



Above—A six-year-old girl at the Meyer Therapy Center (above) overlooks the handicap of two artificial legs to smile courageously.

Below—Mrs. Dorothy Hemphill makes palsied fingers work.



'What He Ought to Be . . .?'

Search Beyond the

"If you treat an individual as he is, he will stay as he is. But if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought to be and could be."

—Goethe.

By Hollis Limprecht

DR. J. HARRY MURPHY'S days of studying German philosophers are far behind him, but he endorses Goethe's idea in a manner that is peculiarly his own, yet in a way Goethe's. Says Dr. Murphy:

"We look beyond the obvious disabilities and search for the potential. There are capabilities in every body and soul, and it's our job to draw them out. We're not practicing rehabilitation here, we're practicing 'habilitation.'"

Because Dr. Murphy and his staff are "practicing 'habilitation'" at the Meyer Therapy Center, youngsters who might be outcasts are learning to live among their physical or mental betters.

Does the center ever meet complete defeat?

"Yes," sighed Dr. Murphy, "we have on occasion." But the rare defeats only spur the staff to greater efforts."

The Meyer Therapy Center is geographically located in the center of Omaha's children's medical complex, which includes in an integrated program the services of Children's Memorial Hospital, the children's wing of the Nebraska Psychiatric Institute, the Hattie B. Munroe Home, J. P. Lord School for Handicapped Children and the University of Nebraska College of Medicine.

Work in Harmony

THE Meyer building is physically connected via tunnels to Children's Hospital, the Munroe Home and Lord School, and by medical and personnel channels equally as strong to the others.

Visitors from far-off medical centers come to view the children's medical complex and go away amazed at the way in which tax-supported agencies, private agencies, doctors, therapists and volunteers work in harmony.

The Meyer Therapy Center is one of the private-agency buildings, made possible by a substantial gift from Mrs. C. Louis Meyer of Omaha and Lake Forest, Ill., in memory of her husband, plus additional gifts from other private sources.

It will be four years old this sum-



—World-Herald Photos.

Leaning on a tiny patient's crutch, physical therapist Charles Bolton explains his job.

mer, and by its fourth birthday party more than eight hundred children will have been exposed to the center's philosophy of "looking beyond the obvious to search for the potential."

These children represent medical challenges of the sternest sort—sufferers of speech disorders, cerebral palsy, mental retardation, fractures, emotional problems, polio's after-effects, spine bifida, muscular dystrophy, cleft palate and hair lip, burns, encephalitis, multiple sclerosis, mongoloidism, amputations, meningitis and many others.

There is no such prescription as "Give him an aspirin, keep him quiet and call me in the morning" for Dr. Murphy, the center's medical director, and his aids.

More than likely their medicine will call for months of exercising under



. . . the steps . . .

the strong, capable hands of husky Charles A. Bolton, the physical therapist; hours of occupational therapy (a mis-named activity for youngsters) under smiling Mrs. Dorothy Hemphill, speech training under the two enthusiastic young speech pathologists, Howard Larimore and Mrs. Myrna Krohn, as well as other medical, mental and psychological evaluations.

The eye of this hurricane of treat-



It's up . . .

Obvious

ment is Mrs. Lily Okura, the center's official administrator and unofficial sturdy shoulder to parents and warm bosom to children.

'We're Getting Results'

MRS. OKURA moved across the medical center campus from University Hospital, where she was secretary to the administrator, to the Meyer Therapy Center from its beginning. She has seen the center develop and observes:

"I don't say we're performing miracles but we are getting results."

A visitor might politely disagree with Mrs. Okura. To see a 6½-year-old girl totter on clumsy artificial legs, then bravely and boldly climb up and down a flight of steps is the ingredient of which miracles are made.

She does this under the critical eye of Mr. Bolton. He's part marine drill sergeant, part softy.

"Americans are lazy," says Mr. Bolton. "You never ask a patient if he wants to rest." He allows no gold-bricking, but by sheer force of his personality he makes his tiny, feeble, disabled charges want to succeed for him.

Like little Cynthia, a victim of cerebral palsy, who grunted and strained to accomplish a single situp, and when she succeeded burst forth: "I did it! I did it!"

Patience is the lifeblood of the physical therapist.

"With some of the children we measure progress in months," says Mr. Bolton. With some of his patients, it is progress to be able to be strapped to the standing board for two minutes a day, three times a week. With others, like Sally, the double amputee, progress can be measured in minutes



Right—
Sometimes the
going is slow
—but sure.

Left—
Mrs. Lily Okura
sees one of her
youngsters,
gives her a hug
(below).



ability to pay. Although it is called a "children's center," it accepts persons through 21, and plays host to a group of adult cerebral palsy victims who meet there weekly.

The center has a pay roll to meet; hence it must charge for its services. The parents pay according to a fee schedule. Of course, many can't meet the heavy cost of permanent disability and assistance comes from United Cerebral Palsy, Nebraska Society for Crippled Children and Adults, National Foundation, Muscular Dystrophy Foundation, and state and local welfare agencies. (Most county boards offer financial help to indigent youngsters from their counties; not the Douglas County Board).

Even these sources of funds don't always make ends meet. Take the case of the widow earning 285 dollars a month whose daughter must have a brace costing 195 dollars in order to stand up. Or of the family which wants to pay its bill at the rate of 25 dollars a month to a company which

available, but expect to have your heartstrings played and perhaps your pursestrings loosened.

Word of the Meyer Center's success with children has reached far afield to parents frantic for help with their youngsters.

Another, and Another

AS AN example, a woman in Glenwood, Ia., made arrangements for her grandchild, a resident of Cheyenne, Wyo., to enter. That, in turn, led to another patient from Cheyenne; and that to another. Patients come from 27 counties in Nebraska, six in Iowa, plus Wyoming, Arkansas and South Dakota.

The bulk, of course, are from Omaha. Some are residents of the Munroe Home but the majority reside at their own home, and at school's dismissal the parking lot is crowded with taxis.

Some eight or 10 "regulars" taxi five or six youngsters each, twice a day, to and from the J. P. Lord School. The drivers, hard-bitten men of the world for the most part, are as gentle as Florence Nightingales with their riders.

Not long ago, when a boy who had been taxiing to and from school for several years died, the cabbie's tears were as real as the parents' at the funeral.

Mr. Bolton's therapy room is the most exciting to the youngsters, with

its fanciful equipment and its promises of a ride on the tricycle for good little patients who do their 10 situps and 10 pushups.

Mrs. Hemphill's colorful room where such essentials as tying one's shoes, brushing one's teeth, and combing one's hair are taught—as well as an occasional lesson in writing—captures the tots' imagination, too.

The fun room is the swimming pool, with its near-by whirlpool bath and gleaming stainless steel tanks.

The therapists' job is to build strength, balance and co-ordination. The polio victim who cannot walk may be a source of pity to a visitor, but he's a source of pride to the staff. Six months ago he came to them immobile on his stomach; now he gets about in a wheel chair and on crutches.

It Becomes Play

FRAIL Mary Anne, a cerebral palsy victim, can barely do one situp after a bout with the flu, but she struggles mightily as Mr. Bolton lies on the mat beside her and coaxes her to do one with him.

Mrs. Hemphill entrances her patients with delightful stories.

That shoe-lace trainer isn't a shoe, and those shoe strings aren't shoe-strings. The metal tabs on the end of the string are "chickens," and the tongue is a road, and the "chicken" is pinched between thumb and forefinger and led, "hippity-hop, across the road, and pop, into the little hole."

It isn't work for weak, unco-ordinated muscles; it's play.

A recent addition to the center is its "pre-school" or nursery school, where children who have been understandably protected at home are brought out into the glare of association with others—but emphasizes Dr. Murphy, "association with their peers."

Adds Dr. Murphy in his slow, measured voice that has brought knowledge to hundreds of Creighton University medical students:

"The vast majority of the patients referred to us have something if you look hard enough. We must look hard, because what we find can spell the difference between a lifetime of dependence or independence."

Most of the parents know and appreciate this search for the difference. Wrote one mother, separated from her child by time and space:

"Even though I miss M— very much, I know she is getting the best of everything."



... and then ...

—the time it takes her to climb a flight of stairs from the therapy room to Mrs. Okura's office for a hug.

The Luckiest Girl

IT STARTED at 20 minutes for the 26 steps (which came only after months on the five-step practice device) and has been trimmed to four minutes.

The little ones count their blessings. Mrs. Okura proves it with this story: "Sally called to me that she was going to get to swim in our pool.

"Boy, are you lucky!" I told her. "Yes," she answered, I'm the luckiest girl in the world."

The Meyer Therapy Center is open to all persons regardless of geographical location, race, color or creed, or



... it's down ...

doesn't consider itself in the installment loan business.

That's when Mrs. Okura slips beyond the official job classification of her office and becomes an unofficial fund raiser. She knows of a number of men's and women's service club foundations and even individuals eager to help when approached.

And if your service club has an opening for a speaker, Mrs. Okura is



... again ...