

DANVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

May 3--We went to the Locust Grove Mennonite church again for a renewal of acquaintances. After not having been there on Sunday morning for 30 years, there was quite a change, and it was hard to convince myself that it's the same place, and the same people. The old men were about all gone. My Uncle David Byler is still there. He is now 90 years old, still lives by himself, his daughters keeping watch, and helping out.

Of course, the building where I attended then has been torn down and there is a new building. They also have a different form of church government. Instead of four ministers on the bench, they now have one pastor anymore, but he is subject to a board of elders. I know most of these men personally, and they are good men. As a congregation can rise no higher than its leadership, this congregation has much for

growth, for the board of elders is out ahead.

I also want to make a report on my nephew Ezra Renno. The oldest son of my next brother Crist, whose body lies buried near Newport, N.Y.

Ezra has been in and out of the state hospital many times. 20 times he was at Massillon, Ohio. The last time he was in Arcadia, Florida. But they do not operate like they used used to. Anyone who is not a criminal and is capable of taking care of himself, as long as he takes his prescribed drugs, they do not keep him but turn him out to society if he at all has a place to stay.

Ezra has been at a boarding home near Tampa, but he got into an argument with the owner, who told him to go pull some weeds, an activity which Ezra abhors, and he refused to co-operate, so he was evicted.

He then went over to his friend's house near Sarasota, namely Willis Mullet, whose wife has been good to Ezra, and watched over him, for he really needed somebody like that. He dropped in on them late in the weekend when they had a house full of company. He is not the most desirable person to have around, for

desirable person to have around, for he does not like to wash or shave, or clean up and the Mullets were at an impasse, what to do with Ezra. She had one last hope. He had an uncle up in Pennsylvania; so they left him go up there. So on Friday evening about 6 we received a call from Ezra saying he will be at the Harrisburg airport, we shall come to get him. I said no, I cannot see good enough to drive after dark. He called my son but he could not go either. I told him to get the bus. About dark that evening he comes to our door, with all his baggage. He could not get anyone to come and get him, for nobody really wanted him around. He hired a limousine at the airport to bring him up here from Harrisburg, which cost him \$90.00. But Ezra happened to have the money on him, and he has no qualms about giving it all away. It has no value to him.

We did not want him either but housed him for the night, and the next day took him to a nearby boarding home. She called in a few days and said she cannot keep him more than a month, which is how long we paid for. She said she has no license to enforce any rules, and with Ezra it's totally impossible to keep him there, for he refuses to undress when he goes to bed or bathe, or anything that normal people do.

We did not know what to do next. But he then informed me of a home in Florida near Tampa which he had not known of when he was down there. I called this place, which is the Helping Hand Home. It's not a boarding house, it's not an institution, just a private home owned by a man and his wife, and they have several children.

He seems to have a special gift of keeping derelicts. His name is Robert Acevedo. He said he takes the worst people from the state hospitals, those whom nobody else would have, and tries to make useful citizens of them. He says he got his ideas from the Old Order Amish in Lancaster. He observed how they operate. They take care of their own derelicts and poor and helpless and he uses those same principles, and says he has not had anyone whom he could not handle.

The usual amount a person gets from his social security, on total disability, is \$462.00 per month. Anyone who is under his care must be there voluntarily, and must give all he has to the common fund, and they have all things common, even the man and his family live from that fund.

Ezra has now been there for several weeks, and it seems to be going very well. He likes it, and here's hoping he can stay there indefinitely, for there is just nobody who will have him around anymore. The last word I heard from Mr. Acevedo was that Ezra is coming along well. He has taught him to shower, and has even cut his hair.

John Renno