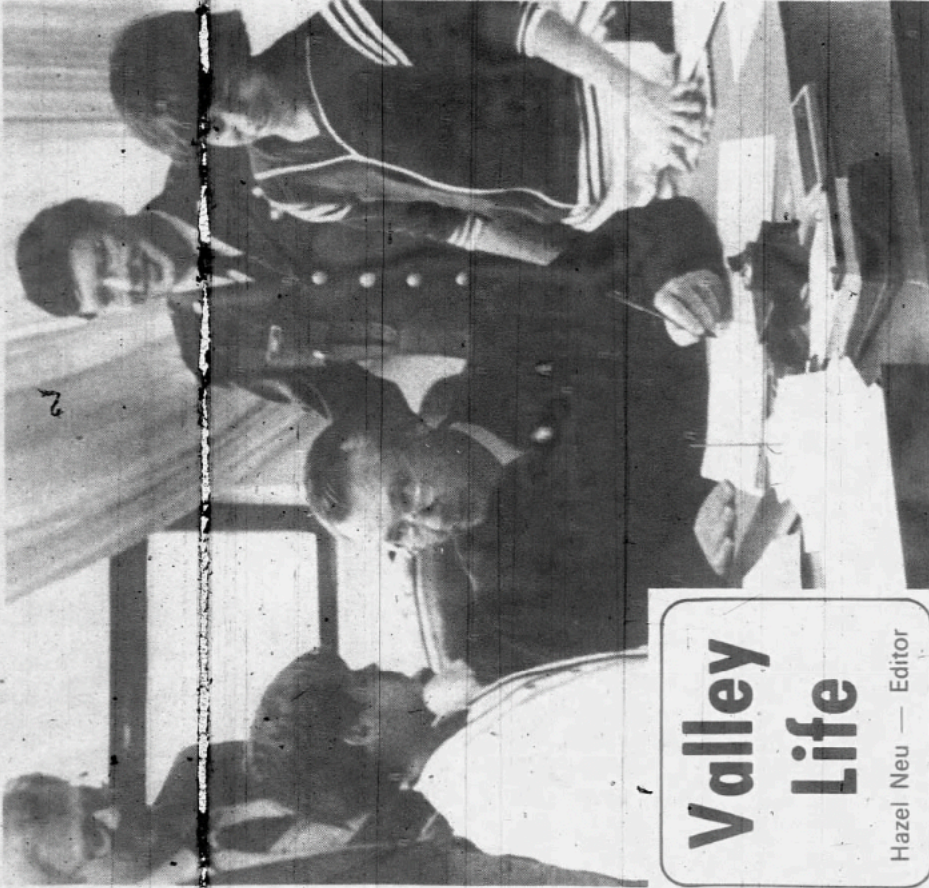


Just one little happy family now

By HAZEL NEU
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IT'S FINAL — Raymond and Johnny Torres Brault became the adopted sons of the Rev. Gilles Brault, Catholic Chaplain at Vandenberg Air Force Base Wednesday during brief ceremonies in Municipal Court Judge Eugene Huseman's chambers. Grouped around Huseman at his desk are, from left, clockwise, Johnny, 9; Ken Miskovitch of the Santa Barbara County Adoption Agency; Force Base Wednesday during brief ceremonies in Brault; and Raymond, 12.

Photo by Dan Duffy

there are so few of them.
"Today's washday," Brault explained when contacted at his home on base during a day off. "I'm on my sixth load!"

Doesn't he have a housekeeper?
"I'm the housekeeper," he emphatically replies. And the boys help.

As for how he'll deal with any special problems or adjustments, Brault's system, he said, will be "trial and error, like everyone else!"

Generally speaking, few unmarried men are available for adoption, especially Caucasians, according to Ken Miskovitch, MSW, a full-time social worker with the Santa Barbara County Adoption Agency in Lompoc at 124 North I St.

More children are available age 8 and up, including those with special needs such as physical and emotional problems.

Miskovitch does home studies on people seeking to adopt to evaluate them for parenting, and also does post placement supervision.

Home studies on Brault, were done by the American Red Cross in Iceland since there are no adoption agencies there, and Miskovitch has been doing the post-placement supervision, here.

"We're looking for families especially for older kids because they're harder to place," Miskovitch says.

"Most people want babies. Twenty years ago we had plenty of babies but now things are different. Times have changed!"

Responsible for the trend, of course, if that more single mothers are keeping their babies, as well as fewer pregnancies due to contraceptives and abortions.

The Santa Barbara County Adoption Agency also does pregnancy counseling for anyone who wants to relinquish a child, and home studies for independent adoptions, where a child is placed with another person, independent of an agency.

Now that his adoption of Johnny and Raymond has been finalized, Brault says he is going to try for a third child.

One reason is that the boys would like some more kids around.

The other, is that he likes children.

"They're neat," he says.
"They drive you nuts but they're neat!"

A "father" in more ways than one is the Rev. Gilles Brault, 34, the Catholic Chaplain at Vandenberg Air Force Base who became a parent Wednesday.

That's the day his adoption of brothers Raymond, 12, and Johnny, 9, became final in Municipal Court Judge Eugene Huseman's chambers.

Asked why a single man, and a priest, at that, would want to raise a family, "Why not?" Brault counters. "It's the best of both worlds."

Although the adoption is thought to be the first of its kind in Lompoc and, possibly, also a first for Santa Barbara County, according to Brault the "unusual" part is not that he is a priest, because he says he knows of other priests who have adopted in different parts of the country.

What's unusual, is that Brault never applied to an agency to adopt the children.

"They applied to me," he says.

He was stationed in Iceland when a friend who operates an orphanage in Texas contacted him, knowing his love for children and his interest in adoption.

There were four brothers available.

When Brault came back to the states, he claimed Raymond and Johnny in Texas June 23, then brought them on to his new assignment July 1 at Vandenberg Air Force Base.

Whose name do they bear?

"We made a compromise," Brault says.

The boys' first names are translated from the Spanish. They "got rid" of their middle names, made their last name their middle name, and took his last name. So they are now Johnny and Raymond Torres Brault.

A native of Montreal, Brault has been in the United States since 1965 when he joined the Air Force.

Why?

Because it was different.

"When you're 18, you're always looking for different things to do," he explains.

He also served three years in Naval Intelligence, then went back into the Air Force in 1973.

How long his little family will remain at Vandenberg Air Force Base is questionable since priests, he says, get moved around a lot because