

Youths' Speech Problems Fewer Since Clancy, '21, 'Lowered Boom'

By DAVE SMITH

(Pictures and text courtesy of The University of Michigan News Service.)

Ann Arbor, Mich.—Hundreds of boys and young men with speech problems can be thankful that Notre Dame University's John N. Clancy (Ph.B. '21) "lowered the boom."



John N. Clancy

He's a recovered stutterer.

Throughout St. Francis grade and high school in John's hometown of Traverse City (Mich.) and even at Notre Dame, he had to cope with a severe stuttering problem.

"All I knew was that I had to experience overcoming my stuttering by

Clancy is founder and director of The University of Michigan Speech Improvement Camp and living proof that speech problems can be licked.

mer and total fee receipts amounted to \$925 . . . slightly more than John needed as a down-payment on the 26-acre site.

This past summer, 85 boys from 21 states attended the eight-week session at "Shady Trails," as the camp is called. The '58 budget, by comparison, was about \$42,000.

In all approximately 1,600 boys ranging in age from 8 to 21 have attended Clancy's camp during its 27 years of operation.

Although The University of Michigan didn't acquire the camp until 1949 (through support of the Kresge Foundation), from the outset Shady Trails has been linked, in some way, with the U-M Speech Clinic where John now serves as assistant director.

In 1936 John enrolled in the U-M School of Graduate Students and received his master of arts degree in speech correction the following summer. Having worked part-time at the Speech Clinic he continued as a full-

trying to condition my new speech patterns into various speech contacts," he says today. This same principle is and has been applied through the years at John Clancy's speech camp.

At Notre Dame — where John was graduated in a class of but 112 men — the door was opened for many extra-curricular activities. But, he explains, "You either had to condition your speech or hand up your cue. I held on to my cue."

For ten years after leaving Notre Dame, where he majored in commerce, Clancy worked in the business world — as a statistician, credit manager, and cost accountant.

The one cold December day in the Depression year of 1931 Clancy "lowered the boom" and announced to his wife Grace:

"We're eating and paying the rent, but I'd like to open a boys camp for kids with speech problems." Grace answered: "O.K."

The following Spring the Clancys — with Grace as camp mother — opened their camp at Northport on beautiful Grand Traverse Bay some 25 miles north of John's hometown. It was the first camp in the nation devoted exclusively to boys with speech problems. Four boys attended the first sum-

time clinician and promoted the speech camp "after hours."

U-M speech correction students and instructors began working at Clancy's camp soon after it opened. One pre-doctoral student spent three summers there. His name: Dr. Harlan H. Bloomer, now Director of the U-M Speech Clinic and a close personal friend of the Clancys.

Other students who worked at John's camp included Dr. Harold Westlake, head of Northwestern University's Department of Communicative Disorders, and Dr. Darrell Mace, Co-ordinator of Clinical Services, University of Florida.

The tremendous growth of interest in the nation's speech problems is evidenced by the several thousand-member American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA).

John Clancy, one of a handful honored as "fellows" in the ASHA (Dr. Bloomer is also a fellow), recalls: In 1932 when I joined there were only 29 of us in the ASHA."

By way of contrast, the camp staff alone at Shady Trails numbers 36, including 18 speech correctionists. In addition, 12 internships are offered each year for graduate students in speech correction. Though the pay is small, the camp course provides these students

to build confidence in the youngsters. "If a young fellow can't speak right he loses confidence in practically everything he does. We emphasize sports at Shady Trails and close contact with others who have speech problems to build the boy's confidence."

During a typical day each boy spends a few hours in sports under professional supervision. Four and a half hours are spent in speech correction classes and time is also set aside for individual therapy.

Perhaps the most popular activity in camp is the "open forum" in which the boys present and debate problems — "a good way to get them to talk," as John says. The campers also visit nearby towns and report their activities at the popular after dinner speaking sessions in the camp's main lodge.

What success has John Clancy had with his boys? "We like to think we've been very successful," he says. "We've had a couple of our boys graduate from Annapolis, one is now a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and another, now a pediatrician, was graduated from the Harvard Medical School."

In Shady Trails where every religion is represented, one of the boys composed this line which is said before each meal: "For health and strength and daily food we give our thanks."
