

ONESIPHORUS: HELPFUL FRIEND

A Rotary World Community Service project in Taiwan 'helps the helpless help themselves.'

by Jo Nugent

Assistant Editor, THE ROTARIAN

THEY ARE a heart-breaking sight when they first arrive—the polio-crippled children who come to live at the Home of Onesiphorus* in Taitung, Taiwan. They are like caricatures of human figures, with their grotesquely bowed, or stunted, or underdeveloped limbs. They come in the arms of loved ones, or balancing their uneven bodies on bamboo canes, or crawling on stubs of legs. For most it has been a long journey, from mountain villages so inaccessible and primitive that neither they nor their parents have ever seen a well-crafted crutch, let alone the priceless vaccine that might have spared them their twisted fate.

For them, coming to Onesiphorus—this miraculous place where bones are straightened and spirits mended and starved bodies and intellects fed—is a little like being born again. They are the lucky ones, this handful from among the 50,000 Taiwanese children who were struck by a severe polio epidemic 12 years ago. These few are being helped. And now that Rotarians have come into the picture, even more will be helped.

The Home of Onesiphorus accommodates 65 children. Nineteen Rotary Clubs are participating: 18 Clubs in the U.S.A. and one in Taitung. One Club supports one child, becomes his "parent," communicates with him on a familial basis.

The 18 U.S. Clubs are all in District 642 in Illinois, which has adopted the children in a World Community Service project. The project began in the Rotary Club of Love's Park, where it was introduced by Club member C. J. Ulrich, a board member of the Home of Onesiphorus for many years. "C. J.," an advertising executive, and others in the Club developed a tape-narrated slide film to tell the story to the District's 44 Clubs. To date, 31 have seen it. It is hoped that eventually District cooperation will reach 100 per cent and that other Clubs will share in the project.

The Home of Onesiphorus was founded in China in 1916 by a missionary, L. M. Anglin. Today there are four homes: in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Lebanon, and Jordan.

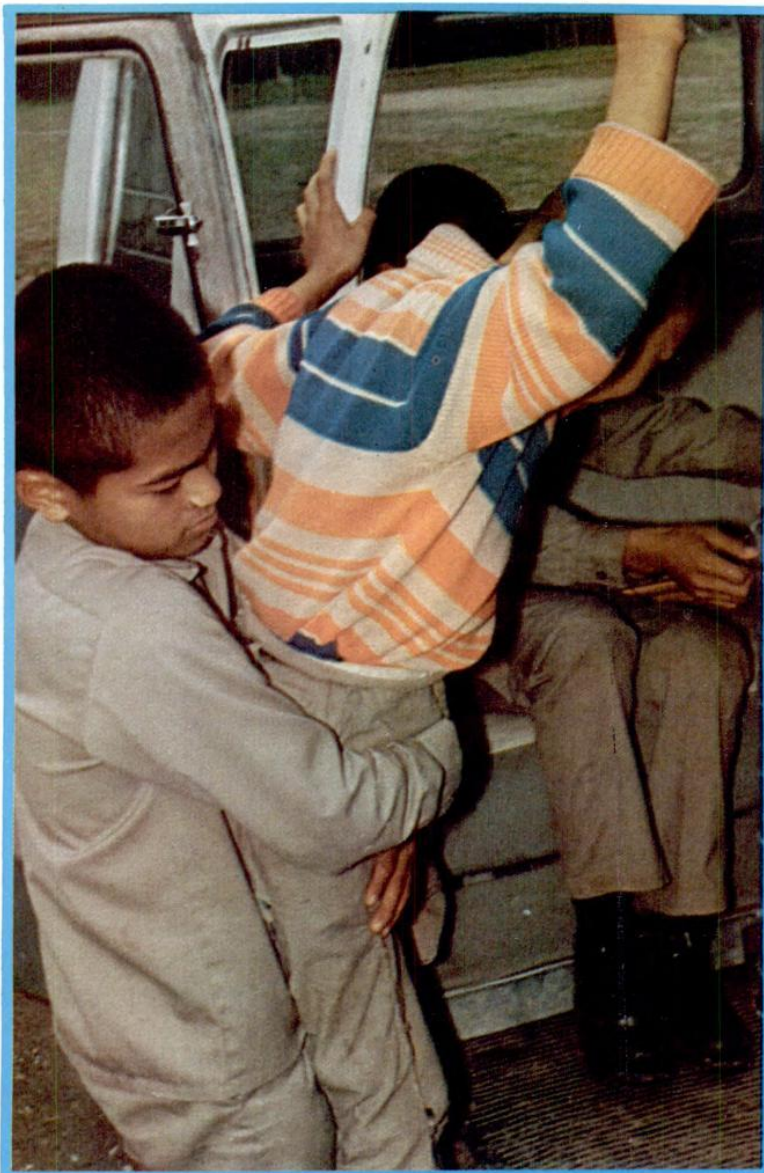
* Onesiphorus was a friend of the Apostle Paul (II Timothy 1:16-18). His name means "a doer of good . . . to others."



Lucy Vanderwarker (left), a missionary from New York and herself a polio victim, is a constant source of inspiration to the children. In her special quarters at the home, she teaches many of them to adjust to life in a wheelchair. Lucy recently visited Rotary District 642, which sponsors Onesiphorus.

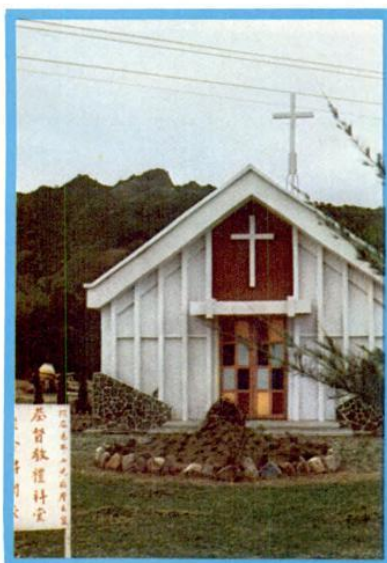
Right: A fortunate turn in the road brought this lad to Onesiphorus. The path that lies "around the corner" may be a long and arduous one but it has been smoothed a hundredfold by his good start here. He is one of the lucky ones and, like most who grow up here, will never forget it.





Left: "Don't worry. I won't let you fall. Just hold on." An able boy helps one who isn't. Not yet. But just give him time. A special bus owned by the Home of Onesiphorus transports the children to a local school and a nearby mission clinic.

Above: Just like boys everywhere, those at Onesiphorus enjoy a game of rough-and-tumble.



Left: The little chapel at Onesiphorus. Though a spiritual atmosphere prevails, the home of Onesiphorus operates without denominational affiliation or emphasis. It is a member of the interdenominational Foreign Missions Association.

Right: A street scene in Taitung, site of the home. The town has a population of 30,000, a Rotary Club membership of 28. The support of one child at the home for one year (\$479) takes the Club's total budget. As interest in the project grows, other Taiwanese Clubs may lend assistance.

