were truly our daughters and sons."

At age 12 young Wylie came to her Flying O Ranch because, among other crimes, he had used a knife to rob a newsboy of \$25. Wylie had abundant energy and hostile feelings toward persons in authority. Ettie told the foster parents not to rush him, and she herself assigned nine horses to his care, with freedom to do as he wished. For a day he was baffled and just stood around, warily watching. Finally he started to ride, and for the remainder of that week he galloped bareback over the hills and valleys of the ranch, barely speaking to the other members of his new family, pausing only to eat and sleep. Then suddenly he'd had enough; he asked for work, and got it, in the ranch dairy.

As with all the young people, he had his chance to earn spending money; so he saved \$30 and repaid the newsboy he had robbed, all on his own. He became so interested in dairy stock that, two years after Ettie Lee found him, he won first place competing against 300 other Californians in a stock judging contest at a fair. Today he is a happy, respected adult citizen managing a big dairy ranch in California—and incidentally is one of the many "graduates" of the ranches who hold a deep, abiding love for the teacher herself. "She meant everything to me," Wylie says. "She is one of God's own."

Boys and girls on the Lee ranches go to public school every day, just as other rural children do. Back home, Mom and Pop—and often the older foster brothers and sisters—help with homework; writing compositions about ranch life is a favorite. Grades generally are well above the school average.

THEIR CAPACITY IS HIGH

On Sunday, each youth is encouraged to attend the Sunday school and church of his choice, and almost all of them do attend. Many become Christian leaders among the young. "Almost without exception, these boys and girls have fine mental capacities," one investigator reported of Ettie's charges. "They simply need guidance, and Ettie supplies that."

Ettie Lee takes a dim view of "institutionalized" care for delinquents and of routine-ridden courts. Not long ago she learned about a 17-year-old boy arrested because he had been molesting mature women. His "attack" consisted largely of running out to hug them. He would hug, then flee—a strange and frightening

compulsion. The authorities ruled him incurable, and the court wouldn't release him to Ettie Lee's care. She sent her current business manager, Delbert Eccles, back every day for 10 days to fetch him, until the judge finally snarled, "All right, let that crazy old woman give it a try."

That "crazy old woman," who had made herself rich out of love for children, hastened on ahead of Delbert and the boy. She privately instructed the 50-year-old foster Mom on this ranch—"Every day, even oftener, you simply hug this boy for a few moments. Put your arms around him, tell him that some little task he has completed was well done. Give him extra personal loving, as mother to son."

SUCCESS STORY

It worked! The "hopeless psychoneurotic" lad became completely normal. He was elected president of a high school student body, made president of a citizenship club and was achieving the highest possible grades. He went on through college and is now a social worker. "I wanted to mold my life on Aunt Ettie Lee's," said he, with simple devotion.

Girls were a special problem for Ettie Lee, and circumstance solved it. She says she had one mental lapse: she built a fine home in a ranch setting and planned to "retire" on it. Before she could move, however, a girl tapped on her apartment door early one morning. The girl was pregnant, helpless, frightened. Ettie sent her to that new home with a woman companion. Others soon followed. Now the mansion is a temporary home for many unced teenage mothers-to-be.

Ettie admits that she is not always successful. A few—but a very few—of her boys and girls have run away from her ranches. One had to be transferred to a mental institution, but even he got better, so that he could come "home" for periods of work in the garden. He earned \$40 for himself that way. "And you know what?" Ettie says proudly. "He spent every dime of that \$40 buying toys and games for the other children in his foster home. It made one of the grandest Christmases our many families have ever known."

Whenever Ettie herself shows up at a ranch, everybody, including pets, rushes out to her car to hug and kiss her. The teacher, now elderly but still very spry, is herself almost a counterpart of Santa Claus.

"And I'll tell you why," one of her graduates explained not long ago. "Aunt Ettie activated the very spirit of Christmas itself, the one indispensable emotion—tenderness."



Cowhand Ettie talks cattle with youth as ranch's "Mom and Pop" look on.



Mechanic Ettie gets pointer on fixing carburetors from one of her auto-minded charges.



Teacher Ettie keeps professional eye on boys doing homework. Though all have

delinquent backgrounds, under her tutelage they do well-above-average work.