

St. Petersburg Times

DIGITAL NEWSBOOK



FOR THEIR OWN GOOD

Part One: They were screwed-up kids, sent to the reform school in Marianna for smoking, fighting, stealing cars or worse. The Florida School for Boys — that'd straighten them out. Fifty years later they are, by their own account, screwed-up men — afraid of the dark, unable to love or be loved, twisted by anger, scarred by the whippings they endured in a cinder block hell called the White House.

Part Two: What is the school like today?

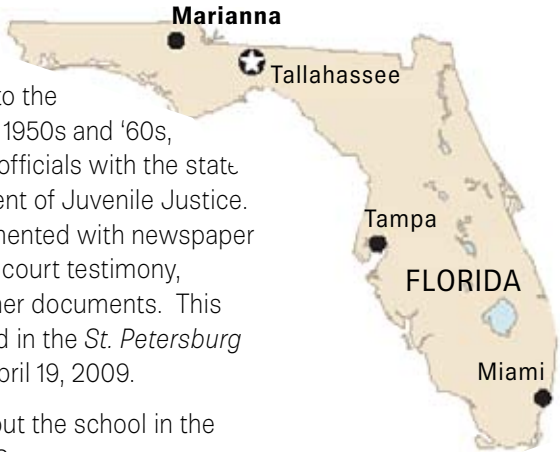


STORY BY BEN MONTGOMERY AND WAVENEY ANN MOORE
PHOTOGRAPHS BY EDMUND D. FOUNTAIN OF THE TIMES

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ABOUT THIS STORY

PART ONE is based on more than 100 hours of interviews with 27 men who were sent to the Florida School for Boys in the 1950s and '60s, and with current and former officials with the state, the school and the Department of Juvenile Justice. The interviews were supplemented with newspaper clippings, congressional and court testimony, archival photographs and other documents. This story was originally published in the *St. Petersburg Times Floridian* section on April 19, 2009.



TIMELINE: What was said about the school in the years between 1903 and 1983.

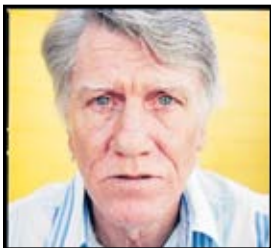
PART TWO is based on more than 8,000 documents obtained under the state's public records laws, including e-mails, internal incident reports, grievances filed by boys at the school, personnel records, surveillance video and DCF investigative summaries. This story was originally published in the *Times* on October 11, 2009.

The *Times* plans continued coverage of the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys. To talk to a reporter, call (727) 893-8650 or (727) 892-2283.

ON TAMPABAY.COM

For a video in which the men describe their experiences at the school, for more photos and documents, and to read the 1968 *St. Petersburg Times* story go to www.tampabay.com/specials/2009/reports/marianna/.

This Digital Newsbook was produced for the *St. Petersburg Times* at the Reynolds Journalism Institute in Columbia, MO. www.rjionline.org



George Goewey, 62. "If you cried, they beat you harder."



Don Stratton, 64. "It was a shameful thing."



Dick Colón, 65. "I looked over to my left and one dryer was going. There was a black boy in it."

A one-armed man. A leather strap. Bloody pajamas.
Fifty years ago, the state taught these men a lesson they'll never forget.

FOR THEIR OWN GOOD

Part One

MARIANNA

The men remember the same things: blood on the walls, bits of lip or tongue on the pillow, the smell of urine and whiskey, the way the bed springs sang with each blow. The way they cried out for Jesus or mama. The grinding of the old fan that muffled their

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Times Staff



The White House. "There was blood on the walls." — Jerry Cooper



Eddie Horne, 59. "A 3-foot-long leather strap. It had metal in it."



Don Stratton, 64. "It was a shameful thing."

cries. The one-armed man who swung the strap.

They remember walking into the dark little building on the campus of the Florida School for Boys, in bare feet and white pajamas, afraid they'd never walk out.

For 109 years, this is where Florida has sent bad boys. Boys have been sent here for rape or assault, yes, but also for skipping school or smoking cigarettes or running hard from broken homes. Some were tough, some confused and afraid; all were treading through their

formative years in the custody of the state. They were as young as 5, as old as 20, and they needed to be reformed.

It was for their own good.

Now come the men with nightmares and scars on their backsides, carrying 50 years of wreckage — ruined marriages and prison time and meanness and smoldering anger. Now comes a state investigation into unmarked graves, a lawsuit against a dying old man. Now come the questions: How could this happen? What should be done?

Those questions have been asked



The small, flat-roofed building known as the White House — on the right — stands toward the back of the reform school campus. Some former students say this is where they were beaten with a wide leather strap attached to a wooden handle.

again and again about the reform school at Marianna, where, for more than a century, boys went in damaged and came out destroyed.

IN THE LATE 1950S, A 13-YEAR-OLD KID who slicked back his long hair like Elvis stood in front of a judge in Tampa. A car had been stolen from the neigh-

borhood. Someone said they saw Willy Haynes driving it.

Willy didn't know how to drive, but the judge didn't know that. Here was a boy who grew up in a little house off Columbus Avenue, in Six Mile Creek, a scrappy neighborhood on Tampa's eastern edge, where a poor kid learned early how to protect himself. When the judge warned the boy to behave or he'd

be sent to reform school in Marianna, Willy surprised the court.

Why can't I go now?

He had heard the Florida School for Boys had a band and a football team and maybe even Boy Scouts, and it didn't cost a penny to participate. He kissed his mother goodbye at the courthouse and left Tampa in the back of a state cruiser. Big, beautiful, oblivious Florida blurred by outside the window.

This was before the interstates sliced through the state, and they took Highway 41 north and connected with U.S. 19, then transferred to Highway 90 west, through Tallahassee, to the tiny panhandle town of Marianna.

Willy wasn't scared as the state car pulled onto the gravel road that led to the state's only boys' juvenile reformatory, the Florida School for Boys.

No fences. Manicured lawns. Tall pines and stately buildings. It looked like college. It had to be better than home.

Inside, he signed a ledger.

William Haynes Jr.

April 11, 1958.

The books were shelved in rows, and each was filled with names of hundreds of boys from across Florida. Some were man-sized boys with criminal records. Others were retarded, or so young they didn't have hair under their arms.

A boy escorted Willy Haynes to Ty-

ler Cottage and told him to keep his belongings in Locker No. 252. He was given a toothbrush and pajamas and his own military bunk. The poor kid from Tampa felt like he was finally home.

He was there barely a week when it happened. Some bullies caught him outside the showers, and the next thing he knew he was in the middle of a tangle of feet and fists. Willy knew how to fight, and he was choking one of his attackers in a headlock when a cottage father busted in.

The school's disciplinarian, R.W. Hatton, asked Willy who he had been fighting, but the boy would not give up the names. Better to be punished than be branded a puke.

You're going down, Hatton told him.

They dragged him across that manicured campus, toward the squat concrete building called the White House. They dragged him through the door.

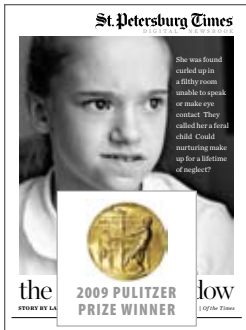
BOYS WERE DRAGGED TO THE WHITE House in ones and twos and threes, and sometimes there was a line outside, and sometimes a white dog kept watch.

Here came Marshall Drawdy, Eddie Horne, Robert Lundy, Manuel Giddens ...

And Jerry Cooper, snatched from his bed at midnight and dragged through the dark, bare feet over wet grass.

RJI DIGITAL NEWSBOOKS

DESIGNED FOR READERS



The Girl in the Window

St. Petersburg Times

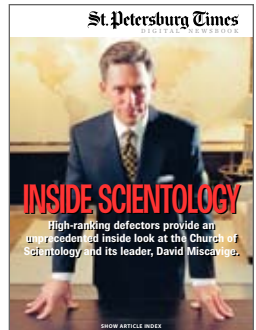
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St. Petersburg Times

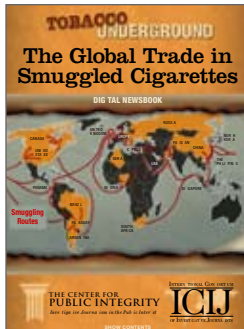
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