

A Real Home . . .

By Eleanor Benning Davis

BEFORE I reached my 'teens Bonny Oaks held for me all the horror and fear which any child feels toward a thing that has been used as a threat to persuade him to do the right thing. Bonny Oaks has been much abused because of this misconception of its purpose. The words: "They will send you to Bonny Oaks," was sure to bring about instant obedience and perfect behavior. That was over twelve years ago.

Now, after twelve years at Bonny Oaks, I know that the worst thing that could have been said to me would have been: "You *cannot* go to Bonny Oaks." For, it has been a real home to me for years, and still is. Here I have received a goodly share of sympathy, understanding, patience, and love. Here I have received the scoldings I needed, the training (cultural, educational, and religious) which is necessary, and the inspiration, encouragement, and occasional pushing, which any child must have who desires to be a good useful citizen.

My life at Bonny Oaks during the difficult stage of adolescence was quite normal. I went through all the agonies of disappointing cases of puppy love, found fault with almost everything, had wonderful times, made some good grades in school and some not so good, and thought that clothes were the most important thing in any woman's life. Graduation from high school was a wonderful experience.

Then to college—I was very homesick for Bonny Oaks. In fact, it was almost unbearable at first. However, gradually I became adjusted and soon found myself deep in college life. My weekly letters home were to Dr. and Mrs. Keese—To them I told my joys and woes, my successes and failures. For four years I anticipated summer and Christmas vacations which were spent at "home." It was always wonderful to come back; to be warmly welcomed and to bask in the peaceful, homelike atmosphere so characteristic of Bonny Oaks.

After my marriage my husband and I came to Bonny Oaks—he to supervise the farm, and I to join the teaching staff.

It has not been my intention merely to write a story of my life. That is not important in itself. But, it is important to me for people to realize that life at Bonny Oaks is not abnormal or unnatural. My life has been full, wholesome, and happy, and I am only one of hundreds who have found Bonny Oaks a real home. Some have found it so in a lesser degree, perhaps; others in an even greater degree than I. As evidence of this, soldier sons have spent their coveted furloughs here; graduates who are making their own way come back to spend their vacations. This would not be true if Bonny Oaks did not fill a special need, and thus occupy a special place in the hearts of all who have called it "home."



1935 PEACH CROP

Left to Right: Eleanor Benning, Aldene Duncan, Juanita Drew, (Unknown), Helen Smith, Mamie DeLong, Lillian Sutherland.