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Children Run Onto Social Shoals When Parents Shirk Family Helm

By the Rev. James
Buckingham

EAU GALLIE — "It's 11 p.m.," the TV intoned. "Do you know where your child is tonight?"

Obviously a good many Brevard parents don't know. And don't care. Not only at 11 p.m. . . . but at 3 a.m. . . . and 6 a.m.

EXAMPLE NO. 1: It was 9 a.m. Saturday morning when Earl Dasher was broussing around a little concrete shed behind an old hotel in Eau Gallie. He was looking for a nail. He found someone's son instead. The child was about 16 years old and was cowering behind the door fearful Earl was a cop.

The boy had spent the night in the shed. He had gotten drunk at a dance hall the night before. Some adults had furnished the

liquor — little "sampler" bottles — and he had drunk it in the parking lot.

Ashamed to go home, he staggered across the street and spent the night sleeping on a filthy concrete floor of the roach-and-spider-infested shed. He wore only Bermuda shorts and his body was filthy with grime and dust.

HE'D tell his parents he spent the night with a friend — if they bothered to ask.

Example No. 2: Deputy Sheriff Bob Schmader was making his routine patrol before dawn last Sunday. He spotted activity in a boat shop on the East Merritt Island Causeway. He apprehended four chil-

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dren breaking in. One of the boys got away. Two of the children were 15. The other was 12. The time was 2:30 a.m. Sunday.

Obviously four sets of parents weren't too concerned where their children were at 2:30 a.m. Much less whether they were going to make it to Sunday school that morning.

EXAMPLE NO. 3: A patrolman stops a speeding car on South AIA. In the car are six older boys and a 15-year-old girl. The interior of the car reeks with the strong smell of marijuana — like the smell of smoldering alfalfa.

But the kids have gotten rid of all their "joints" before the officer arrives. The only charge the arresting officer can make is speeding.

After writing out the ticket, he tries to say a fatherly word to the girl. She reminds him of his own daughter. He offers to see she gets home safely.

SHE PUSHES her long hair out of her eyes and half laughs, half sneers: "Don't worry about me, I'm safe. My old lady gets me birth control pills."

The boys join in the laughter as the car pulls off into the darkness. It's midnight.

The time is later than you think, parents.

Do you know where your child was last night? What he was doing? Or don't you care?