

ORANGE COUNTY

Crowded Out

Olympics Puts a Critical Strain on County Shelters for Homeless

By JERRY HICKS, Times Staff Writer

It was a sight far removed from the excitement of the 1984 Olympics: Michael, April and Joseph Haney, all youngsters, sharing a single can of cold vegetable soup or lunch, passing around a stick hat Joseph had whittled into a spoon with his pocket knife.

They were with their mother, Millie Rose Haney, staying at Featherly Regional Park in Yorba Linda Saturday in a pup tent someone had given them.

When Haney and her children ditchhiked down the coast from Washington to Orange County six days ago, they gave no thought to the 1984 Olympics. Haney just wanted to find a job and get her children settled before school started.

High Motel Rates

But Haney, who is 26, couldn't find any temporary housing. The Olympics have turned a serious temporary shelter problem into a critical one, Orange County housing officials said Saturday, because higher motel rates during the Olympic period have forced some permanent motel residents into the streets.

Haney isn't one of the displaced motel residents. But she has had to compete with them for the handful of shelter spaces available.

No matter which social agency homeless people call for help this

weekend, the response is likely to be that the shelter is already filled.

"We're so full we actually had people sleeping in the living room of our shelter Friday night," said Jill McCarthy of Christian Temporary Housing, a private group with a 60-bed shelter in Orange.

Homes for Poor

While many major hotels in Orange County have agreed not to raise rates, some of the smaller motels have more than doubled their room fees to take advantage of Olympic tourism. It is mainly these motels and hotels that poor people have been living in month to month.

Haney said she couldn't afford a motel room anyway. She and her children, ages 7 to 10, arrived in Orange County with little more than a change of clothes.

"One place I called said they did have a room, but there were five families that wanted it," Haney said. She said jokingly that she never thought the Olympics would be one of her problems.

A coalition of county social groups has planned ahead for the temporary shelter problem during the Olympics. The group has a commitment from 14 churches to provide more than 200 beds.

But unfortunately for Haney and several others who spent the





DISPLACED: County Shelters Strained

Weekend in the park, many of those churches won't be ready with bed space until at least Monday, according to Jean Forbath, one of the group's leaders.

The temporary housing problem is apparently most critical in Santa Ana, where a new city housing code enforcement program is forcing more and more people to seek temporary housing, according to Lena Tapia, a coordinator for Catholic Social Services, which has been helping people find temporary homes.

"We think the situation is critical right now, and getting worse," Tapia said.

Private individuals donated 12 spaces at Featherly Park for people needing shelter through the Santa Ana-based Center for the Homeless.

Rusty Kennedy, executive director of the Orange County Human Relations Commission, said the temporary campsites were meant to be just a precautionary measure in case the displaced motel resident problem got out of hand.

"I guess the park sites became necessary before we anticipated," Kennedy said.

Across from the Haney family in Featherly Park is another group in the same predicament—David and Helen Allen, of Louisville, Ky., and the 10 others who came with them last week to Orange County.

Besides the Allens and their six children, there is an uncle and a nephew, a woman acquaintance and her baby daughter. The group

came in a van and a truck. With those vehicles and a small tent, the 12 have found sleeping room in an assigned spot at the park.

Allen said his family had applied for welfare assistance but were turned down. They were also told it would be hopeless—because of displacements caused by tourists coming for the Olympics—to find temporary shelter for 12 people.

"We came out here because we heard there might be jobs in Southern California," David Allen said. "We didn't give any thought to the Olympics."

As for Haney and her children, roughing it is nothing new.

They had lived with a friend in Seattle until recent weeks, when they moved to North Bend, Wash., where Haney sought work. She and the children lived on the ground in a woods for two weeks, she said.

She heard there might be work in Southern California, so she and the children hitchhiked down, arriving Wednesday.

That night they slept at the home of a woman who had given them a ride.

Thursday night they slept in a park in Orange County—Haney and the children couldn't say for sure where it was. They stumbled across it looking for a welfare office. On Friday, Haney went to the Santa Ana Police Department, who referred them to Save Our Selves, and they were eventually sent to the park.

Forbath of Save Our Selves had provided food for the family and

arranged for the park space. But she said Saturday she was unaware that they were without transportation and that they didn't even have utensils.

"I feel terrible about it," Forbath said.

By Saturday evening she was making arrangements to get the Haney family transferred from the park to a motel, which Save Our Selves would pay for until she could apply for welfare and longer-term housing through other agencies.

Meantime, the boys, Michael, 10, and Joseph, 7, gathered minnows in a cup from a pond while Haney and her daughter discussed what their next move would be.

"I can do all kinds of work," Haney said, who has been divorced and on her own with the children for seven years. "Me and the kids have made it this far and we're still together. I'm going to see to it we're settled before school starts, because my children don't miss school."