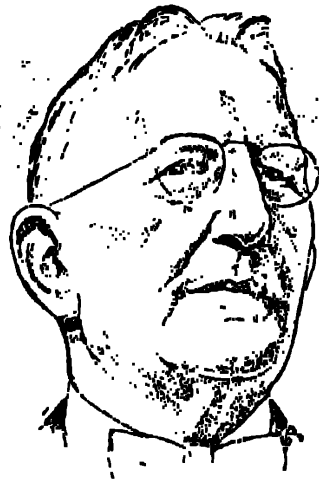


» John Klingberg's faith has brought joy
and new life to hundreds of children

The Home That Prayer Built

Condensed from The
Kiwanis Magazine



T. E. Murphy

JOHN KLINGBERG has never asked anybody for a cent, yet people have given him nearly \$2,000,000 during the last 40 years. Besides money, he receives such gifts as tons of clothing, a carload of potatoes, a fine milch cow and hay to feed her. His mail is an ever-recurring miracle of money streaming to him from the 48 states, averaging \$1000 a week.

These happenings are, in his words, "daily dealings with God." Four decades ago, when he was a poor clergyman serving a poor congregation, he resolved to found a home for orphans. Then and there he made a vow that he would never ask anybody for anything, or even tell anyone his needs, but would rely completely on prayer and faith.

He has never broken his resolve. Yet, starting penniless, he has built one of the finest homes for children in the United States. Its buildings, valued at a half million dollars, stand on a beautiful 40-acre estate on the highest hill in New Britain, Conn. And it is wholly free of debt.

The Home is not connected with any church or organization. The nearest thing to sponsorship is the friendly interest of Mr. Klingberg's fellow clergymen of the Swedish Baptist church, who long have watched this demonstration of perfect, childlike faith in prayer, and of course they spread the story.

The only literature Mr. Klingberg distributes is a simple booklet of facts acknowledging even the smallest donations. No names are ever mentioned. "We do not want to receive gifts from people motivated by self-glorification," he decided at the very beginning. So you read such items as "Friends in New Sweden and other towns in Maine have sent us again a carload of potatoes"; "three bushels of turnips and cabbages from Bristol, Conn."; "eleven aprons and four cans of soup from Alcester, S. D." With one gift came the message: "This is the money from the eggs which my hens lay on Sunday."

People are always handing Mr.

Klingberg money on the street, and every now and then he enters in the record: "Found \$5 on the floor of the office. Someone must have slipped it under the door."

There are occasional large donations. There was a gift of \$25,000, to be used "to keep the orphans warm." The head of a large bank -- a man he had never seen -- bequeathed Mr. Klingberg \$50,000. "I shall try to make this the best home in the country," the clergyman told the banker's son. "You've done that already," said the young man. "Dad was hard-headed; he investigated you thoroughly even though he never met you."

The first step in the founding of the Home was an impulsive one. A policeman came to the young clergyman one night and told him three tiny children, whose mother had left them, were alone and hungry in a shack at the edge of town. "I dressed the little fellows," Mr. Klingberg says, "and brought them home, where my wife received us with tears in her eyes." At the time he was earning only \$16 a week and living with his wife and their two small children in a crowded tenement. "We just prayed, and trusted in the Lord for help," he says.

The town was not long in learning that Klingberg had taken in the three waifs. There were many offers of help. A man stopped Klingberg on the street and promised him a large house, at \$10 a month. Local newspapers printed the story, and

donations of food and furniture trickled in. Other children came, too -- within a year there were 18 waifs and orphans ensconced in the Klingberg home.

John Klingberg confesses he had at first his moments of doubt. But now he felt his faith completely vindicated. When friends urged him to be "practical" and solicit contributions, he responded, "If my work isn't good enough for God to support, then I'd better abandon it." And to those who told him he'd get more help if he were a little more careful about the kind of children he took in, he retorted firmly, "My home is open to children of all races and creeds, and the only test, ever, is their need."

He lived from day to day, and hand to mouth. Once when the \$10 rent fell due and he had not a penny, he walked up and down the main street, praying silently. "A stranger gave me \$5 and another \$10," he says.

One Sunday it seemed that at last the children would have to go hungry. Mr. Klingberg knelt. Up the street at a picnic ground there were sounds of singing and revelry, but resolutely he closed his ears and his eyes and began, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

It started to rain, a torrential downpour. A knock on the door interrupted his prayer. Two burly fellows stood there, a huge hamper between them.

"We're from the Bartenders' Un-

ion," one of them explained. "Rain broke up our picnic and we thought you could use this stuff." Flinging back the cover he disclosed huge hams, cheeses, sausages, bread and butter.

"Thank you," said Mr. Klingberg, and he added gently, "It is not entirely unexpected."

The day before Christmas, the porter in a barroom came to him with a can of dirty, tarnished pennies and explained apologetically, "These were picked up from the sawdust in front of the bar." Mrs. Klingberg washed the pennies in ammonia and they came out bright and shining, 700 of them.

Mr. Klingberg admits that in the early days people thought him "loony." "The principle of childlike trust in God is not understood by the majority of people," he says. "But after 40 years there has been no need to change the method of securing funds for the work. The Lord is just as rich today as He was in the beginning."

Mr. Klingberg knows poverty firsthand. Back in Sweden his mother carried mortar as a bricklayer's helper to support her seven fatherless children. From the time he was nine, John worked when he could, begging bread when other resources failed him. He worked in the iron mines until he was 20, then came to the United States, where he found a job in steel mills near Chicago. He left the steel mills to enter the University of Chicago, graduating with

a degree in theology — no small feat for an immigrant laborer.

Few institutions operate with such a small overhead as the Children's Home. There are only 12 paid employes, some of whom have worked there for more than 30 years. Recently Mr. Klingberg's son, Haddon, resigned his pastorate to come back to help, and with a view of eventually taking over the administration.

Just now there are 100 children at the Home. There are chores for every child over 11. Girls wash dishes and set tables; boys take care of the cows and chickens. Younger children help out by darning socks. There is no corporal punishment, but a boy may be deprived of privileges or assigned to darn stockings as punishment.

The Home takes children from anywhere, has no set formula for admissions. That is unorthodox. And Mr. Klingberg's case records aren't very professional.

"Why should they be?" said one sociologist. "That's no institution; that's John Klingberg's family. Families don't keep case records on their children."

To social workers who disapprove of dormitories for orphans, Mr. Klingberg says: "It is not the house that builds up a fine character, but the spirit within its walls. If children feel that the persons who take care of them love them and are unselfish, they feel at home in any kind of building."

In 40 years, 1100 orphans have gone forth from the Home. A good

proportion of his graduates live nearby, the girls married, the men skilled mechanics or small businessmen. A number have become missionaries. Nearly 100 are in the armed services.

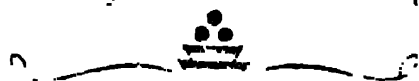
Every year the alumni hold a reunion. At this year's meeting they contributed nearly \$500 toward a new building for small children. A soldier in the Solomon Islands sent a month's pay. Mr. Klingberg is prouder of his children than he is of the decoration the King of Sweden bestowed on him in 1926, and the pleasantest part of his day's work is to read their letters.

Only once has Mr. Klingberg come near to violating his vow never to solicit human aid. In answering a letter from a banker who had just sent in a contribution, he enclosed a picture of a certain boy, Frank, saying, "I thought you would like to see the kind of boy that you are helping. We are hopeful that some day he

will be able to go to college." Thus far, and no farther! By return mail came an invitation to call and bring the boy. The upshot was that Frank went to college and is now a professor of medicine.

Mr. Klingberg lives in a modest white frame dwelling on the grounds. With a nervous energy and a physique that belie his years, at 75 he goes through a staggering daily routine. Seven days a week he is up at five o'clock; he makes his last round at 11 o'clock at night.

His clear eyes and his rough-hewn countenance betoken a man who has lived a rich life emotionally. As he talked with me he looked out at the waving fields of corn, the cows browsing in the pasture. Two little girls played with dolls on the front steps. Boys at play shouted happily out back. The old gentleman's eyes glistened as he said, "We face the future with our hearts full of thanks. The blessings God has given me!"



Join the Navy and See D. C.

ARMY and navy officers assigned to Washington frequently fret over being chained to desks. They would prefer active duty. In one navy office, all the junior officers have applied for front-line assignments. Recently one of them, to his delight, was sent to a ship in the Pacific.

The day after he left, the desks of his colleagues blossomed forth with "service flags" — each with one blue star. When the captain in command asked about the flags, he was told: "Oh, those are for Lieutenant Smith, sir. He has gone off to war and we are very proud of him."

The captain, alas, didn't think it was very funny and the "service flags" forthwith disappeared.

— John F. Cramer in *Washington Daily News*