

Cheltenham School
Cheltenham, Md.
January 17, 1943.

Dear Shirley,

As you see, I am reduced to borrowing Lou Hilbert's good stationery until my paper comes from Buck Creek. My stuff from there should have been shipped on the 14th or 15th, and I shall be expecting it by mid-week. The package from Mother came yesterday, fortunately, for I am down to my last shirt today. Please tell her not to send anything more, however, until I ask for it, because this job will require somewhat different clothes than those I thought I should have. For example, it is not necessary to wear suits all the time: washable pants and old coat or sweater will do quite well, and some of the time I may wear my work shoes.

Since last writing you, I have been in a quandry regarding assignment to a cottage. Temporarily, Mr. Thomas asked me to observe in Cottage 1, containing boys about 14 to 18. This has been an easy job, as boys this age are not so constantly active as the younger ones. Mostly, it means being around to supervise cleaning the building and other duties, signing slips for those who need to leave the building, answering the telephone, parceling out games and cigarettes, etc., or letting the office boy do it, and in the evenings planning something active, such as boxing matches, for the boys between supper and bedtime. The boys in that cottage have to clean the whole building, mopping and sweeping the floors regularly, cleaning the windows occasionally, etc. Besides, most of them go to school for about 3 hours a day. ("School" is a very insignificant feature of the program; the boys have low I.Q.'s -- for which reason, many of them were truants from school in Baltimore -- and so the formal education attempted is very little.) "Work detail", which is supposed to involve technical training, involves a considerable number. Some boys serve in kitchen or dining hall, others bake bread, work on the farm (dairy, hog farm, poultry farm, truck gardens), shoe repair shop, tailor shop, and carpentering around the buildings. All this is good experience, but getting the work done is usually emphasized at the expense of good instruction. The vocational instructor in plumbing, for example, is qualified to teach the subject, but in reality simply acts as school plumber and has to draw on the boys principally as a labor supply rather than as a class.

Due to poor organization and lack of equipment and personnel, many of the boys have 4 to 6 hours a day free from planned activity, which is bad and creates disciplinary problems. They use this time, playing checkers, ping pong, and a few other games, if available, cutting each other's hair (down to the roots!), reading comics, and just loafing around; in good weather they use a football; sometimes the gym is available for them.

Each of the older cottages has a general responsibility outside the building. The duty of cottage 1 is to wheel coal from the big coal pile to the coal bin. Though this is hard work, most of the boys really like it, and go at it with a will shoveling into wheel

barrows, and others running around with full and empty wheel barrows, having collisions, and dumping every fourth or fifth load by accident on the way to the coal bin trap. This job takes about 1½ hours every two days. Each time about 10 tons of coal are moved by 16 to 20 boys. On two occasions I worked along with the boys, half supervising them meanwhile, and gaining the most exercise I have had since CPS days. Do you see why I am not sending for my Tux?

The latest rumor I heard was that I was to be a third master in Cottage 6, for young boys, on duty during parts of the morning and afternoon shifts. So yesterday afternoon, I went to this cottage and just stayed around with the kids. I helped one of them struggling with his long division and multiplication tables; another, who was using the shoe shine equipment, gave me a shine almost as good as the one I got in the Washington bus depot. He had had experience in this trade on the Baltimore streets, I believe.

One thing I must tell you about is the ~~eveni~~ singing just before bedtime. One of the boys picks a song, usually a negro spiritual. The rest of them nearly raise the roof singing it, and obviously enjoy it. And the negroid quality of their voices keeps them from sounding harsh and strained even when they are singing at full volume. Then they recite the Lord's prayer -- all solemnly and on one identical pitch,--and "Now I lay me" and go off to bed.

Another thing I observed yesterday was some very good marching. One of the boys acted as drum major, lined the others up, gave commands and called out the steps; and the others, having a very good sense of rhythm (much better, for example, than the older Berry boys, aided by a loud band), kept ranks very well as they marched all around the campus and then in to supper.

~~It-is-about~~ Lest I leave the impression that these boys are practically sprouting wings, I ought to say that at times they are quite difficult to manage. But on the whole, I do not have as many apprehensions on that score as I did when I came.

It is time to go down to the cottage and see what it is doing, and whether I can help the other master. I hope I can write another long letter next Sunday. Good luck to you in your school, and to ~~Father and Mother~~ in their various activities.

Your loving brother,

Roland

P.S. Didn't I write the last letter to you, too? Hope Mother and Father don't feel neglected.