

[1964, Aug. 25]

County
Madison, Freedom Schools, Summer Project
1964

This summary is incomplete because of insufficient or no information on the schools in Valley View and the school in Cedar Grove.

An overview of reports from the other five schools can be divided into three sections: 1) experiences common to all or most of the schools; 2) notable differences among them; 3) recommendations and requests for the fall and winter program.

Common Experiences

A sharp drop in attendance occurred in every school but Gluckstadt (where attendance remained c. 16). With the exception of Pleasant Green, every school began with large numbers of students (30, 50, 70). Pleasant Green began with none; canvassing brought in c. 20. After about three weeks attendance was down almost by half everywhere. Another drop occurred in the last weeks, leaving the schools with a fourth or less of their initial enrollment. An upward trend did appear during the last three days at Cedar Grove near Flora where attendance rose to c. 55 or 60 in the closing sessions.

subjected

Every teaching staff was juggled around, and every group of students had accordingly to adjust to such changes; the adjustments were not always satisfactory. New Bethel students lost Earl Bessey, who had to return to the north early; they also had to accept the switch of Bob Gilman for Peter Praetz. Pleasant Green students had to get used to the switch of Pete for Bob; later Jo Ann Coiman was transferred out of their school. Gluckstadt students had no constant teaching staff at all. Mrs. Chute and Peggy Gunn left early (Peggy was not with them much when she was here because of a foot injury); Bob Stout worked with them only a week; Arlene Bock wasn't with them much longer (tho' she had substituted earlier for Peggy). They were also substituted to two or three other substitute teachers. The Flora Cedar Grove school lost Dorothy Hess just a few days after school began and then, just before the last week, Sandy Watts was transferred out of there. Both of these departures very much bothered the students. Asbury kids, of course, suffered the worst trauma. They had been unhappy in the beginning days when Sandy Watts was moved from them to Flora. They were very troubled when Nancy Cooper and Nancy Wright had to leave unexpectedly early.

Make-shift provisions had to be made for age groups considerably younger and older than the high school students for whom the schools were planned. Full adult classes were set up in both Cedar Grove schools. A small adult citizenship class, plus a one-man literary

class, were established at New Bethel. Every school worked up special programs of drawing and reading and spelling for the young children.

The summer's curriculum was pretty uniform, as were students' responses to it -- much enthusiasm for Negro history, good success with "creative dramatics" (role-playing), growing enthusiasm for discussion of citizenship materials. The visits paid by Mrs. Jeannette King to the Canton schools were enthusiastically evaluated by the teachers as valuable. Such contact with a southern white is a provocative experience for these youngsters.

Notable Differences

These differences stem from two causes: a) teacher-student initiatives; b) uncontrollable circumstances. Asbury students produced three editions of a Canton Freedom School newspaper and a public play (three performances -- two in Canton, one at Tougaloo). New Bethel teachers had commendable success with a reading program in which each student undertook to read one important (or famous or "classic") book. Gluckstadt teachers (Mrs. Chute, mostly) were well pleased with their kids' response to assignments of giving reports. Pleasant Green experimented with letting the students take over the lectures and discussion-leading and were excited by the good results. Pleasant Green students also had the benefits, well-used, of Sue Sanford's tape recorder. New Bethel, Pleasant Green and Flora Cedar Grove had good responses to quiz games. Asbury, New Bethel and Flora Cedar Grove students all enjoyed and became very skilled in canvassing for the FDP.

As for unique experiences stemming from "circumstances," the Gluckstadt experience is most notable -- the total loss by fire of the building and an estimated 800-1000 books and multiple other supplies as well as the church furniture and piano belonging to the owner of that building. New Bethel had circumstances to battle, too, in the person of Jake Vinson who threatened and harassed them in many ways.

^V plantation owner in that saw-mill area,

Recommendations and Requests for Fall and Winter Programs

If possible, find the enrollment lists for each of the schools and contact the summer students with information on the winter programs which should include adult classes, tutorial work, and programs for younger children. (The adults at New Bethel would like to keep their small group going).

Send out teachers to both Cedar Groves (at least two per school, preferably three).

Negotiate with the congregation of Mt. Pleasant Church in

Gluckstadt (being built across the street from the burned building) for the use of their building for winter classes and the establishment of a permanent library for which the community has expressed a desire.

Arrange transportation systems wherever possible and necessary for getting people to school in the winter.

Gather exceptional written materials and artistic works to be sent to Jackson for inclusion in the Freedom School anthology which is now being put together.

Maintain close touch with students who are potential college material. Keep abreast of all SNCC, CORE, COFO, etc. scholarship programs; also seek information on northern scholarships.

Be certain that books and materials left in Pleasant Green are transferred to the Community Center as soon as possible.

Establish a system for coordinating the winter schools which will operate more consistently and will maintain better communications between the coordinator and the teachers than the summer's system did.

As much as possible, maintain an unchanging teaching staff at each school.

Jo Ann Coiman
Canton COFO
August 25, 1964

To: George Raymond

Individual Report

From: Jo Ann Coiman

October 5, 1964

My main concern this week has been to get the Freedom Schools running again. We (Arlene and I) held a class in the Canton Center Tuesday night which was fairly well attended and, so far as I can tell, pretty successfully handled. Thursday night we intended to bring a group of Gluckstadt students into the center for school but were unable to do so because of no working cars. Friday evening we enjoyed a really good session in the Flora Freedom School. Monday and Wednesday evenings I devoted to precinct meetings, accompanying Marthe and Eartiss to Precinct 8 and Tom and Eartiss to Precinct 6.

Last week's day-time hours were passed in a variety of tasks. I finally got the Library master list typed and ready for the mimeo machine. I wrote, typed and ran off 500 copies each of summary sheets on the Freedom Schools and Community Center for the information booth at Saturday's rally. I got a report into the hands of the educational staff which detailed some of the things I learned last weekend in Batesville. Arlene and I spent one long afternoon cleaning up the Flora school in preparation for Friday night and then getting stranded by a broken clutch. I took a few hours, too, to plan out school work.

Saturday, of course, was the Rally where I freedom registered a whole 2 people. I also had a chance to talk to Mr. Johnny Goodlow who still sounds very optimistic about our using the Madisonville Church for school. He was to have found out Sunday (yesterday) for sure. I was also approached at the convention by Lois Chaffee from Jackson who proposed that I move to the Harmony Community Center. DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THIS PROPOSAL? I would prefer to ~~XXXXX~~ forget about it if you think that is possible.

Sunday I sat home, froze to death and watched Hilda's travelling companions. I also did little things like bathe, which at 9am-10pm 7 day/week schedule doesn't allow a whole lot of time for. I also sent some notes out to the north reminding people that the Miss. Project is still alive and that if it dies it'll be their fault for neglecting us. I attempted to go to church across the street from where I live, but weather conditions apparently caused cancellation of the services.

In the coming week I expect to ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ get myself moved to Mrs. Robinsons, send off a good report to Liz Fusco on the Canton area schools, help run off the library list (some 67 pages), write an article for the Citizen, fulfill an obligation left over from the Batesville meetings (to critique the curriculum unit on Nazi Germany so that it can be rewritten), reshelve the library, visit Johnny Goodlow, teach school and tutor.

To: George Raymond

October 12, 1964

From: JoAnn Coiman

Individual Report

Besides regular school sessions 3 evenings a week (Canton, Tuesday, Gluckstadt Thursday, Flora Friday), daily order-keeping in the Library and varying forms of regular contact with the kids in the Center, I spent several hours tutoring a young man in world history this week and a couple of more hours working with Albert Brown on his application to a college for the deaf in Washington. I also worked out a 10-weeks schedule of discussion for the Flora adult freedom school and wrote an article for The Citizen.

The Library is finally reshelved, is now in very good order and has had about 60 new volumes added to it, all of good quality. I have written for more materials such as The Journal of Negro History. Others of my letters north are bearing fruit: we should receive sometime this week or next a shipment of clothing from Galesburg, Illinois. By next month we should have a shipment of Center and school supplies coming in from Ames, Iowa. The last I heard, the Fellowship of Reconciliation is starting a fund-raising project to supply all freedom school libraries with the basic literature on non-violence.

Several hours of the week just past went into clean-up chores: swept, mopped and scrubbed out the entire center Monday; spent Saturday cleaning out the book storage room and the closet behind the Library; also carried out my KP duties as assigned by Tom Ramsey.

I am anxious to help bring more order and constructivism to the programs of the community center and hope that we can begin to do so this week. I'm also anxious to put more work in on my teaching materials and to see my fellow teacher do the same. I am very bothered by a general atmosphere of aimlessness and unrest among the staff. We have to get ourselves organized so that we can really bite into the task of organizing Madison County.