

The Rearing of a Spastic Child--A Mother's View

BY C. L. ANDERSON

WHAT is it like to rear a spastic child? It certainly takes patience and understanding; unselfishness and sacrifice.

Mrs. A. L. Hullin, 4223 E. 73rd St., who has a spastic son, Buddy, 12, wouldn't mention these things.

Mrs. Hullin takes a less-personal view of the problems and looks at what she has done for Buddy as part of a large problem facing our society.

Buddy's mother thinks the biggest problem for the parent of a spastic child is: What next?

"As the child grows you always are on the lookout for ways to help him," Mrs. Hullin says. "New schools, therapy and what to do at home. There is so much uncertainty about each case that the parent worries about doing the right thing."

Mrs. Hullin points out that a spastic child needs more than the usual amount of love and attention.

"But it gets to a point where everyone anticipates every need of the child," she says. "This can prevent chances for the child to become independent. The spastic child must be given every opportunity to be on his own."

As the child grows older, Mrs. Hullin says, the greatest problems are in the social field.

"Buddy can't keep up physically with children of his own age," Mrs. Hullin says. "But children small enough for Buddy to play with aren't up to him mentally."

Buddy is a pupil in classes for handicapped children at **Warren Avenue School**. He is studying fifth-grade arithmetic and language arts and fourth-grade spelling and social studies.

Buddy likes all sports--his favorite is whatever one is in season. One of his favorite

pastimes is playing ball with his brothers, Denny, 18, and Dave, 16. Buddy is learning to swim and play the organ; he has an ear for music.

There are harsh moments, Mrs. Hullin says. For instance, when Buddy was 7, neighborhood children said he couldn't play with them because he was spastic. Buddy went home to his mother and asked:

"What does it mean to be spastic? Why did God do this to me?"

Mrs. Hullin explained Buddy's condition to him and then said:

"We all have handicaps, but they don't always show."

Buddy has demonstrated great determination when learning a new skill. Sometimes he surpasses the hopes of his parents.

A year ago he asked his father, who owns a supermarket, for a bicycle. Hullin didn't think Buddy had reached the stage where he could master a bike, so the father said no.

Buddy didn't complain, but went to a nearby playfield, borrowed a bicycle from a friend and learned to ride.

Buddy then took his father to the playfield and demonstrated his new skill.

Buddy got a bicycle.

Mrs. Hullin devotes much time to programs for spastics. She teaches two classes for adults a week at the United Cerebral Palsy Center, 201 Minor Av. N.

"The biggest problem right now is getting a home for spastics," she says. "The only facility in this area is a wing at Buckley."

While there is much hard work and many heartaches to rearing a spastic child, Mrs. Hullin says there is great satisfaction.

"Every bit of progress we've made with Buddy has been a great victory."