Florida Sheriffs Youth Fund, Inc.

PRÉCIS

The Florida Sheriffs Youth Fund (FSYF) is a nonprofit umbrella organization which administers three residential child care programs—a Boys Ranch, Girls Villa, and Youth Ranch—in three locations in the state of Florida. The genesis of FSYF is the Boys Ranch, founded as a nonprofit agency in 1957 by the Florida Sheriffs Association as a facility to help troubled boys. After some initial years of struggle, the sheriffs hired Harry Weaver as executive director of the Ranch. Under Weaver's leadership, the organization has grown from a three-cottage operation with a $100,000 budget, into a thriving multimillion dollar enterprise. Most outstanding of all, the organization runs entirely on privately derived revenues and has become highly sophisticated in the arts of fund-raising, estate planning, and public relations.

THE ENTREPRENEURS

The Florida Sheriffs Boys Ranch was established in 1957, several years prior to Harry Weaver's involvement. By the time of its 20th anniversary celebration in 1977, the organization had enshrined in folklore its modest beginnings, including the sheriffs and early donors who conceived and implemented the idea. There were several key characters including former Sheriffs Ed Blackburn and Don McLeod who learned about Farley's Boys Ranch during a trip to Texas in 1955, and brought back the idea to the Florida Sheriffs Association; Sheriff Hugh Lewis who led the effort to organize the venture, including the securing of land and funds; Tommy Musgrove, a wealthy farmer who donated the land for the ranch; J.L. McMullen who led a committee of Suwannee County civic and business leaders to persuade the sheriffs to undertake the ranch on the site of Musgrove's land; and Sid Saunders, president of the Sheriffs Association during the period the Boys Ranch was begun. These men were instrumental in launching the Boys Ranch, but it was a very small and shaky enterprise when Harry Weaver took over at the helm, late in 1961.

Harry Weaver's early career gave little formal indication of a managerial orientation. Prior to 1956, he was employed as a teacher and counselor at a state training school for boys. From 1956 to 1961 he was a fed-
eral probation officer based in Tallahassee. But Weaver’s administrative abilities must have been recognized by the sheriffs. He did, for example, organize an industrial arts program at the training school. But his apparent motives for coming to the Boys Ranch in 1961 were very traditional. After being on the corrections end of the spectrum of youth problems, and perhaps being discouraged by it, he wanted to do something on the “prevention side.” The Boys Ranch was intended to help straighten kids out before they became seriously involved with law breaking.

Weaver’s style is much easier to describe than his motivations. He is very patient and soft-spoken, and also very disciplined. He is extremely meticulous in his attention to detail, whether it be records of children, encounters with potential donors to the agency, or keeping the agency’s finances. Weaver is also a crafty and calculating personality who sees precisely how his attention to details fits into an overall managerial strategy. And if Harry Weaver is anything, he is a very skilled salesman.

The salesman in Weaver comes out best when he is describing his approach to getting people, especially elderly donors, to contribute to his agency. It’s hard for the outsider, even incredible, to think of getting someone to make a financial contribution as an exercise in helping the donor. But Weaver has carefully thought through this approach and seems both sincere and convincing: “... I learned ... [to get] ... satisfaction [from] ... helping people to give. ... In order for a person to give, to give freely, they have to be comfortable in their giving. ... We encourage visits to our program. ... People want to be a part of it and see it. They don’t want to know the gory details of the kids’ lives. They know they have had a rough time. They know the world today is very difficult for teenagers. ... But they like to be a part of something that’s good, wholesome. ...”

More than just making people feel comfortable about their giving, Weaver sees himself providing a direct service to the donors. Referring to one elderly woman who visited the ranch: “It is obvious that she is in the middle of her estate planning, and that she needs help. She resists help, however, because in fact she and her husband have done quite well through the years with their investments. I have encouraged her to contact the trust officer, but she has stayed still since she has no relatives and no real close friends. ...”

Referring to another lady who accompanied the first on her visit: “Now ... I was not unmindful of the lady who stayed off to the side ... because she had the same problem. So once she started to leave, I thanked her for coming, and I asked her if she was on our mailing list. ... [It turns out] not only is she alone, no relatives, [but] she’s a real estate broker. ... Never said a word during our conversations. So what have we got? We’ve got two friends; they have got at least five friends each. They will be our friends.

“Now we don’t do that just for the money. We do it because it is the
right thing to do. People are very uncomfortable in their approaching
death if they do not have their finances in order. They may be prepared
for death emotionally from the standpoint of religion or what have you.
But if they don’t have a will, and if they don’t have their finances in or-
der, they are miserable. . . . We work at this, and we are going to do
more, because we think it’s a service. And we think it’s important
whether they give to us or not.”

If Weaver is the skillful salesman, he is also a patient, pragmatic prob-
lem-solver by nature: “I enjoy working with people and some people say
I enjoy problem-solving, and seem to thrive on crisis. I don’t know that I
do. I rather think that I’m a person who thinks that every problem can be
solved, or a reasonable solution can be reached. . . .”

Weaver’s upbringing in a poor but dedicated family, sensitized him to
the value of enterprising and hard work. And as an FFA (Future Farmers
of America) member and a student of industrial arts in his youth, he de-
developed a love for building and growing things, which seems reflected in
his enterprising behavior later on. Just as important, the care he received
from relatives under somewhat adverse economic circumstances, helped
develop his sense of responsibility for the welfare of others. As he puts it:
“[It’s] how we used to do it when the barn burned and everybody pitched
in and built the barn back for the neighbor. Or, if the neighbor got sick,
everybody pitched in and harvested the crops. . . .” Thus, while Harry
Weaver is a product of his particular family upbringing, he is also a prod-
uct of the general social milieu of the southern United States—a conser-
ervative-minded American who advocates the traditional values.

Yet in many ways Harry Weaver is an enigma. He professes little in-
terest in money, or power, or prestige, yet in moderate quantity he has
achieved all these. He seems seriously concerned with helping others, yet
he is curiously unmindful of the needs of minority children. And, it is dif-
ficult to distinguish between Weaver the salesman and Weaver the social
worker, especially in his approach to elderly donors.

It is clear that Weaver is an enterpriser and a builder, who enjoys
challenges—seeing what he can do—and enjoys seeing the fruits of his
labors, be they physical constructs, organizational structures, or pro-
grams of various kinds. He is essentially pragmatic, always behaving in a
rational, carefully thought-out manner, and in accord with basic conser-
vative principles. In a wider sense, however, he seems curiously value-
free: “I don’t know what my philosophy of life is. I just live everyday.”

THE ORGANIZATION

The genesis of FSYF lies with the Florida Sheriffs Association, the
professional group of chief law enforcement officers in the 67 counties of
Florida. In Florida, the sheriffs are locally elected and are influential po-
itical figures, both locally, and, as a group, statewide. Association with
the sheriffs has been a major factor in building the image and the support for FSYF.

The sheriffs' role in FSYF has changed gradually over the years. At the beginning (1957), it was the initiative of the sheriffs that succeeded in establishing the Boys Ranch. Apparently, the notion of sponsoring a ranch that could "straighten out" young boys before they got into serious trouble, by providing a substitute for poor home environments, was attractive to the sheriffs as an image-builder for themselves. The sheriffs' image was a negative (punitive) one with respect to youth—they were the officials associated with juvenile arrests, detention, and referral to state training schools. The ranch would put the sheriffs in a more positive light, trying to help youth and prevent juvenile law breaking.

The sheriffs had little money of their own, but they were able to use their status to generate resources in a manner that was to set precedents for the pattern of future fundraising. They solicited both cash, land, and in-kind labor and goods, and hit upon the ideas of issuing honorary memberships to the Florida Sheriffs Association for $15 fees, and designating generous donors as "lifetime members." In the 20th anniversary issue of The Rancher, State Representative Ed Blackburn, Jr., of Tampa (one of the original sheriffs involved with the ranch), recalls the early activity of the sheriffs: "The Florida Sheriffs Association was broke...[but] at the sheriffs' January 1957 winter meeting in Key West, the sheriffs voted that an Honorary Membership Program be made available to a selected group of good citizens in each county. These good people responded.

"Six months later, the 1957 Summer Conference of Sheriffs was held in Sarasota and... as a result of the Honorary Membership Program, the Association had a bank balance of $7,000.

"...the Associated Press picked up the story and Sheriff Hugh Lewis, of Suwannee County, picked up the ball and ran with it. [Farmer] Tommy Musgrove had earlier given...some 20 acres...to the Elks Club for a youth project; he still owned the 120 adjacent acres to the south. So Sheriff Lewis persuaded the Elks and Tommy to give this 140 acres for the ranch.

"Suwannee County civic and business leaders got together a prestigious committee, headed by J. L. McMullen, to lobby and persuade the sheriffs to name this as the site for the proposed ranch.

"This committee made the formal proposal to the sheriffs' directors in St. Petersburg in August, 1957. The sheriffs accepted, and the idea mushroomed. Adjoining this land to the east were two abandoned farms that were in estates, about 550 acres in all, and $31,000 cash would buy them both. "...With the help and advice of the local committee, together with the help of the two friendly Live Oak banks, the sheriffs bought these farms for cash.

"The banks lent the sheriffs $13,000 for a total of $26,000, the sheriffs added $5,000 of their $7,000..."
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Blackburn adds, prophetically: “Sheriffs, of necessity, have lots of friends or the badge of authority and honor that they wear wouldn’t be theirs, but all of a sudden they found themselves surrounded by a host of new friends who were attracted when they learned that sheriffs had a virtue they had never before seen. . . . Countless friends, both new and old, responded. Money, materials, and labor were donated. Committees were formed in service and civic clubs and churches all over Florida. . . .”

The legacy of these early years remains strong. The sheriffs still play an active role as directors of FSYF. The image of their association with FSYF continues to be a major asset for fund-raising, and much of the style of that fund-raising has been retained. The sheriffs also form an integral part of the intake process. Admissions to the FSYF campuses work through the local sheriff offices. Indeed, Harry Weaver is careful to preserve the close relationship with the sheriffs: “. . . I work through them. [If] I have a speaking engagement in an area, I don’t go to that speaking engagement unless I let the sheriff know I’m coming. I invite him to be with me, and he generally is with me. . . . When . . . our social workers . . . go into an area, they go to the sheriff’s office, if nothing other than to check with the secretary. . . .

“Each kid comes to the sheriff. That application has to be signed by the sheriff. . . . We like for them [the sheriffs] to stay involved, to know what’s going on. . . .”

The sheriffs muddled through the early years of Boys Ranch, going through four resident directors, and floundering financially, before Weaver was hired. Weaver came in 1961, on the condition that changes be made in the organization, including the nature of the sheriff’s involvement in administration. Weaver recalls, “. . . We were on a shoestring. . . . If it weren’t for non-cash gifts, such as beef and things, . . . we wouldn’t have survived. . . . When I came we could go no way but up. . . . We were at rock bottom. . . .

“[The sheriffs] wanted to do something productive . . . and they also wanted to do something to help their own image. If you’re for motherhood, you can help your image, so it was a nice combination. Now, what they did not see . . . were the problems they were going to have running the program. The idea was great; it sounded beautiful, but running an under-financed program . . . was very difficult. . . . At the same time that was all they could do, because that was all the money they had. . . . There were certain changes they would have to make in order for me to come. . . . Finally they made certain changes. . . . The board agreed that I could develop a budget and spend money within that budget and I could sign all checks. . . .”

Essentially the sheriffs agreed to take a less direct role in administration, and a more advisory role as directors. The ranch became more its own organization, rather than an extension of the Sheriffs Association. Furthermore, the sheriffs agreed to restructure the board as well. Weaver
explains: "... In the beginning, by virtue of ... [the] limited funds, you had to draw on resources from local people [the Suwannee Civic leaders] ... and they sort of controlled the organization. ...

Weaver insisted on a more statewide, representative board structure. The board structure that emerged required a majority of non-sheriffs, with appointments to the board made by the Board of Directors of the Florida Sheriffs Association. The FSYF Board then elects its own officers, and of course, the executive director (Weaver) is responsible to the board.

Despite the continued formal control by the sheriffs over selection of board members, Weaver says, "It's not a problem ... [although] that probably will change one day."

Weaver is generally pleased with his board members whom, he says, are selected because they "... will agree to attend meetings and be involved. ... That's the main [thing]. The sheriffs have been very good about this. They want to appoint those that will be involved and take it seriously. You don't have to be wealthy. You don't have to be a president of a corporation. ... We have a CPA. ... We like to have a doctor on there ... [but] the main thing is to have a professed interest in child care, and what we are doing. ..."

Nonetheless, the financial contributions of board members have been important to FSYF. As Weaver recounts: "Let's put it this way. One of our board members ... built the medical clinic ... and he built the administration building at the [Girls] Villa. Another one ... built this [administration] building and another one was instrumental in building the cafetorium."

Fund-raising has become a science at FSYF. Yet here, too, the roots in the Florida Sheriffs' original efforts, as well as image, remain strong. Amazingly in this era, FSYF operates (except for tax exemption) without a penny of government funds. Large individual donations or estates willed to the organization have been responsible for much of the capital stock (land, buildings, etc.), but Weaver insists that solicitation of small donors, bequests, and in-kind contributions of goods and services are the backbone of the operation. Of all revenues received in fiscal year 1977, 55 percent represented direct gifts, 27 percent were from bequests, 11 percent from income on investments, 3 percent from sale of livestock and farm produce, and 4 percent other. Most of the gifts (roughly 75 percent) were from individual donors, as opposed to organizations, and most of these, Weaver says, are from "$15, $20, $25 donors." (The list of donors numbers some 30,000!) It is in this area particularly that the imagery and appeal of the sheriffs is most effective. As Weaver states in a 1978 speech to the National Association of Homes for Boys: "We are fortunate to have been founded by and associated with the Florida Sheriffs Association. It links us with law enforcement which has a natural appeal to a wide segment of society. The concept of sheriffs helping youngsters with prob-
lems to grow into law-abiding citizens rather than following the path that leads to delinquency and crime is even more appealing.”

In summary, despite the fact that the sheriffs’ direct financial role in FSYF has been minimal (on the order of $80,000 annual contributions in 1979, out of roughly $4 million in total annual revenues), the sheriffs continue to be an integral part of FSYF—through their direct and indirect representation as directors, through their involvement in intake, but most of all through the imagery of “honorary sheriffs” and other public relations aspects of sponsorship.

The corporate structure of FSYF has become considerably more complex, since 1961. But even on this dimension there is a legacy of the early years. Most important is the fact that the Boys Ranch was originally established as an irrevocable trust which meant that the organization could not expand past its original purpose, e.g., it could not accommodate girls. Nonetheless, the organization did expand to a multiple-campus operation, adding a Girls Villa in 1970, and a Youth Ranch for coed sibling groups in 1976. These additions were made by the cumbersome means of setting up separate corporations, each governed by a similar board structure and headed by Weaver as executive director. A separately incorporated Youth Fund was similarly organized in 1973 to carry out fund-raising and administrative coordination. In 1977, through court action, the provisions of the original trust were broken and the various parts of the organization consolidated into a single operation, the Florida Sheriffs Youth Fund, Inc.

At the outset in 1961, Harry Weaver established his firm control of the organization, and this has become increasingly important as the organization grew into a multi-campus enterprise with abundant physical and financial assets and a wide-ranging system of patrons and donors. Weaver is particularly proud of how he modernized management control. The records of some 30,000 donors are automated and “we will have everything . . . vehicles, children’s records, inventory, the whole bit . . . on the computer.”

**CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS**

1957—Boys Ranch is founded by the Florida Sheriffs Association, with 140 acres of donated land and $5,000 in cash. The adjoining 562 acres is purchased with a $26,000 mortgage.

January, 1959—The first cottage is built and staffed, and the first group of boys is admitted.

1960—Two more cottages are added. Total population of boys is now 32, with an operating budget of $114,473.

1961—Harry Weaver is hired as executive director of Boys Ranch.
1960-1970—Boys Ranch expands to six cottages, 100 boys. Many additional buildings are added. The operating budget grows to $400,000. 
July, 1972—Girls Villa opens with 8 girls. It expands to 24 girls and three cottages by 1978. Ultimate planned capacity is 40 girls and 5 cottages. 
1973—Florida Sheriffs Youth Fund, Inc. is established to carry out the administrative, accounting, and fund-raising activities of the Ranch and Villa. 
April, 1976—The Youth Fund purchases land and buildings for a third campus, the Youth Ranch. The Youth Ranch opens in 1979 for 10 children (sibling groups). Ultimate capacity is 30 children, housed in three cottages. 
October, 1977—The Ranch, Villa, and Youth Fund are merged into a single corporate body called the Florida Sheriff Youth Fund, Inc. At this point the total operating budget is $2.3 million, with a net worth of $12 million. Harry Weaver, previously executive director of each of the separately incorporated units—Boys Ranch, Girls Villa, Youth Ranch, and Youth Fund—becomes president of the merged corporation. The boards of directors of the separate units are consolidated.

CONTEXT

The locale of northern and central Florida provided particularly fertile soil in which to grow an enterprise of the kind that FSYF has become. There are several reasons for this. First, the state is politically conservative. Thus the notion of contributing to an organization associated with the function of law enforcement is a popular one. The sheriffs are a symbol of authority to be respected and admired.

In addition, the idea that FSYF operates without government funding is also particularly appealing to a conservative constituency. As Weaver views his donor constituency: “These people want only to share their responsibilities with other individuals and families. They strongly object to the intrusion of governmental entities into their responsibilities. FSYF cultivated support of the conservative element, by appealing to the voluntary, nongovernmental feature of its operation. As Weaver emphasizes: “... Our donor family is ... pretty much a conservative group of people. ... By and large it’s the person who feels the government has gone too far, that they give too much money away, that they waste money. It’s the Proposition 13 people. We tapped [into] them ... a long time ago. ... We’re extracting from these people funds that make them comfortable in giving to a nongovernmental agency. ... [We emphasize] sharing, giving, giving of one’s self and time, without being forced ... to do it.”
A second relevant feature of Florida is its large and increasing concentration of elderly residents. Weaver himself discounts this factor, but it is clear that the multitude of elderly has provided a lucrative market in which to solicit bequests for FSYF. Such bequests constituted some 27 percent of income in fiscal year 1977. Weaver and his organization have astutely recognized and exploited the fact that many elderly people need help with estate planning. Thus FSYF staff have developed special expertise in this area. FSYF publishes brochures on the subject and Weaver has spent a major proportion of his own time visiting with prospective elderly donors.

A third aspect of Florida that has assisted FSYF is rapidly rising land values. This phenomenon has had two effects. First, it has caused tax problems for older land owners, making the donation of property to FSYF a more attractive proposition. Second, bequests of property have been a source of increasing wealth to FSYF, not only in terms of the value of current assets, but income realized from sale of land and use of land for commercial enterprises such as livestock and timber farming.

The character of Florida's criminal justice and child welfare systems is another contextual factor that influenced the development of FSYF. The early negative association of the sheriffs with the punitive aspects of juvenile justice has already been noted. Part of the difficulty here arose from the dearth of alternatives provided by the State for residential care of children. State training schools (viewed popularly as prisons for kids) were the only formal alternatives for delinquents. State funds for purchases of service from private child care agencies, basically for foster care, were also meager, although many of the 50 or so other voluntary child care agencies in Florida, many of them church-affiliated, did receive such funds.

Thus, in a sense, FSYF stepped into a partial vacuum focusing on older, presumably predelinquent children, more than other agencies, and developing a viable financial means of supporting such a program.

CHOICES

The basic decision to incorporate as a nonprofit organization was made before Weaver's tenure as executive director. Originally such status provided the tax benefits to donors of the land, cash, and other contributions, needed to assemble the campuses and initial cottages. Other alternatives were essentially null. According to Weaver, the public sector was not a viable option in 1957, despite the sheriffs' positions as government officials: "... Back then you really had little government funding in this area. It was almost unknown. . . ."

Even after Boys Ranch was established, during the 1957–1961 period
when the organization floundered, the public sector option was reconsidered: "... When they [the sheriffs] had so much trouble, they thought of all sorts of alternatives. ... They talked in terms of turning it over [to the state] . . . [but] . . . there were not enough [sheriffs] for it. . . ." It can only be guessed that the sheriffs had insufficient confidence that the state would carry out the envisioned purpose of preventive programming; and indeed they may have been philosophically opposed to seeking government involvement. In any case, many of the sheriffs probably believed there was still a chance that the Boys Ranch could be made viable as a private venture.

According to Weaver, the profit-making sector was also a possible option. But again, this option violated the original intent. Weaver observes: "... I could have become a millionaire in profit-making . . . but it would be with a different kind of youngster. It would be for the youngster with parents of means, presidents' of corporations children and this sort of thing. . . . We looked at that [profit-making alternative] very carefully . . . [But with] the kids that we take . . . we don't even discuss finances with a family. . . . First we determine . . . whether the youngster needs to come. Then if we accept it, and the parents can give a dollar a month, we expect them to do that [but only] because that's therapy. . . ."

Within the framework of the nonprofit form, Weaver and the sheriffs made some basic strategic policy decisions which enabled the agency to stabilize and later to prosper. The most fundamental of those decisions was the setting of priorities. It was decided that building the agency's financial base would be the first order of business. Programmatic considerations would take a back seat. As Weaver puts it: "... You have to have money before you can do things. You see, that's always the dilemma. . . . This conflict in a human services organization between fiscal people and program people. But you have to recognize that you can have the most beautiful plan in the world, and great ideas, but unless you have the money to put them into effect, they're not worth anything. All you're doing is dreaming."

Given the financial imperative, Weaver's plans were impressive, especially in an era of relative decline in philanthropy. His intent was to build an endowment large enough to insulate the agency from adversity: "We don't want to amass a lot of reserves . . . We don't want to do like Boy's Town . . . but on the other hand, we have to make sure that we are protected in case of an adversity or disaster, or something like that. So we are trying to come up with a formula that will say—with this many children, with this many fixed assets, such as buildings and equipment, and so on . . . the reserve should equal this. And [we would] stay with that formula . . . [and not] over-extend . . . [ourselves]."

Perhaps more impressive than the goal of financial independence is the manner in which the agency chose to raise its funds. Unique advantage
was taken of both the affiliation with the sheriffs, the conservative milieu, and the substantial elderly population in Florida, to develop a financing capacity focused totally on private giving. Weaver recalls that latching onto the particular donor groups at the beginning was somewhat ad hoc, perhaps fortuitous, but having done so, the avoidance of government funding became a requirement: "... I've always been asked ... at speaking engagements ... 'Do you accept state or federal funds?' ... People like this business of being able to do [things independent of government]. ... It's bred in them ... the sheriffs and everybody. ..."

Asked if racial attitudes have anything to do with avoidance of government funds, Weaver replies, "... No, it's deeper than that. It's the being told what to do and how to do it. ... You know what government funds do. ... Boy, they get you. As a matter of fact, the racial [factor] has nothing to do with it ... [although it may have] years ago."

Similarly, FSYF chose to go its own way in fund-raising, independent of organized charities such as United Fund. According to Weaver, "We don't get involved in that. ... They've wanted us because we would be a good representative in the United Fund ... a good agency for them to say that they support ... [but they don't give much money] and ... first you have to go through a lot of red tape. So it just doesn't pay us."

Having restricted itself to its own private fund-raising, FSYF became expert in various techniques, ranging from the collection, utilization and sale of non-cash gifts, to personalized mass solicitation of small donors, organized visits to the ranch, estate planning and solicitation of bequests, setting up memorial funds, cultivation of the large donors by honorary memberships and prominent display of donor names on campus streets and buildings, elaborate coverage of donors in the agency's magazine, and so on.

Significantly, the choice of private giving as the basic avenue of resource development, served to reinforce the basic policy decision to emphasize finances over program as first priority. While the FSYF child care program certainly was more than adequate in terms of activity content and physical amenities, program development played second fiddle. Compared to the planning that went into resource development, program planning was ad hoc. As Weaver describes the program: "... We really [do] not have a treatment modality. ... I like to think of ours as PLT (Practical Living Therapy). We have a little of all of it ... behavior modification ... group-guided interaction [etc.]. ... It's a very practical approach. Had I been able to come up with ... some definite treatment modality of my own selection and development, I would have been more comfortable ... but I never did have it clearly in mind. ..."

Weaver and his staff were, in 1979, first getting around to an organized, systematic evaluation of their child care methodology and program.
Not only was the child care program given a second order of attention, but in many subtle and not so subtle ways it was shaped and influenced by the focus on donors. The physical campuses are a positive manifestation of this. They are kept clean and manicured, and constantly open for visitation and inspection. Just as conspicuously, however, every road and building carries the name of a donor, and a luxurious guest cabin is maintained.

But there are more troublesome influences also. The admissions policy seems very conservative for an agency presumably designed to deflect delinquent behavior. There have been only a few minority group children, forcing one to wonder if donors, some of whom Weaver admits were biased, would be turned off by too many nonwhite faces. And despite Weaver's observation that: "Our youngsters are a little more disturbed than those in most of the other homes. . . . We are geared to the teenager. They're more difficult to work with. . . ." The criteria of admissions, as specified on the intake form require that the youngster "... be of average or above intelligence; not have been adjudicated a delinquent; be in good physical health, have no severe personality problems . . . be recommended by the local sheriff." Furthermore, given the size of FSYF's budget, the agency was conservative in the number of children it served. (The agency served under 200 children in a given year.) Weaver says, "We are trying to maintain the right number, for quality. We could care for a lot more kids, but it would be just a mill. . . ."

The intake form also required that a child "agree to receive religious instruction." This stipulation is reflective of the general style of the agency, not only for children but staff as well. Again, it all revolves around the donors. Weaver is quite candid about this: "[Although] we get very little money from churches . . . we . . . have compulsory church times. . . . We . . . require staff who live on campus to attend church. . . . We could not hire anyone with a beard. . . . They'd have to shave it off, you see, because of the people that support [us]. And this has nothing to do with the character of the person, but it's that identification. . . . We can't have extremely long hair. It doesn't have to be as short as mine, but we can never have that. . . . Where you get your money, and how you get it, dictates what you do and how you do things. . . ."

Finally, the whole corporate restructuring from the original Boys Ranch, to the umbrella Youth Fund, was closely related to fund-raising considerations. Essentially, the original incorporation of the Boys Ranch eventually proved too cumbersome and restrictive. This first became clear with the undertaking in 1970 of the Girls Villa, under stimulus of the Sunshine State Women's Chamber of Commerce. At this juncture, it was apparent that broad-based support could be enhanced by service to girls. (Later, programmatic considerations also indicated the need to provide coed care of sibling groups, leading to the Youth Ranch project.)
any case, such constituencies could not be addressed through the restrictive trust of the Boys Ranch, so Weaver and the sheriffs embarked on a deliberate strategy of separate incorporations in order to accommodate these constituencies in the short run, and make a case later, for consolidation and lifting of the restrictions. Weaver describes the circumstances: "... People were partial to the Ranch, and there were those who were opposed to starting the Girls Villa [but] . . . we had some real dissension within the donor family as to whether to give to boys or girls. . . . And I sensed that early. Of course, what I wanted . . . at that point [was to] have one legal entity, [but] it [was] complicated by the fact that the Boys Ranch was established under a charitable trust . . . [a] very difficult trust to break.

"... The Sunshine Women's Chamber of Commerce gave us $70,000 to get [the Girls Villa] started. . . . Then [when] we received [donated] funds we kept everything separate. We had duplication of everything. We wrote separate checks, had separate bank accounts, and the whole bit."

Part of the problem was solved in 1973, with the establishment of (another) separately incorporated Youth Fund. As Weaver notes in his 1978 National Association of Homes for Boys (NAHB) address: "... In 1973, we established a third organization (or legal entity) to provide 'an umbrella of support' over the Boys Ranch and Girls Villa. . . . The Youth Fund . . . took on the responsibility for all major administrative, accounting, and fund-raising activities of both the Ranch and Villa.

"With three organizations (the Boys Ranch, Girls Villa, and Youth Fund) in operation and a fourth (the Youth Ranch) on the horizon, some type of move toward unification seemed wise. We already had three separate boards of trustees, three executive committees . . . and three separate sets of minutes. . . . We were doing three of everything . . . in spite of the Youth Fund organization that we had established to eliminate duplicated effort. . . .

"... I had an ulterior motive in all of it. I saw eventually that the Youth Fund would be the umbrella. . . . [So] we [had] three sets of everything . . . cumbersome and bulky, and the circuit judge went right along with [our arguments for consolidation]. . . . [Had] we tried to do that . . . with just the Boys Ranch [he] would not have gone along with it."

**RISKS AND CONSTRAINTS**

Harry Weaver describes himself as a risk-taker. Indeed, his coming to Boys Ranch in 1961 is evidence of this, as he gave up a secure, well-paying job as a federal probation officer, which promised an early retirement and a good pension, to lead an enterprise which was on the financial ropes. Having come to the Ranch, Weaver continued to take gambles.
For example, during his early days at Boys Ranch, Weaver directly supervised FSYF's child care program, and he believes that perhaps the riskiest decision he has made at FSYF was to move himself out of direct programming involvement and into the fund-raising function: "I had trouble with it for a while. . . . I was very possessive of the kids and the program. I probably thought that nobody else could do it like I could. . . . [But] we had to . . . make a choice. We had to have money. . . . [Nevertheless] I felt uncomfortable because it might have an adverse effect on our income [too] . . . if we had problems, or some crisis."

As noted earlier, another of Weaver's gambles was the gambit of separately incorporating the Villa and the Youth Fund, in the belief that the courts would allow ultimate consolidation with the Ranch. He might have been stuck permanently with the cumbersome multi-corporate structure.

Overall then, FSYF under Weaver undertook a number of significant risks in the short run, in order to build a stable base and hedge in the long run. It has been the basic corporate strategy of FSYF to build an efficient organizational structure, backed by a sufficient financial reserve, to buffer the agency from whatever changes in donor behavior or governmental regulation (e.g., tax exemption policy) may obtain in the future.

From the beginning of Weaver's tenure (1961), corporate decisions had to conform to various institutional constraints. Some of these have already been noted or implied. For example, the restrictive trust under which the Boys Ranch was originally incorporated, required some organizational acrobatics to accommodate and eventually circumvent it. Prior to consolidation, for instance, funds could not be easily moved between the Ranch and the Villa, restricting overall flexibility in program and resource development.

Similarly, in the funding area FSYF had to live with certain restrictions, emanating from three sources—the marketplace, the sheriffs, and the donors.

The marketplace has always been viewed as a source of fiscal discipline by FSYF. At the beginning of Weaver's tenure at FSYF, it was a matter of avoiding bankruptcy ("It takes money to operate . . . you have to pay your staff.") Later on, despite some calculated risks, expenditures at FSYF continued to be rigorously justified.

While on balance, association with the sheriffs has by far been a net asset, this relationship also imposed constraints. For example, care has continually been taken to preserve the wholesome, law abiding image. In the fund-raising area, Weaver explains: "... We have to be very careful in gifts to us. We can't let anybody of an underworld nature give to us. . . . We have had to refuse money . . . send some money back. We can't let a known criminal element be seen with one of these [FSYF] bumper stickers on his car."

The greatest source of restriction remained the donor population, how-
ever. The overall shaping of FSYF’s program and style by the preferences of the donor population has already been discussed. More specifically, despite the consolidation of the Youth Fund, donors were able to designate particular usage for the funds they donate (e.g., building, scholarships, etc.). This, of course tended to reduce the agency’s flexibility in expenditures. But FSYF was extremely creative in recognizing, indeed appealing to, the tendency of donors to try to earmark how their dollars are spent. The theme which FSYF adopted—“Something for Everyone”—meant just that. The organization developed elaborate lists of items and programmatic needs that donors could “buy” for the agency, as well as a variety of general purpose memorial and other funds to which they would contribute.

Still the donor influence at FSYF has been profound. For example, FSYF became a fairly expansive agency in terms of multiple campuses and intake services, and ranged far and wide for donors, around the state; but it was restricted to Florida. Weaver says, “There’s too much to do here. . . . I think [expanding outside Florida is] going too far. . . . The needs are just so great . . . in the state. Why do that? . . . There’s no reason. . . .”

This seems a curiously modest position for an enterprising, risk-taker of Weaver’s caliber. But the reasons may have something to do with the donor base. Going interstate would involve overview, perhaps interference by governments in other states, or perhaps even by the federal government under the guise of interstate commerce. FSYF would also risk losing the “take care of one’s own” community flavor of its operation, and its special association with the image of the local sheriffs. Such a situation would be anathema to the conservative element that built FSYF.

OUTCOMES

To the outside observer, FSYF is a hugely successful physical and financial operation. Under Weaver’s direction, the agency moved from a $114,000 operating budget in 1960 to a $2.3 million budget in fiscal year 1979—all of it from private sources. Just as impressive, the agency generated a substantial surplus of revenue over current expenditures (e.g., $836,000 in fiscal 1977), permitting it to amass a net worth of more than $12 million in assets. These assets include substantial holdings of real estate and marketable securities, as well as commercially viable timber and livestock operations. The intent was to build a self-sustaining endowment.

Managerially, FSYF is a highly professional business operation. It utilizes modern techniques of data processing, and is meticulous in its accounting and management control, ambitious in its investment program,
and streamlined and constantly self-evaluating in its internal organization. Its fund-raising operations were most innovative, meticulous, and diversified. FSYF was highly sophisticated in its approach to estate planning, personalized solicitation of large numbers of small donors, appeal to large donors, and utilization of non-cash contributions.

Based on its affiliation with the sheriffs, and its careful study of the psychology of giving and special attention to its own image, FSYF emerged as a public relations masterpiece. In Florida, the Boys Ranch became practically a household word—representing a good, wholesome, popular, charitable cause. Strategic, professional use of the media—television, films, literature—broadcast this word in an eminently successful way.

The reality of FSYF's child care program was somewhat less clear. No doubt, it had a wholesome program, with marvelous physical facilities and a well-paid staff. But the notion that it was making a serious impact on preventing delinquency is unproven. Although one may argue that prevention requires taking in a youngster before he becomes seriously involved with law-breaking, FSYF's intake policy seemed particularly timid. The emphasis was on the deserving child of unfortunate circumstances, rather than any demonstrated risk of delinquency.

Furthermore, considering the scope of FSYF's financial success, the agency did not extend itself very far in terms of the number of children served. While there was expansion to additional campuses and a conscious widening of orientation from local (Boys Ranch) to statewide, the total population served less than doubled in the 1970s while the operating budget (not counting accumulated surpluses) increased fivefold. Rather the emphasis was on establishing a firm financial base for the future of the agency by building up assets.

**ANALYSIS**

The chemistry which resulted in the spectacular development of the Florida Sheriffs Youth Fund appears to have had three essential elements: the entrepreneurial talent of Harry Weaver, the special imagery of the sheriffs, and the fertile environment of conservative and elderly donors.

Clearly Weaver was a driving force. Before his tenure the Boys Ranch was headed for failure. Weaver was the master builder and salesman who turned the operation around. He seemed to be motivated largely by the satisfaction of experiencing the fruits of his building efforts, seeing what he could do in constructing, physically and organizationally, a viable enterprise almost from scratch.

But Weaver is not simply a builder by instinct and motivation; he is also a social worker. Possibly as a result of his upbringing, he needed to
feel that he was "helping people." Perhaps that is why he was such an effective salesman. When the organization required that he become a fundraiser rather than be directly involved with the children, he transformed this role into one of counselor for the elderly. He convinced himself that he was performing a service for his donors, and exuded the sincerity that came with this resolution. Thus he could not be easily dismissed by potential donors who may have suspected that it was simply their money he and the Youth Fund were after.

The imagery of the sheriffs played a very special role in the evolution of FSYF. The sheriffs "law and order, helping" image certainly assisted the agency to develop the required philanthropic base of support and make the ranch a public relations man's dream.

The social environment of a conservative, elderly population of potential contributors in Florida was the third element of FSYF's success. Surely, the Florida of the 1960s and 1970s was one of the more fertile fields in which to solicit such a group. But this is probably more a matter of degree than kind. Other states have similar populations, perhaps in smaller numbers. Essentially, it was the genius of Weaver and his staff, in organizational design and public relations, that enabled the tapping of this resource in such a spectacular way.

Given the essential chemistry, the "flashpoint" was the decision in the early 1960s to put financial development as the agency's first priority. This decision influenced not only the corporate, financial success but profoundly shaped the style and program of the agency itself. The donor reigned supreme at FSYF, his influence seen and felt in the physical facilities, administrative operations, staffing, programming, and intake policies. Weaver claims that by giving primacy to the agency's sources of support, FSYF put the horse before the cart — establishing a firm organizational base to facilitate carrying out the agency's mission. The reverse may also be argued. Over time, the approach may become more balanced. According to Weaver, "... I believe that we have a good program. ... Of course, it is not what we want it to be one day, but we each day work towards excellence in these areas.

"I like to think that we put equal emphasis on our children's programs and our public relations and fund-raising. I am convinced that we cannot survive without placing equal emphasis in these areas."