

Mother to 150 Boys Has Big Job, But She Likes Every Minute Of It

By OLIVE DICKASON

The smallest of Mrs. M. Craig's 150 boys is Pretty Boy, and he's the "only one who talks back."

Pretty Boy is something of a favourite, being a budgerigar. Not that the boys don't come in for their full share of attention from Mrs. Craig. She is housemother at Weredale House, and with a family of that size she finds that favoritism is out of the question.

"They're a fine lot of lads," she says in her Scots accent. "I've spent a happy time here."

That happy time is now in its 35th year. Mrs. Craig first came to Weredale House during the influenza epidemic in 1918, shortly after her son died. She came to help out during the emergency, and has been there ever since.

Plenty To Do

Being mother to so many boys has its ups and downs. Mrs. Craig's tasks range all the way from looking after their wardrobes to sewing drapes for the windows and acting as a mother confessor for any youngster who happens to need it.

"The boys are really very good," she smiled as Pretty Boy flew out of his cage and landed on her shoulder. We get all sorts of problems as we get boys from all sorts of backgrounds. Some come from

broken homes, others have lost one or both parents. For all of them we try to make this a home and not an institution."

It's necessary to have rules, however, Mrs. Craig added, and on the whole the boys are obedient. She tells of one little fellow who had lost his mother, and who did not take too well to life at Weredale at first.

"We had a talk, and I told him I knew how he felt about not having a mother because I didn't have a boy. I asked him if he'd like to adopt me, and in spite of his tears he managed a 'yes'."

Taking Dentistry

One of the boys is at present taking dentistry at McGill. He is being assisted by a former Weredale House boy who himself graduated in dentistry and now wants to see that another gets a similar chance. Some have attended Sir George Williams College . . . one of these boys is now in the insurance business.

"It's grand to hear from our boys once they have started working, and to learn how they are doing. And some of them have done very well."

Tea for Pretty Boy

Pretty Boy flew after Mrs. Craig when she went to her desk to get some cards.

"These are mother's day cards from some of my boys," she said proudly.

Pretty Boy took the notion that he would like one of the cards for tea and promptly began to nibble on it. Mrs. Craig discouraged that idea, so he came over to attack the reporter's pencil as she was busily taking notes.

"There are times," Mrs. Craig continued, "when it is difficult for us to do anything with a boy, if he comes to us after a long period of running the streets. But most of them are only too willing to co-operate."

One young man liked the place so well that he stayed on after he started working and right up until the day he got married.

"Many of them bring their wives over to meet us," Mrs. Craig said, indicating V. F. McAdam, secretary manager, who has been with Weredale House, which is a Red Feather Service, about a year longer than Mrs. Craig.

"Then they bring their babies along," Mrs. McAdam chuckled. "Some of them have made the trip especially so that Mrs. Craig can pose with them for a three-generation picture."

Mrs. Craig has a daughter of her own, and her husband is hospitalized. She spends all her time at Weredale.

"I'd be terribly lost of I left now," she said. "I wouldn't know what I'd do without the boys to look after."

Pretty Boy had to have his word in there too. "Cheerio," he said. "Goodbye."

Meetings Today

Ladies' Guild of St. Monica's Parish second annual Christmas sale, St. Monica's Church, 3476 Benny avenue, afternoon and evening.



MRS. CRAIG'S PRETTY BOY FROM 6 WEREDALE



"Ma" and her boys



TURN ABOUT: His Christmas present came early to Sam at Orlando, Calif., as 125,000 persons watched Miss America honor following the city's gigantic holiday parade. The queen is 19-year-old Neva Jane Langley of Lakeland.