

Tampa Bay Times

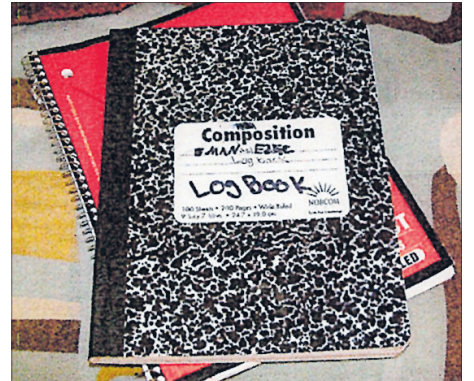
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In God's name | A Tampa Bay Times investigation

Closed church school again accepting boys



Photos of Heritage Boys Academy taken as evidence by the Bay County Sheriff's Office in June 2010 show, at left, a students' living quarters; a notebook, top right, in which students' wrongdoings and punishments were recorded; and a video screen that, according to Clayton "Buddy" Maynard, who ran the school, was used during whippings to monitor boys who were outside the punishment room.

A military-style facility that regularly used whippings as punishment for infractions closed in 2010, but the owner is again seeking students.

BY ALEXANDRA ZAYAS | *Times Staff Writer*

For 15 years, parents sent their troubled boys to a secluded compound, to be whipped into submission by a preacher wielding a switch. He kept a log recording their sins, including "wicked writings" and "peeing in bed." When deputies descended in 2010 to examine bruised bodies and confiscate bloody underwear, they learned one boy had been lashed 1,330 times. Heritage Boys Academy closed. But that was not the end. The Tampa Bay Times has learned that preacher Clayton "Buddy" Maynard is once again caring for children - at least two boys, whose parents have signed over guardianship. State officials confirmed that during a recent visit prompted by the Times' questions about the facility.

Maynard and his Truth Baptist Church have been advertising online for students ages 13 to 17 for a "semimilitary" boarding school to teach boys how to "be and behave like a man."

An Oct. 31 post on Maynard's Facebook page says his ministry for troubled youth has five boys "in residence."

But what is now called Truth Baptist Academy is not licensed as a children's home or accredited as a boarding school. None of the state agencies that oversee such facilities were aware the church was caring for children.

No one responded to an e-mail or repeated phone messages left on the academy's number or Maynard's cellphone.

But on their website, the home's operators are unapologetic for avoiding oversight.

"Unlike the 'accredited' schools," the school's site says, "we don't water down these subjects by allowing them to be taught drugs, fornication, homosexuality and other perversion."

Maynard summed up state requirements in two words on his Facebook page: "Government tyranny."

Truth Baptist Academy is one of more than 30 unlicensed religious children's homes the Times examined during a yearlong investigation. The newspaper found more than 100 allegations of abuse in homes operating outside state standards, places where children have been chained and secluded for days, sexually abused and medically neglected to near death.

The Florida Department of Children and Families is cracking down on illegal boarding schools in a statewide effort prompted by the Times investigation. Maynard's home is now among those on a watch list. DCF officials gave him 30 days to show proof that he would submit to oversight.

The clock runs out next week.

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Maynard's military school was called Heritage Boys Academy back in June 2010, when Bay County sheriff's deputies came upon a runaway with a bloody nose surrounded by boys who set out from the school to capture him.

The scene concerned authorities, who had gotten a call that day from a woman who saw a search party carrying a rope through a neighborhood.

DCF had investigated allegations that year that kids had been choked for using profanity. They found credible evidence of asphyxiation and physical injury, but not enough to verify abuse. In seven investigations of the school through the years, DCF made one verified finding in 2006, of inappropriate or excessive restraints.

Authorities would soon find more evidence of mistreatment.

Two days after they saw the bloody runaway, investigators showed up at the school to interview the boys. One appeared tense to the investigator, who felt he answered questions as if they had been rehearsed.

Another began to cry.

A black boy said staff had called him Rosa Parks and Malcolm X and made him sit through a sermon about how black people were only good as slaves or servants.

Boys recounted day after day of being whipped with a stick seven, eight, nine fists long. At least one said he bled.

"I wanted to kill all of them," a 16-year-old boy later said in a deposition. He had been ordered to attend Heritage by a Hillsborough County judge as a provision of his probation; his mother chose the school.

"They were abusing me to a point that I wanted to actually kill them."

Investigators snapped photos of Confederate flags and camouflage, and a bumper sticker that said, "Spank your child! Or they may grow up to be a Democrat."

They learned all about whippings called "corporal corrections" - CC for short, Maynard told an investigator, "carrot cake to be jokingful."

Boys got a CC for each "serious" offense, which included "talking on silence," "eating in the dorm" and "rap music lyrics." Rap was catalogued on a list of 30 "evils," "heresies" and "cults" on the Heritage Boys Academy website to be opposed and preached against.

Other ills: "So-called women's liberation," "so-called Christian rock" and more than a dozen religious doctrines.

Each CC consisted of five licks, a daily maximum for most boys. For two students, parents signed slips allowing them to be struck 25 times a day.

From May 2009 to May 2010, logs seized by deputies show one boy received 1,330 licks.

To take their licks, boys had to change out of their uniforms and into thinner pajama pants. Maynard told

deputies he used to make boys pull down their pants, but years ago, DCF advised him to stop.

"We want 'em to feel it," Maynard told deputies.

"I felt mine when I was a kid."

When investigators examined the boys, they found backsides striped and blotched with bruises, welts and scars.

Maynard told an investigator that the marks might have come from fresh whippings, but that boys may also have been injured by other boys. He said sometimes the switch would wrap around a boy's leg and leave a welt but said he tried to make sure his staff was careful.

"If there were injuries of what you say," Maynard told an investigator, "I did not know about it, number one. Number two, it's not my policy to cause those injuries, and if those injuries were caused by our staff, then I will do anything I can to correct what's being done because it's not right. We never have ever wanted to hurt these boys in any way."

After their interviews, the boys who had been transported for medical examinations wrote a letter to investigators to say thanks.

Maynard, his son Russell Maynard, 20, and Robert Unger, 40, another school disciplinarian, were arrested and charged with abuse.

But prosecutors started to lose witnesses.

One mother would not let them speak to her son. Another did not return calls or letters. One said the punishment was no different from what she would have done at home.

Another problem for the state: There was evidence a boy had contacted others online about getting stories straight.

"These kids were troubled kids," Assistant State Attorney Megan Ford told the Times. "To the parents, I don't think they ever considered them victims because they were bad kids and they were sending them to a bad kid place."

After a judge dismissed the case in April 2011, members of the Maynard family provided a television news station with footage from outside the courthouse, where more than 100 supporters gathered to sing in celebration.

Women in long skirts and little boys with buzz cuts held signs about freedom.

Some quoted a verse from Romans:

If God be for us, who can be against us?

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Last month, after inquiries from the Times, the state sent a worker past a Private Property sign, down a wooded road named Maynard Drive and onto the compound to ask the preacher some questions about how he was running his school.

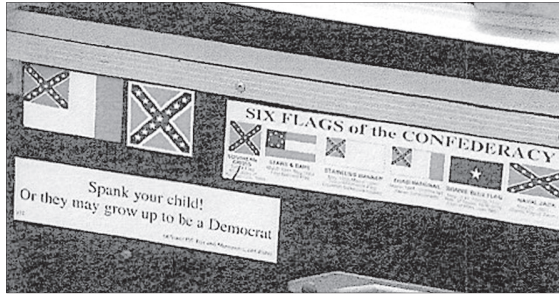
Maynard said that two boys were living there, sleeping in a church loft, and that their parents had signed over guardianship. He was not receiving money, he told the state. Parents could donate.

He said that he was using corporal punishment, and that he would email regulators his disciplinary policy.

The state has not gotten it, and does not believe the custody arrangement exempts Maynard from oversight.

DCF sent him a letter Nov. 9, giving him 30 days to prove he was applying for accreditation.

“These kids were troubled kids. To the parents, I don’t think they ever considered them victims because they were bad kids and they were sending them to a bad kid place.”
 Megan Ford, assistant state attorney“



The Bay County Sheriff’s Office took these evidence photos of Heritage Boys Academy. They show, at left, a laundry area in which bloody underwear was found by deputies; at top right, Confederate bumper stickers — and one that reads “Spank your child! Or they may grow up to be a Democrat” — on a trailer on the school’s property; and a supply room with shelves stacked with military-style clothing.

**Heritage Boys Academy
Corporal Correction Form**

Name: [Redacted] Date: 4/1
 Violation: 2 CC's - Bad attitude 4/2
 Administrator of Correction: Buddy Maynard
 Corporal Correction Administered: 10 licks to the rear
 Where: Office
 Witness(es): Mark Gregay
 Notes: [Redacted]
 Staff Signature: [Redacted]

**Heritage Boys Academy
Corporal Correction Form**

Name: [Redacted] Date: 11-28-09
 Violation: Peeing in bed
 Administrator of Correction: Bro Rob
 Corporal Correction Administered: 5 licks
 Where: Office
 Witness(es): Steve Channer
 Notes: N/A
 Staff Signature: [Redacted]

**Heritage Boys Academy
Corporal Correction Form**

Name: [Redacted] Date: 11-28-09
 Violation: Wicked Mouth 11/27/09
 Administrator of Correction: Rob Vgen
 Corporal Correction Administered: 5 licks to the rear with a switch
 Where: Office
 Witness(es): Russell Maynard
 Notes: N/A
 Staff Signature: [Redacted]

**Heritage Boys Academy
Corporal Correction Form**

Name: [Redacted] Date: 3/20
 Violation: 4 CC's Repeating Goals 2/1
 Administrator of Correction: Buddy Maynard
 Corporal Correction Administered: 20 licks to rear
 Where: Office
 Witness(es): Brian Niles
 Notes: [Redacted]
 Staff Signature: [Redacted]

**Heritage Boys Academy
Corporal Correction Form**

Name: [Redacted] Date: 11-28
 Violation: Wicked Mouth 11/27
 Administrator of Correction: Rob Vgen
 Corporal Correction Administered: 5 licks to the rear
 Where: Office
 Witness(es): Russell Maynard
 Notes: N/A
 Staff Signature: [Redacted]

**Heritage Boys Academy
Corporal Correction Form**

Name: [Redacted] Date: 3/21
 Violation: Skipping class 3-19-10
 Administrator of Correction: Russell Maynard
 Corporal Correction Administered: 5 licks to both
 Where: office
 Witness(es): Brian Niles
 Notes: N/A
 Staff Signature: [Redacted]

**Heritage Boys Academy
Corporal Correction Form**

Name: [Redacted] Date: 4-26-10
 Violation: Stealing school keys 4-26-10
 Administrator of Correction: Bro Rob Vgen
 Corporal Correction Administered: 5 licks w/ switch to rear
 Where: Office
 Witness(es): Bro Clay Maynard
 Notes: N/A
 Staff Signature: [Redacted]

“We want ’em to feel it. I felt mine when I was a kid.”

Clayton “Buddy” Maynard, the Truth Baptist Church preacher who ran Heritage Boys Academy

**Heritage Boys Academy
Corporal Correction Form**

Name: [Redacted] Date: 4/23
 Violation: 1cc skipping class 4/23
 Administrator of Correction: Buddy Maynard
 Corporal Correction Administered: 5 licks to rear
 Where: Office
 Witness(es): Mark Gregay
 Notes: [Redacted]
 Staff Signature: [Redacted]

**Heritage Boys Academy
Corporal Correction Form**

Name: [Redacted] Date: 11/10
 Violation: Display of Bad Attitude 11-7
 Administrator of Correction: Buddy Maynard
 Corporal Correction Administered: 5 licks to rear
 Where: Office
 Witness(es): Jason Moore
 Notes: [Redacted]
 Staff Signature: [Redacted]

**Heritage Boys Academy
Corporal Correction Form**

Name: [Redacted] Date: 3/21/10
 Violation: Direct disobedience 3-20-10
 Administrator of Correction: Russell Maynard
 Corporal Correction Administered: 5 licks to both
 Where: office
 Witness(es): Brian Niles
 Notes: N/A
 Staff Signature: [Redacted]

**Heritage Boys Academy
Corporal Correction Form**

Name: [Redacted] Date: 7-4-08
 Violation: Talking as Silena 7-3-08
 Administrator of Correction: Bro. Buddy Maynard
 Corporal Correction Administered: 5 licks to rear with switch
 Where: Office
 Witness(es): Steve Channer
 Notes: [Redacted]
 Staff Signature: [Redacted]