

REPRINT FROM

# I P M R

1957 ISSUE

PUBLISHED BY  
INSTITUTE OF PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION  
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY — BELLEVUE MEDICAL CENTER

## TEAMWORK TELLS THE TALE

TELEPHONE: BEACHVIEW 2-7143

**FIRE EQUIPMENT:**

CO-2, DRY CHEMICAL  
SODA & ACID FOAM  
1 QT. PUMP FIRE  
EXTINGUISHERS  
FIRE HOSE, ETC.

**WILLIAM HIRD & CO.**

1318 - 76TH STREET  
BROOKLYN 28, N. Y.

**SAFETY EQUIPMENT:**

GRINDING & WELDING  
GOGGLES  
SAFETY CANS  
OILY WASTE CANS  
DUST MASKS, ETC.

---

HEADQUARTERS FOR ALL MAKES OF FIRE AND SAFETY EQUIPMENT

---

Recently the New York State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation gave Bill Hird his diploma when they decided that he no longer needed the supervision and counseling which they had been providing for almost three years. As owner of a fire and safety equipment sales and service business, Bill has written nearly 7,000 letters soliciting business. His accounts include Grand Central Station, the New York Central Railroad, the Ford Instrument Company, B. Altman & Company, Elizabeth Arden, New York University-Bellevue Medical Center and many Government agencies. At present he puts in a full day and is realizing a profit with the help of his wife Anna, whom he calls his "hands".

Bill's story is one of inspiration and hard, hard struggle in overcoming a disability while supporting a family with very meager funds. It is the story of successful teamwork between numerous agencies that made it possible for him to be lifted out of a life of complete helplessness and dependence to a position where he is now supporting his family with no outside aid.

In 1951 at the age of 32 Bill was stricken with infantile paralysis which left him paralyzed in all four extremities. He was a sheet metal worker at the time (although he had recently closed out a small fire extinguisher business) and was married, with two children aged nine and four. With the support of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis he was a

long-term patient in several hospitals and in February of 1953 through the Foundation, was admitted to the Institute where he remained an inpatient until April of the same year.

Bill could do literally nothing for himself when he came here. His wife, along with holding down a job in a factory wielding an acetylene torch was exhausted from the strain of caring for her husband and two children. For the two months that Bill was a patient in the Institute, the Catholic Charities provided a housekeeper to mind the children so that his wife could continue to work. Friends helped with the children's clothing needs.

At the Institute, Bill learned to get in and out of



Bill Hird and his wife Anna at work.

bed with minimal assistance. With special self-help devices he could feed himself, write, and type on an electric typewriter, and the National Foundation provided a special wheel chair with removable arms. Through vocational counseling it was decided that it would be feasible for Bill to return to the fire extinguisher business, only now he had to prove through mail advertising that even though he was disabled he could provide prompt and dependable service.

The Institute sent staff members to examine the Hird's house and make suggestions in planning that would help him get around more easily. It was decided that a ramp at the end of the kitchen would facilitate his getting in and out of his house in a wheelchair, that an office could be made out of their porch, and that a closet off the kitchen large enough to admit a wheelchair could be made into a bathroom. Funds for some of this remodeling were provided by the Catholic Charities. The New York State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provided a filing cabinet, an electric typewriter, and a special bed. The New York Tele-

phone Company came in and set up a manual switch phone with the receiver suspended so that Bill could answer the telephone and make calls by flipping the switch.

Then Bill went to work!

He has come a long way since those early months when outside help was needed to meet family expenses despite his utmost effort. That time is past, and now Bill feels his earnings can go even higher and are, he says, limited only by the limits he cares to place upon himself. His confidence allied to so much solid accomplishment surely marks him as an outstandingly able head-of-a-family.

Bill's story has been a great triumph for one of our favorite concepts—the team approach—and on a very large scale. Catholic Charities, the Department of Welfare, the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and personal friends all worked together with us to save a very brave man facing a fearful crisis.