

# A&M student takes custody of boy, 15

## 'Frankie can stay with me until... he gets tired of me'

By M. Bridgett Keough  
Reporter

Robert Cagle isn't your typical college student. He's 21, single and trying his hand at parenting.

Since August, Frankie, a 15-year-old boy, has been living with Cagle. In December, Cagle gained power of attorney and soon expects to have guardianship.

For all practical purposes, Cagle says, he acts as Frankie's guardian. He can take Frankie wherever he goes, and he even attends parent-teacher conferences.

Frankie tells the story of his move into Cagle's home as if he's wondering how this home is different from the other nine or 10 pseudo-homes he's had.

Frankie explains that Cagle lived in the trailer next door to his last home. He took time to talk with Frankie. He took him to softball games. As their friendship grew, so did Frankie's trust.

Then one August day, Frankie came to Cagle needing a place to stay.

Frankie had been living with a couple, who were friends of relatives' friends, for five months. It was Frankie's 10th home since his mother died when he was 8 years old.

"They told me the stove blew up," he says. "Then, she died at the San Antonio Burn Center, but I don't even know where she's buried. Nobody will tell me."

Frankie lost not only his mother,

*Cagle says he doesn't like talking to teachers. Fortunately, he says, he's only had to do it once.*

but also his younger brother and sister — his family.

His brother and sister were adopted, he says, and he hasn't seen them since their mother's death.

"Someday I'm going to Houston and find them," Frankie says.

Living with relatives has never worked out, Frankie says, and he really doesn't know why.

But living with Cagle, he says, has been different.

"He just seems to understand me," Frankie says. "He understands when I get into trouble at school. He doesn't jump all over my case. He doesn't carry it on to the point where I get mad."

Cagle says he doesn't like talking to teachers. Fortunately, he says, he's only had to do it once.

Cagle remembers the day he offered Frankie a place to stay.

"I really didn't think he was going to take me up on the offer, but I really meant it. The next thing I knew he was moving in," Cagle says.

Cagle says his parents and friends didn't believe him at first when he told them he was taking custody of a 15-year-old.

"There was no way anyone was going to persuade me otherwise," he says. "I already had my mind made up."

"I wouldn't have made it this far today if someone hadn't taken me in."

Cagle knows from experience what it feels like to be looking for a home.

When his step-father was hospitalized for the sixth time, Cagle says, he was kicked out of the house. The relationship had been a bitter one.

"That was about the best thing that ever happened to me," Cagle says.

*"Sometimes I feel like I'm giving up something I didn't have to give up. But most times I feel like I'm gaining something."* — Robert Cagle

Cagle moved in with his grandmother and his father, who is blind.

"I gained independence there and everything worked out for the best," he says.

Cagle says he helps Frankie become more independent. He admits tension existed between the two trailers after Frankie moved in with him. It bothered Frankie's former "parents" to see Frankie given so much independence.

"When I got him, we started to go different places — like rodeos and concerts," Cagle says. "They were about to go insane. They treated Frankie like a slave. They made him clean the house and stay inside all the time."

With a grin, Cagle adds, "They're moving today."

Frankie says he does the dishes, and Cagle cooks.

"He's (Cagle) only done the dishes once since I came," he says. "The other people would say 'FRANKIE GO WASH THE DISHES.' Now, it's 'Frankie, when you gonna wash those dishes?'"

Cagle admits he lives life at a slower pace.

"Sometimes I feel like I'm giving up something I didn't have to give up," Cagle says. "But most times I feel like I'm gaining something."

Cagle, a Kilgore native, plans to graduate in December 1986 with a bachelor's degree in agronomy. He says he hopes to join the Peace Corps and to work in South America.

Frankie has four years of high school to complete, he says, before he can become a fireman.

Cagle says he's willing to postpone his career plans until Frankie graduates from high school. He says he may attend graduate school or take a job in the area.

"Frankie can stay with me until he's 18, or whenever he gets tired of me," Cagle says. "I'm willing to stay here if he wants to graduate from Bryan High School."

# Cow manure ad places Mark White on 'poo poo' list

AUSTIN — Fort Worth nurseryman Mike Cook is using a "cow poo poo" ad to try to fertilize the seeds of political discontent against Gov. Mark White.

For about five years, Cook, 38, has periodically included a political mes-

sage in his newspaper ad among the prices for pecan trees, pansies and tomato plants.

The political message always is in the cow manure price box.

"Cow poo poo," it says. "Who the poo does Mark White think he's kid-

ding when he says he hasn't raised taxes since he was elected governor! We won't forget when we go to vote in November. And that ain't no poo, Markey baby."

The ad then returns to a more businesslike note: "Excellent for

spring gardens, shrubs, trees. \$1.49 per bag."

When notified about Cook's ad, the White campaign took it lightly.

Campaign spokesman Mark McKinnon said, "The substance of the ad speaks for itself. We appreciate a good sense of humor."

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invites all who are interested in becoming charter members of the Zeta colony at Texas A&M to come to an Ice Cream Social on the afternoon of April 13th at 4p.m. behind Mt. Aggie. For more information call Christie at 696-7606.

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