The Third Letter

A school principal tried every way he could to get a school for his pupils — but prejudice bottled up his efforts until he wrote one last letter . . . .

By JAMES H. HILL

Tom Spain kissed his wife lightly on the cheek and patted her hand. The first two fingers on her hand were crossed. "Good luck, Tom. I'll work on Dora's sweater while I'm waiting."

Tom opened the door and climbed out of the coupe. Brenda, his wife, reached for her knitting bag. "I'll sure need the luck," Tom said, looking a trifle awed at the modernistic gray building that housed the State Appropriations Commission. It was steel and concrete and bright chrome and brass, appropriately landscaped with rich green grass and pyramidal evergreens. A far, far cry from the dilapidated clapboard schoolhouse in Grandison where Tom was principal.

Tom was tall and thin, and his ambling gait was anything but aggressive; but once you got a good look at his eyes and the out-thrust chin, you kind of knew automatically that Tom Spain was a plodder — a case-hardened try-try-again boy. A wry smile twisted his deep-brown face as he moved down the walk-way to the glittering facade.

A uniformed guard stepped him inside the lobby. "Mr. Howard Dennison's expecting me," Tom said hoping that the guard wouldn't ask for the commissioner's authorization. "My name's Spain — Tom Spain. I'm principal of the school over in Grandison."

The guard eyed him phlegmatically; obviously was satisfied that no colored man would have the gall to enter this edifice without an appointment. He made a jerking motion with his head, signalling Tom to follow him.

They went through a set of opaque glass doors into the main corridor, a thing of glazed tile and indirect lighting. Tom looked at the satin-like tiles and contrasted them with the worn-out, misfit flooring in the Grandison Grammar school.

The guard said: "The sixth door down on your right. Room twelve."

Tom thanked him effusively and moved down the corridor.

The door to suite 12 bore the legend: "Grandison County Appropriations." Tom was about to enter when the door opened, and a man and woman emerged. The woman was middle-aged, with blonde-gray hair. Her escort was brown-haired, cleanshaven. His features struck a responsive chord in Tom's memory as he backed away to allow them to pass.

Heard Of Swimming Pools

The woman was saying: "I'm not sure that $85,000 will be enough for the swimming pool and tennis courts. After all, children in junior high school . . ."

Tom didn't hear the rest because they were out of earshot; but something clicked into place in his mind.

Dennison frowned. "Bad situation. Deplorable. So the roof blew off, eh?"

his waist mutely attested to his excessive indulgence in food and drink.

But the double-breasted worsted he wore was immaculately tailored to his paunch, and couldn't have cost a penny under two hundred dollars. Dennison's smile when he extended his hand to Tom, was as expansive and cold. Tom pretended not to notice that Dennison's hand was like a limp fish.

Sumptuous Office

Dennison's office was the last word in modern decor. The desk was one of those sleek, seven-thousand-dollar affairs, complete with cellaret, tiny refrigerator, shaving equipment; and the pile rug looked thick enough to mow. Dennison waved Tom to a chair and moved behind the desk. Three lights, cleverly recessed in the ceiling, carefully spot-lighted the paunchy man as he sat in his swivel chair.

"I know what you're here for, Tom," he said, pressing a button which caused a humidor to appear at Tom's elbow. "Have a cigar?"

Tom declined. "It's about the school appropriation, Mister Dennison . . ."

Dennison leaned over and took one of the Havanas, bit off the end. "I've been meaning to answer your letters, Tom—both of 'em; but well—we've been sort of tied up with one thing and another." He looked up quickly. "How come you're not in school today?"

"The storm blew the roof off last night," Tom said, watching Dennison intently, careful to keep his smile in place. "I told you about that in the first letter. I also told you about that leeching plant from the smelter polluting our drinking water. The children and their families have been dragging water in from Holbrook and we've been treating it."

Dennison frowned. "Bad situation. Deplorable. So the roof blew off, eh?"

Tom nodded, averted his eyes to the thick rug. "The whole building ought to be dismantled, Mr. Dennison. "I'm sure it wouldn't stand any kind of inspection, no matter how cursory." He looked up, the smile almost gone.

"And we simply must have a school — I mean a real school, large enough to accommodate all of the children in our district. By using cinderblock and sheet-rock we could put up a good building for fifty-thousand, and for ten or fifteen thousand more, pump in good water from Holbrook . . ."

Like A Monstrosity

Tom stopped speaking, because Dennison's mouth was open, and the cigar had fallen to the desk. There was an apoplectic expression on the commissioner's face. He regarded Tom as though he were some kind of evil monstrosity.

When finally he got his voice back, he said: "Fifty thousand dol— Do you mean to sit there and tell me you expect this commission to grant a staggering sum like fifty thousand dollars for—for . . ." he spluttered off unintelligibly, his hands waving incredulously in the air. "Preposterous!"

Tom fixed Dennison with a steady gaze. "If I remember correctly, the figures quoted in the educational budget for this fiscal year of 1951 totaled a million and a half dollars. I seem to recall that to date exactly five-thousand, two-hundred eighty-seven dollars and fifty-three cents have been spent on colored schools, Mister Dennison."

Dennison's gesticulating stopped almost as abruptly as it had begun. His lips flattened into a hard line now, and he was growing very red from the neck up. He retrieved his cigar, contemplated the burning coal on its end. Without looking at Tom he said:

"Mr. Spain, I'm prepared to go before the board and present your request for a new roof for the Grandison Grammar school, and the erection of a water storage tank, plus a contract with a filtering plant in Holbrook." There was a note of dismissal—of finality to Dennison's tone.

It wasn't lost on Tom Spain. He rose, smiled, bowed. "I'm sure that such a modest request will meet with no opposition, in view of the eighty-five thousand dollars just allocated to the Marsden Junior High school for the building of a swimming pool and tennis courts." Tom bowed again. "Good day, Mr. Dennison, and thank you for your time."

He Faced The Problem

Outside in the bright sunshine, Tom Spain seethed. Brenda obviously read the defeat in his face before he entered the car, so she kept quiet; put her knitting away and closed her bag.

They were nearly home before Tom spoke. He told her of the interview, and of the chance information about the swimming-pool appropriation. Brenda was silent for a long time, her eyes growing moist as she considered his words. "What are you going to do, Tom?"

Tom's eyes were intently on the road. His anger had subsided somewhat. "What would you do, Bren?"

She put her hand on his knee, drew closer to him. "Oh, Tom, you know what I'd do without asking. I'd take that professorship at that northern school that pays you a third more money, and I'd forget this bigoted, Godforsaken part of America. God knows, nobody'd blame you."

'I'm Not A Quitter'

Tom slowed the old coupe down. They were nearing their bungalow on Frane Road. The wry smile appeared on his face again. "No, I guess nobody'd blame me at that, Bren—nobody but me, that is."

"Oh, Tom . . ."

"I'm not a quitter, Bren; nor a deserter. You ought to know that by now. There are 694 children depending on me for an education. The state bars them from white schools. The State is also proud, Bren; and that's what I'm going to do. I'm going to smash its pride to pieces before the whole world!".

Brenda Spain sighed and relaxed against the cushions. Whenever Tom got that look in his eye and that set to his jaw, nothing short of death would swerve him from his purpose. But she could only see in Tom's insistence for better schooling a vicious circle of buck-passing.

"I suppose you're going to write to the president! If you do it'll be referred to the State, State sovereignty, you know. The governor might not even see your letter and you'll be back where you started."

They were parked now, in front of the neat little bungalow. "You're right about one thing, Bren. I am going to write a third letter; but it's not going to go to the president. I'm going to send it to C.A.R.E., with copies to the NAACP, United Nations, and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court."

Brenda's mouth popped open. "CARE? But that means a donation to—"

Tom opened the door on his side and stretched out a long leg. "I know what it means, Bren. Do you have any idea where I put my camera last?"

The bulky brown envelope that arrived at CARE Offices in New York on April 8, 1952 was addressed personally to the chairman of the benevolent organization. It contained, among photographs, photostats, and news-clippings, a check for one-thousand dollars to be

(Continued On Page 8)

A Short Story Complete In This Issue

The man was Horace Mazy and he'd long been an advocate of swimming pools for the white schools in the state.

The red-headed receptionist in Suite 12 grew stony-faced the moment she saw Tom Spain, the fact that his manner was deferential and courteous notwithstanding. Tom smiled and handed her his card. "I'm supposed to see Mr. Dennison," he said.

The receptionist took his card rather abruptly, left him standing. "Wait here, Spain!"

Tom nodded, cast sidelong glances at the comfortable chrome-and-leather waiting-room chairs when the girl had gone. He stood fumbling with the brim of his hat for an uncommonly long time."

He was about to take a seat any way when Dennison's door opened, and the commissioner came out with his receptionist. Dan Dennison was medium in height, but the pouches under his eyes and the spare tire about

The Case Of The Bitter Will

A white sheriff's colored daughter was the target of money-hungry relatives who wanted to break his will which left thousands of dollars to the girl. Read this true story of a famous legal fight.

Charleston, W. Va. was the scene of a bitter legal fight back in 1920 when white relatives of a colored girl tried to stop her from inheriting $209,000 when her white father died.

Nine years later, the court ruled that the girl was to receive the larger share of the estate and the rest was given to the wife of her white father.

Here is an on-the-scene-report of the courtroom tangle as reported in the AFRO-AMERICAN of March 14, 1920:

By J. C. GILLAM

Legal proceedings to set aside the will of Roman Pickens, white, anticipated since it was probated, have been instituted by John E., his brother, also white, and a bitter fight is in prospect for the large estate left by the deceased to his daughter "outside the law."

Pickens, once sheriff of this Kanawha county, and picturesque figure, died in December last, bequeathing his estate to Geraldine Pickens, locally known and accepted as his daughter by a colored woman, long a domestic in his household.

The will gave the entire estate, appraised at $209,000 to Miss Geraldine Pickens, with directions that she "treat with love and affection" the lawful widow, Mary E. Pickens (white), who holds legal rights during her life time.

It also directed that she "well and comfortably provide for "Cora, the servant," during her life.

Much common-sense advice was conveyed to the heiress, a beautiful young woman who has since reached her majority, by the document.

It directs her to consult with experienced businessmen in all business affairs, it cautions her never to sign or endorse any notes, and warns her that she will be the object of the schemes of designing persons.

Sell No Land

The beneficiary is also commanded not to sell any of the real estate until she reaches the age of 30 years, as the real property, located in this city and in the farming sections of this and neighboring counties, rapidly is increasing in value.

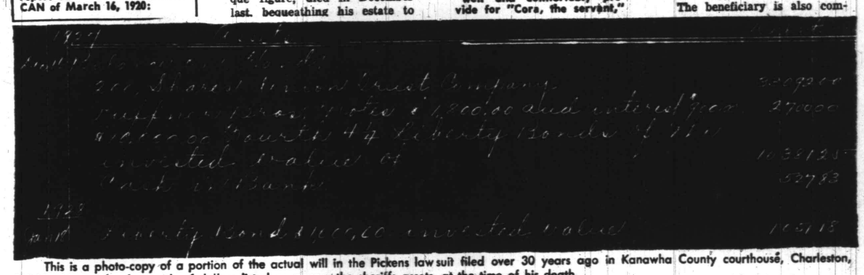
H. P. Brightwell, white, city treasurer and vice-president of a local trust company, of which Pickens was a director, was named administrator by the will and other prominent officials of the same institution were appointed appraisers by the court.

Miss Pickens has had little or no association with other members of her race than her mother, with whom she lived in the home of her father on a farm at Tornado, about 18 miles up Coal River in a white farming settlement.

There being no colored school and her father being averse or too "close" to send her away, she, those who know her intimately say, has had the advantage only of what little education her parents and an occasional tutor could give her.

The girl's white uncle and other relatives fought nine years against her inheritance. Her bequest was finally whittled down to about $71,000 in cash and more in stock and shares.

The white wife, previously left out of the will, finally received over $32,000.



This is a photo-copy of a portion of the actual will in the Pickens law suit filed over 30 years ago in Kanawha County courthouse, Charleston, W. Va. Notice the thousands of dollars listed as among the sheriffs assets at the time of his death.

The House I Live In . . .

(Continued From Page 1)

Mr. Pink and Mr. Swope were not those kind of Americans. They said middle income groups — period!

That's why our mailbox reads like a roster of delegates to the United Nations. Read the names yourself: Abo, Anderson, Arico, Ashley, Bach, Barnes, Berger, Brody, Carter, Campanella, Checkanow, Coleman, Dambowic, Davis, Eisenberg;

Evans, Fox, Franklin, Goodman, Gordon, Hsu, Hurba, Kelly, Kline, Ruvinsky, Schoenfeld, Thornton, Trestynowitz, Underhill, Valentine, Washington, Wells, Wilson, Wise, Young, Zupnick.

Racial Identity Unknown

How many colored? How many Irish? How many Jewish families? How many Chinese? You're asking us? We don't know at Queensview! Delmore Brickman, our resident manager doesn't know and neither do I, for things like that are not important to us at Queensview.

But ask me something that's important! I can tell you, for instance, that 13 per cent of our ten acres of land are covered by our fourteen buildings, and that the other 87 per cent of our fourteen buildings is used for playgrounds for our kids, and parking space for our cars.

I can tell you that everyone of our apartments is cross ventilated; that there are only four apartments on a floor; that each building has a laundry room and a carriage room for the baby buggies and bicycles; that we have four meeting auditoriums, a newspaper, a nursery, a Boy Scout and a Girl Scout Troop, a bowling team, a basketball court, and just about any kind of club you can mention from bridge to Mah Jong.

I can tell you that our oil bill is about $30,000 a year, that 206 of the persons in our family are children between the ages of new born babies and four years old, and that the largest age group among us is 525 persons between the ages of 31-and 40 years.

I can also tell you that the major wage earner in 101 of our family groups earned under $3,000 prior to applying to come to Queensview; that seven families had a principal wage earner during that period who made over $7,000 and that the majority of the principal wage earners during that same period averaged from $3,500 to $3,999. You should also know that 276 of our families had one additional wage earner and that 13 had more than one.

Residents Are Stockholders

How do I know all these things? Well I guess I should have told you that in the beginning. You see, I help to manage the house I live in. Each one of our 14 buildings elects a building representative to represent us at Community Council meetings which are held monthly. I help to elect my building representative because I am a stockholder in Quensview. All of us are stockholders.

In addition, we elect seven of our own resident stockholders to our board of directors. One of the members of our board is Henry Lee Moon, public relations counsel for the NAACP. Henry is on the board, not because he is colored, but because when the election was held he was one of these we felt qualified to go to those board meetings and help protect the interest of the 276 families in Queensview.

After each board meeting I get a copy of the minutes of the meeting delivered to my apartment so that if I don't like what the board is doing I can then go to the stockholders' meeting and say so.

The city of New York gave us a tax exemption on the value of our land site when it saw what we were trying to do. This represents a big savings to us all.

The savings come back to me in this way: I put up $2,600 cash as an original investment. Since that time I have paid nothing but my monthly notes which run about $80 for my 4½ room, ninth floor apartment. No gas, no electric, no heat, no nothing — just $80.

In my apartment on the ninth floor overlooking the East River into Manhattan's towers and Central Park I often stand by my picture window and watch the lights of New York.

And as I stand there I think of the house I live in with its large closet space, sliding closet doors, parquet floors and fireproof protection. And then I think of the hallway outside my door and the three doorways leading to the apartments of my neighbors on my floor.

On each door there is a sign with the name of my neighbor. One reads "Strompf," another "Alterman" and the third "Conklin."

But the most important writing in our hallway is on a little floormat which is there before each apartment door.

The mat says "Welcome" and I know my neighbors mean it — in the house I live in!

Nobody Believes In Hell

An old argument is revived here as William Pickens tears into some of man's oldest theories and calls them so much poppycock.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article was written in March, 1952. Last week, Dr. Pickens told the AFRO that his views still remain the same as the points he discussed then. More recently, Dr. Pickens has been an official with the Treasury department.

Nobody believes in material hell, material heaven, that Jonah was swallowed by the whale, or the Red Sea drying up for Israelites, and bodily resurrection.

That's the belief of Dr. William Pickens, former vice-president of Morgan State college in Baltimore.

Dr. Pickens' article entitled, "Things Nobody Believes," written for the Messenger magazine firmly places him on the side of Dr. Grant in his argument with Bishop Manning over the divinity of Christ. Although Dr. Pickens says nothing about the divinity of Christ in his article, he does say that anyone who believes something simply because it was believed 3,000 years ago is an "idiot."

If we fail to follow the ancients in medicine, chemistry or astronomy asks Dr. Pickens, why should the dead rule us in this one matter of religion.

Dr. Pickens says people may "swallow" or "accept" the following statements, but they do not actively, critically and intelligently believe in them. "Nobody believes," he says:

That Adam was made out of nothing, or Eve out of Adam's rib, when there was plenty of nothing left to make a million Eves out of;

That Buddha was a god or Mohammed anything more than a strong, energetic and far from faultless man.

That the whale swallowed Jonah, except those who could just as readily believe that Jonah swallowed the whale. Or that any man ever stayed in the belly of a whale three days and came out undigested;

Sun Standing Still Absurd

That the sun ever "stood still" since it started its rotation on its axis and its procession through space;

Or, what is more absurd, that the earth ever stopped its rotation in order to hold sunlight on a certain part of its surface for a few more hours simply to give a poor human named Joshua, a chance to slaughter a few more of his fellowmen before benevolent darkness should spread its protecting mantle over them.

Nobody believes that the solar luminary and his daughter, the earth, ever entered into so despicable a conspiracy with brutal men.

Besides, if the earth, which turns at the rate of about 18 miles a minute should stop for a second the stoppage would generate enough heat to change the whole planet into exploding gases and reproduce the chaos of the atoms.

No Material Heaven

That there is a materialistic heaven situated anywhere in space.

That there is a lake of fire and brimstone, or any such material hell anywhere. That, God would ever consider the abomination of eternal punishment" for little atomic human beings. In short, any brave, good and intelligent man will acknowledge that to him the very idea of hell is a hellu.

Red Sea Probably Froze

That the Red Sea ever deliberately parted into two walls, defying gravitation, while people walked across on the sea bed. They would sooner believe, as Booker T. Washington amusingly suggested, that it "froze" and they "skated across" on the ice!

No universal flood ever covered the whole earth, since the mountains rose from the sea and man from the brute creations.

That any priest ever wrought a miracle, in the sense of a violation or "breaking" of the laws of nature.

Devil Never Was Snake

That the venomous, but slandered and maltreated snake ever aroused the soul of the Devil, or that the much-abused and very much used hog ever harbored the "evil spirits."

That the Devil ever carried God into a mountain or anywhere else.

That it is a sin to eat meat on Friday.

That there ever was or ever will be a baby in hell, if there be a hell.

That the word of a priest can make any sacred thing more sacred.

Denies Resurrection

That all the billion-million human bodies will ever "rise from the dead."

Every human body uses over again the identical, material substances before it and if ever they all had to "rise," there would be no end to the fussing, contending and disputing over the same knee cap or hip joint!

Nobody believes Eve came from Adam's rib or the devil was in a snake.

Nobody believes that the God who made the universe and set it to run by unbreakable and inexorable law, could ever have a need for helping himself out by "miracles."

Finally, nobody believes that anybody else with intelligence believes these absurdities.

And the sooner we think, act and believe the truth toward ourselves and our fellows, the sooner will we be set right toward the Cosmos and toward God.

That is the way Dr. Pickens sizes up the situation.

YOUR brain budget

1. Which would probably have the highest I. Q.: (a) pickpocket, (b) murderer, (c) embezzler?

2. Lyonnaise potatoes are cooked how: (a) fried with onions, (b) baked, (c) boiled, (d) mashed?

3. The verb hamstring makes one think of which: (a) sheep, (b) horse, (c) hog, (d) dog?

4. An "ism" suggests which: (a) club, (b) cult, (c) clan, (d) clique?

ANSWERS

1—(c) Embezzler; 2—(a) Fried with onions; 3—(b) Horse; 4—(b) Cult.

Handyman Hints . . .

TRIM OLD BRUSHES . . Worn bristles on the outer row of a paint brush destroy the brush's flexibility. Use a sharp knife or razor to trim away this outer row and give the brush new life.

•• The Third Letter ••

(Continued From Page 4)

spent as CARE saw fit. It contained, also, an explanatory letter from Thomas J. Spain, principal of the Grandison Grammar school. The letter said, in part:

"I can truly say that I speak for the 694 students at Grandison Grammar school when I say we are proud to send this gift to impoverished, war-ravaged families of Europe . . . We live in a great state, and even though you can see from photos 3 and 4 that there is a great difference in our facilities; that we have to teach in shifts from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., we have faith that our state will equalize this condition.

An Equal Contribution

"When our students learned that their white brothers and sisters had contributed a thousand dollars to CARE, we immediately held a meeting . . . Although our building is condemned, and we have to have a daily bucket-brigade (See photos 5 through 11) to supply drinking water (our former supply having been polluted by a near-by smelter), we vowed to stand by the separate but equal laws of our state. We are separated, but we did equal the other school's contribution; though you can readily see we could have used the money for other purposes . . ."

There were clippings about the proposed swimming pool at Marsden; pictures of storm-ravaged Grandison Grammar; photos of ill-shod black feet of ragged youngsters lugging pails of water; an ancient truck converted into a chuck-wagon to serve lunch to needy children; pictures of the streamlined cafeteria in the white schools, the auditorium, gyms, music rooms.

A copy of Tom's letter and photostats of everything, including the check, went to the NAACP, UN, and the Supreme Court.

On April 22, 1952, Tom Spain was upbraiding a sulky urchin for sassing his teacher when the callers came.

He rose automatically when they came in.

He had seen pictures of the governor before, but the only other man in the quartet that he recognized was Dan Dennison, the Appropriations Commissioner. The governor was a big, beefy man who might have played a lot of backfield a couple of decades ago. He was wearing his best vote-catching smile.

The governor extended a big, beefy hand. "Tom—Tom Spain!" he said in a booming, soap-box voice. "Heard so much about you and the job you're doing down here, I feel I know you personally."

The New School Plans

Tom bowed slightly, keeping his eyes on the governor's, pretending not to notice the greenish cast on Dan Dennison's face. "I'm honored, your excellency!"

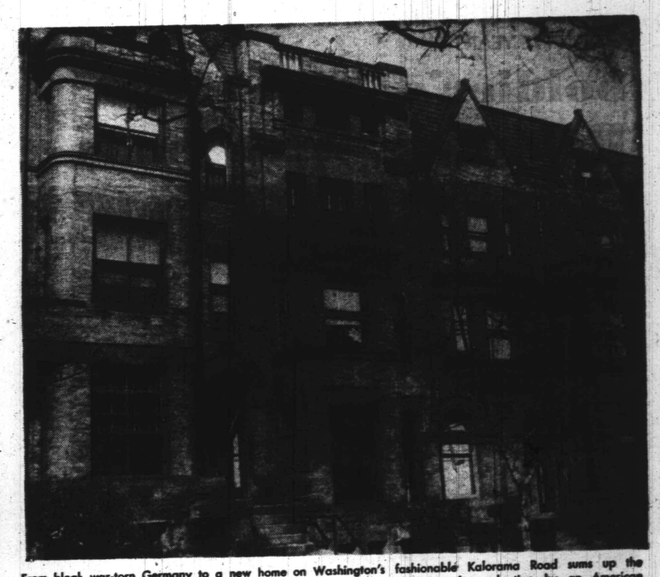
The governor guffawed, slapped Dennison on the back. "Get that, Dan—Your Excellency! What do you know about that. Look, Tom, it's just plain George, see. And Dan and me, and these architects brought along some plans for the new schools here."

Tom's legs almost got rubbery. His eyes protruded. "S-schools!"

"Yes—the new grammar school and the high school. Here, Mike, show Tom the blueprints." A man in a blue pin-stripe opened a leather case, spread out some blueprints on Tom's desk. The governor leaned over them. "Now the plans call for this part of the school to be junior high—the high school building, that is. Now the other one—"

War Babies Romp In New U.S. Home

Eduard and Sonja have taken to new parents and fashionable Washington home like ducks to water. They're learning to speak English and have discovered the wonders of television.



From bleak war-torn Germany to a new home on Washington's fashionable Kalorama Road sums up the adoption of Edward and Sonja, first war babies to arrive from Germany after adoption by an American couple. The AFRO helped arrange their entry to this country. The Cardwell home is in the center of this row of houses.

READING MOTHER GOOSE—Mrs. Hattie M. Cardwell, foster mother to little Edward and Sonja, German tots whom the AFRO helped bring to America, tenderly reads a nursery tale to her new children.

FATHER AND SON—Mr. Edward Cardwell waits while mother adjusts son Edward's clothes before going for a stroll in Washington with his new daddy.

LITTLE Eduard and Sonja, first German war babies to be adopted by American parents through efforts of the AFRO, have taken to their new homes like ducks to water.

The tots are the foster children of Mr. and Mrs. Edward F. Cardwell of 1831 Kalorama Rd., nw., Washington, D. C. and have been in the U.S. since Jan. 14 of of this year.

The story of the adoption of this five-year-old boy and four-year-old girl really began last September when Mr. and Mrs. Cardwell read of the plight of German brown babies fathered by American soldiers in an AFRO Magazine article written by Mrs. Mabel Alston Grammer.

Mrs. Grammer, a Washingtonian, now living in Germany, told how difficult it was for mothers of brown babies in Germany to find decent jobs because of local prejudice.

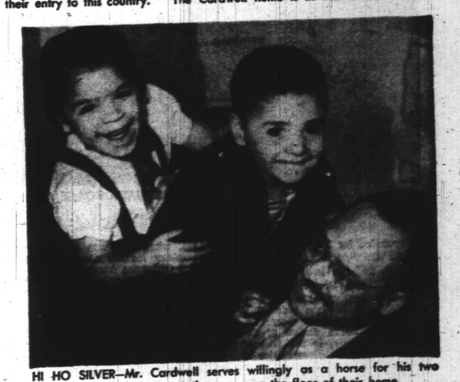
Mr. and Mrs. Cardwell immediately made plans to adopt two children and with the help of the AFRO were able to bring their new son and daughter to this country after five months of arrangements.

Eduard and Sonja could speak no English when they arrived at a New York airport after an overseas flight. But since they have become adjusted to their new home they are learning to speak like native Yanks.

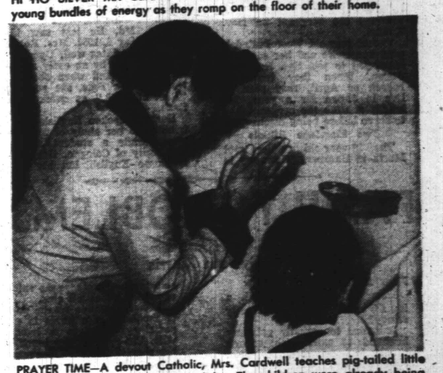
The tots have fallen in love with television, have made friends with a white cat who makes a willing playmate and are having a rollicking good time.

They will soon enter nursery school, then on to kindergarten.

The children are both Catholics as is their mother, Mrs. Hattie M. Cardwell, a nurse at Freedmen's Hospital. Their foster father, a postal worker, is taking instructions in order to jein their faith.



HI HO SILVER—Mr. Cardwell serves willingly as a horse for his two young bundles of energy as they romp on the floor of their home.



PRAYER TIME—A devout Catholic, Mrs. Cardwell teaches pig-tailed little Sonja to say her prayers in English. The children were already being brought up as Catholics while still in Germany.

As these pictures show. Eduard and Sonja are having more fun now than could ever be their lot as brown babies in war-sick and racially embittered Germany.

These children now have a comfortable home, loving parents and opportunities unlimited on this side of the ocean.

For a glimpse of their home life, take a look at the photos on this page.