

an Is Birthday Man; Ci At Bonny Oaks Get Specia

By MARION PECK

Ask any boy or girl at Bonny Oaks what a Civitan is and he'll tell you right off. A Civitan is a birthday man. Not just any old kind of birthday man, but he's a personal one who does something besides send a card with maybe a dollar in it.

Maybe he takes you fishing all day long on your birthday, or home with him for supper and television with his own boys and girls, or downtown to lunch and then lets you buy whatever you want in the stores. Sometimes he brings you a ball and bat and pitches for you or rolls up in a real jeep and takes you and all your Bonny Oaks friends down to the corner and back in shifts for ice cream. And very often he lets you have a party of your very own with a big cake with your name and candles and maybe a little cowboy on it, and you

are allowed to invite anyone else to help eat it and...

It doesn't make any difference what your color is, or your birthday you know sometime during the year. It's your very own personal Civitan going to come and make you happy with no telling what kind of surprises.

A Bonny Oaks birthday man to the rest of Chattanooga is a member of the Civitan Club. About six years ago the Civitan Club wanted to find a worthwhile project as a memorial to the late Will Shepherd, and it decided on putting in an infirmary at Bonny Oaks. The whole club went out to the ceremonies dedicating the infirmary it had provided, and many were struck with the physical needs of the school.

CIVITANS KNOWN AT BONNY OAKS

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They came away determined to do something about turning the public's attention to the needs. It was three years ago that the Civitans started filling another pressing need for the children of Bonny Oaks—a little personal attention. At first they had planned to send birthday cards, but then they decided that every time a Bonny Oaks child had a birthday, a Civitan would be chosen alphabetically to visit him and take along a little gift. When each member has been birthday man to a child, the process starts all over again, the Civitan having a different child every time his turn comes.

Many Civitans have gone beyond the birthday treat stage and remember the children on Christmas or Easter or Sundays.

One member had been ill for some time and had not been able to attend the weekly club meetings. The Civitan secretary telephoned him and gave him the name of a child. At first he planned to send his gift, but he was persuaded to ask his wife to drive him out to Bonny Oaks. He told the Civitan secretary the next day:

"I want to thank you for urging me to go to Bonny Oaks with my gift yesterday. The child was handicapped himself and, well, it made me realize my own blessings. . . . I had taken him a baseball and bat, and do you know what? I wound up pitching ball to him."

The Civitan did more than pitch ball to the youngster. He took him to his own doctor for examinations to see what could be done about correcting the handicap and pledged himself per-

sonally responsible for seeing it through.

One surprised Civitan recently got himself into somewhat of a predicament. He had visited with his birthday child and, on departure, reached in his pocket and pulled out a dollar bill and gave it to him for spending money. Another child nearby, bug-eyed, called out:

"Hey, fellows, come quick. There's a man here giving away dollar bills."

The Civitan gave away all the dollar bills he had right there.

The Civitans seldom have to look for their birthday children—usually they're sitting on the steps, waiting.

Last night the children invited the Civitans to a birthday party of their own, to show their appreciation. Each child wrote a personal invitation to a member, and each invitation was personally answered. As a special surprise for the children, Civitan President Maxwell Smith announced that the club had established three achievement awards totaling \$150 for the school—one for the high school, one for the grammar school and one for the colored division. The awards will be given to those showing the greatest improvement during the year—\$25 for the first prize, \$15 for second and \$10 for third.