

Peter Pan' Means Real Life to Some Kids

By GENE MILLER
Special Staff Writer

Raggedy Ann doll. The boy glances sheepishly at the ID card tied to his shirt button. This is the underground rail-

way in the sky — Operation Peter Pan. Maybe it should be Operation Pedro Pan. The children are refugees of

Castro's Red Cuba. Their parents are 1,000 miles away. For 16 months, the Catholic Diocese of Miami quietly helped relocate 7,778 children — all fleeing Cuba without their

parents. Nearly 3,000 have flown north.

The Communists are certain to call it child-smuggling.

No one is telling exactly how it is done. No one will. The risk of reprisal is too great.

At 9:05 a.m. Thursday, five Cuban children walked up the steel ramp to a plane at Miami International Airport.

At 6:42 p.m. Tuesday, after delays because of bumpy weather, they departed here at Evansville, an industrial touch of Yankee land at a big bend in the Ohio River.

"Snow?" asked an excited 12-year-old boy, as he walked into a bitter 38-degree rain.

We'll call the boy Jose One; his brother, 10 years old, Jose Two. The Joses furiously chewed bubble gum, a commodity rare indeed in Cuba these days.

They hadn't seen the inside of a schoolhouse since Castro closed the schools last year.

That was one reason their parents called them aside one day last month and quietly told them they'd have to leave.

Another reason was that they were hungry. And another was that they were afraid the Communists might send them to Russia.

"I cried just a little," Jose One confessed. "Mother cried mucho."

Neither boy wore an overcoat. They didn't own any. As is the fashion of children fleeing from Cuba they wore shirts, lots of shirts. Jose One wore four.

The record this month for 120 children Delta Airlines has flown north is nine shirts. That boy also wore three pair of pants. Jose Two clutched his most valuable worldly possession, a sack of marbles — 103 marbles.

A third boy, a good-looking kid with curly hair and big flappy ears, was also 10 years old.

He was a veteran of the group. He'd been in Miami since early February — in one of Dade's "transit camps."

Most children fly north from Miami after only a week or so.

Boys outnumber girls, 2 to 1. Ages range from 4 to 17. They all leave Miami with five-dollar bills tucked inside their tickets. Usually that's it; nothing more.

The kid with the flappy ears hung on to a comic book entitled, "Lorenzo," which he interpreted as "Dagwood."

Across the aisle sat two little girls, sisters, 11 and 13.

Besides four thin dresses, the older one wore her first pair of nylons, and nobody seemed to mind that they kept slipping.

At a stopover in Atlanta, an airline clerk noticed her plight and bought her her first pair of garters, fancy black ones with red roses. She was delighted.

Through an interpreter, the girls told about a cousin still in jail. He was captured in the Bay of Pigs invasion almost a year ago.

The 10-year-old clung to her little Raggedy Ann doll named Lulu Lulu took the trip calmly.

The girls know only two words in English. The words are: "Thank you."

There were two older children, a boy, 17, and his sister, 13. Only last Monday they slipped into this country.

At Atlanta, they transferred to a flight to Newark, N.J., where they were to meet an aunt and uncle.

Father — Charles Schottelkotte, head of the Catholic Charities in Evansville, met the delayed flight here.

He bundled them up and sent them on their way to St. Vincent's home in Vincennes, Ind., about 60 miles north. They should find plenty of company. There are about 30 Cuban children there.

God willing, they will not stay too long.

They hope to return to their parents who sent them to America to escape communism.



—Herald Staff Photos by JOHN WALTHER

New Life in a New Land Awaits Sweet Sleep
... and she'll protect her "baby" always

The Coldness Fades Away
... under Evansville's warmth

Police Station Thief Was Boy

SMITHFIELD, R.I.—(AP)—Police said a 15-year-old boy had admitted sneaking into the police station, stealing a money bag containing \$653, and spending all of it on "a good time," including purchase of a second-hand car and a pistol. The money, receipts from the Route 44 drive-in theater, had been left with police for safe keeping Dec. 10.

Socialite's Will Is Overthrown

A Miami Beach socialite's George T. Clark's probate of will that left \$30,000 to her young attorney-escort was overthrown by District Court of Appeal Thursday. It was attacked by her widower, John B. Reid, hotel man, who said Madelon C. Reid intended to leave her estate to educational and religious groups. Reversing County Judge

Police Trucks Are 'Arrested'

Miami Beach Police Lt. Cal Schuler, his fatigue work-suit dripping wet, described waves that broke up to his waist on Collins Ave. Two police pickup trucks stalled on the road, he said, with sand up to their axles and waves breaking on their windows. "They didn't even stall during Hurricane Donna."

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