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EVERGREEN NEWS

A Neighborhood Newspaper Sponsored by Vollintine-Evergreen Community Action Association

Memphis, Tennessee

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MEMPHIS SCHOOLS are probably no more out-dated than the schools in other cities of comparable size. The physical layout of our schools, class size, methods of instruction, even the concept of the "school marm", all are essentially the same as they might have been in Dodge City a hundred years ago. The most apparent difference, it seems, is one of size and twentieth century conveniences, which does not necessarily constitute an improvement. Some of our schools have over two thousand students and are so ugly that, even with their laboratories, cafeterias, and gymnasias, they resemble penal institutions rather than centers for the cultivation of free spirits. The average teacher, though more erudite than the teacher of a hundred years ago, is, at least in elementary schools, still a woman. None of these factors make a modern school necessarily a worse place to send a child for an education than a school of yesteryear. A bright child with a middle class background will do well regardless of the physical facilities and the sex of its teacher. The same assertion unfortunately cannot be made of the culturally deprived child who reaches school age in a city ghetto, with little or no contact with adult males.

It seems indeed unfair to compare our modern schools with those of the horse and buggy days, for in many ways they prepared the children better to live a full life, such as life was, and they did so in an attractive manner: the principle of the multi-class system in one huge room of a clapboard structure with a bell tower comes close to today's concept of the "open space" school, a structure that allows for a minimum of confining and separating walls, rigid

methods, and paddling.

In Memphis, only three of the 160 public schools are open space schools: Sheffield, Balmoral and Ridgeway, all elementary schools miles from the Vollintine-Evergreen Community.

The prime concern of our neighborhood, however, is at present less the methodology of teaching than the racial and social-class composition of the students in our schools. It has been well documented that students of different social backgrounds within a

school may affect the achievement of the entire student body. According to studies by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, this holds true for Negro areas as well as White, although for Negro areas the effects may be more severe. A quotation from a 1967 report by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights may illustrate this assertion: "... racial isolation, whether or not sanctioned by law, damages Negro students by adversely affecting both their attitudes and achievement. Negro pupils attending predominantly Negro schools tend to have lower educational aspira-

tions, feel more frequently that they are unable to control their own destinies, have a poorer self-image, and have teachers with lower expectations than similarly situated Negro students attending predominantly white schools. These differences in part are associated with differences in the comparative social class levels of the average predominantly Negro and the average predominantly White school -- differences which, given the relatively small Negro middle class, cannot be erased without school integration."

A detailed and documented study for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights by James



SCHOOLS continued

S. Coleman reveals that the achievement of white students in predominantly white elementary schools has been strongly affected by the social-class composition of the school, but that the degree of racial integration of a school has no effect upon the achievement of white students in "modally middle class" schools. There seems to be unanimity in the finding that the "apparent beneficial effect of a student body with a high proportion of white students comes not from racial composition *per se*, but from the better educational background and higher educational aspirations that are, on the average, found among white students."

Other studies of a similar nature also come to the conclusion that the achievement of white students in integrated schools equals that of students in predominantly white schools, in some instances even surpasses it, and that black students score higher in integrated schools than in predominantly black schools, apparently regardless of social-class background.

The obvious need is integrated schools, preferably with a higher percentage of white students than black students. However, this need seems to be difficult to fill. As soon as a school is on the verge of racial balance, various forces conspire to destroy it. It has happened with several Memphis schools, with some in our own community, and it is happening again at present. As little as four years ago, Vollandine Elementary School stood out in this city as an example of integrated excellence. It seems that we Memphians, who support nearly as many churches in our city as gas stations and drive more cars displaying flag decals than safety stickers, have little regard for the ethical and constitutional laws of our country when the education of our children is involved. It must be pointed out, though, that meaningful education of the very young is the most promising means to moderate extremism and to turn future social liabilities into social assets.

Dr. Joe Westbrook, the new Central Area Assistant Superintendent with the Board of Education, said in his talk at the February VECAA meeting that it is hoped the decentralization of schools will arrive at a formula for the Board to be more sensitive to the needs of individual schools. He further stated that desegregation may or may not be a necessary step to arrive at such a formula for the Board to be more sensitive to the needs of individual schools. He further stated that desegregation may or may not be a necessary step to arrive at such a formula. Dr. Westbrook is an expert in the field of education in Memphis, and we in the Vollandine-Evergreen Community must consider ourselves fortunate in having a person of his experience to help us solve our school problems. With enough public interest in our schools, exciting projects such as the pairing of schools or even the construction of school parks might be started, and before we know it, our schools will be tuned -- if not to the space age -- at least to the age of the horseless carriage.

The March VECAA meeting will be held at McLean Baptist Church, March 15th at 8:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. No special guest is featured this month, but the committee chairmen will report on their activities. Coffee will be served at the close of the meeting.

editorial: john bruhwiler/features: george bradfute/news: rick thomas/art: warren lowry/advertising: golden shumaker/clerical: emma palmer, sallee bruhwiler, nancy lowe, francis silver, judy johnson, martha jane edwards.

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VOLLENTINE OVERCROWDING CREATES PROBLEMS

by John Bruhwiler

At the helm of 601 children and 24 teachers is Mr. Rochester Neely, Sr., the Principal. Mr. Neely has been in the business of education for 30 years, with a four-year interruption only for a tour of duty in the Second World War. He has been a principal for 9 years, the last 2 years here at Vollandine.

Mr. Neely points out that although the physical plant of the school may not be the most up-to-date -- lacking such extras as air conditioning, a gymnasium and other sports facilities -- the rooms are spacious and comfortable. Of greater importance, he considers his teaching staff "on the whole excellent".

The raw material the teachers work with, the pupils, the "raison d'etre" of the school, Mr. Neely does not praise as spontaneously as he does his teachers. The average I.Q. for the student body is approximately 102 which is two points above the national average. Mr. Neely thinks the I.Q. average at Vollandine would be higher if it were not affected by the culturally deprived. The I.Q.'s of individual students vary so greatly that in one class for instance there is a student with an I.Q. of 72 and another with one of 120. Throughout the school, I.Q.'s range from the low seventies to 130. I.Q. tests in elementary schools may not be indicators of an individual's potential achievement as an adult, which is a relative matter, but a great discrepancy in the I.Q. level of any school class presents problems to the teacher.

An interesting feature at Vollandine for which Mr. Neely has high praise is the work of a volunteer group of non-working mothers who pass up bridge games to help teachers with non-academic chores such as the distribution of supplies and the supervision of slow readers, class breaks, and lunch lines. The volunteers also take an active part in encouraging the children to observe good table manners. Much credit for this program goes to Mrs. Nita Brown, President of the Vollandine P.T.A.. Other exceptional programs are the P.T.A.-sponsored kindergarten which is also under Mr. Neely's supervision, and the Special Education classes. One of these is for children with motor, visual, and auditory problems; two are for very slow or mentally retarded children. The retarded children are divided by age into two classes, one for children from 6-10, the other from 11-14.

Asked to what extent there was "overcrowding" of the school, Mr. Neely agreed that there were indeed more pupils this year than ever before. He had been forced, in fact, to convert into classrooms not only the supply room and the "enrichment" room where the children used to be taken for special projects and activities, but also the recreation room in the basement which now serves as two additional classrooms. Mr. Neely attributes the increase of students partially to the influx of black families into this neighborhood, and massive transfers of children from north of Edward Street. Mr. Neely has informed the School Board of this situation.

Statistics made available by the School Board reveal the following information in regard to the enrollment at Vollandine:

Year	White Students	Black Students	Total
1968-1969	195 (46%)	229 (54%)	424
1969-1970	150 (35%)	279 (65%)	429
1970-1971	184 (30%)	422 (70%)	606
1970-1971*	135 (32%)	288 (68%)	423

*as projected by the School Board

Actual enrollment for 1970-71 exceeded the number projected by the Board by 184 students. If it can be assumed that the increase in the number of black students exceeding the projection was due to transfers, the enrollment without the transfer students would be 184 (43%) white and 238 (57%) black. The most striking aspect of these figures is the fact that the drop in white pupils at Vollandine since 1968 would amount to the negligible number of 11 (5.6%).

Mr. Neely's motives for admitting children from north of Edward Street are admirable. It must be a difficult decision to refuse children the opportunity of an education at a school with a reputation for excellence. On the other hand, if the present high percentage of black children should induce some more white parents to move out of this neighborhood, it would not take long for Vollandine to become a "predominantly" black school. As was documented by J.S. Coleman's study, a black school in today's society is not a desirable goal. This apparent fact finds more substantiation in a recent study of achievement tests of black students at Vollandine and the students at the all-black Alcy Road Elementary School. The students at Alcy Road who are almost entirely from upper middle class families did considerably better in the first grade than the black students at Vollandine who, as a whole, have a less privileged background. In the upper grades, however, the Vollandine students outclassed the Alcy Road students in every respect.



PUPILS' PETS

MRS. LONA RUNYON has taught at Vollandine 23 years and still loves it. In fact, she says, now that her two daughters are married, her sixth grade children have become her family, the school her second home. She is aware of the influx of Negro children at Vollandine. At the beginning of this year, however, when she had 40 children in her class, it was not the color of the children which bothered her, it was their number. Now, with her class down to 28 pupils, she is happy. She says she is not aware of a child's color because she teaches "children, not color". Mrs. Runyon has high praise for Mr. Neely whose personal interest in both the children and the faculty she believes contributes greatly to the academic success of the school.

MRS. JANE GRAHAM has taught at Vollandine for 4 years. However, she has educated children longer than that. She raised five children of her own before attending Memphis State University. When asked if the achievement of her students seemed to bear any relation to their racial or social-class background, Mrs. Graham said in her class there was no pattern at all in this re-

PETS continued

spect. She believes that in order to interpret achievement tests significantly, a larger number of students is needed than is found in just one class. The one problem she says she has is "thinking up" always new activity type programs for her fourth graders. The main educational challenge she sees is the correlation of the four communication skills. For relaxation, Mrs. Graham sews and studies toward her M.A. in Education at Memphis State.

MRS. JOHN FABER came to Vollentine five years ago to take charge of the P.T.A. sponsored kindergarten. Along with twelve years of experience in private kindergartens she brought with her a patience and a kindness that make harsh words in her classroom unnecessary. Even if the middle-class background of her children might be partly responsible for an unusual rapport between pupils and teacher, most of the credit is undoubtedly hers. Although she has three grown sons—an engineer with the Air Force, an intern at Vanderbilt, and a senior at Princeton who also intends to study medicine—she keeps furthering her own education by attending evening and summer school. For relaxation, she makes ceramics. Mrs. Faber thinks very highly of the Faculty and the Administration and thoroughly enjoys working at Vollentine.

MRS. MARTHA CARTER received her M.A. degree in Special Education for the mentally retarded from Memphis State University three years ago. Petite Mrs. Carter is entrusted with the 11-14 age group of the retarded children where I.Q.'s range from 55-76. "Retardation," she says, isn't necessarily genetic or congenital; it can be due to emotional problems or other nervous disorders. When this is the case, a child may progress quickly and before long be transferred to a regular class. Mrs. Carter is very pleased with the success she has had, especially with very slow pupils such as the child who didn't know his own name when he came and now works with a Second Grade Reader. She credits Mr. Neely's personal interest in the program with part of her success. Mrs. Carter loves her work and can't think of anything she'd like better except joining her husband who is a dentist with the American Forces in Korea.

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

- Northside High School dance sponsored by WDIA has been tentatively scheduled for this weekend. The dance was won in a School Spirit Contest sponsored by the radio station.
- Girl Scout Sunday at Evergreen Presbyterian Church on March 7. All girls participating in scouting programs will be recognized.
- Old Time Movies will be sponsored by the Senior High Group of Springdale Methodist Church on Sunday, March 7. Charlie Chaplin and Laurel and Hardy films will be shown starting at 2:30 P.M. at the church. Admission is 50¢.
- Festival of award-winning short films at Southwestern on March 8. A total of seven films, many done with animation and experimental techniques, will be shown. Show time is 8:00 P.M. and admission is by contribution.
- Snowden Junior High will hold its regular PTA meeting on March 9.
- Piano concert by Joseph Kalichstein at Baron Hirsch Synagogue on Thursday, March 11. Tickets at \$4.00 and are now available. This will be the last concert of the current season.
- Vollentine sixth grade will visit Cypress Junior High on Thursday, March 11, to be shown in advance what their new school will be like.

NEIGHBORHOOD continued

- The Bishop College Recruiting Band will perform for Northside High School on Monday, March 15, at the school.
- Missionary Conference at Open Door Bible Church, March 24-28. Dr. Alden A. Gannett, the main speaker, is former president of Southeastern Bible College.
- Puppet Show at Snowden Junior High on Friday, March 26. The Harleton Players will present "Circus" to the elementary school students at 2:00 P.M. in the auditorium.
- Revival at McLean Baptist Church, March 28-April 4. Dr. Roy McLain will speak nightly at 7:30 as part of their Outreach Emphasis program.
- Baseball practice starts this month at many churches sponsoring teams. Interested boys should contact their recreation director for practice times.
- Little Flower Catholic Youth Organization sponsors a tutoring program for fifth and sixth grade students who need extra help in math, reading and English grammar. Classes are held every Wednesday evening from 7:00-8:00 P.M. at Little Flower School. For further information call Mark Born, 272-1493.

HEARING ANNOUNCED

An application by William Loeb to rezone the northwest corner of Jackson and North Auburndale from R-3 (duplex) to C-2 (commercial) will be on the April 1 agenda of the Memphis and Shelby County Planning Commission.

The application, submitted by William W. Farris, Mr. Loeb's attorney, does not state the specific use intended for the property if the request gains Planning Commission and City Council approval. C-2 is a less restrictive zoning than C-1.

Owners of property within a 500-foot radius of the property registered in the name of Lehora Cianciola are being notified of the public hearing on the proposed rezoning. The notification area is bounded roughly by Belvedere on the west, the south side of Crump on the south, Hawthorne on the east and houses south of Vollentine on the north.

If the application is approved, all the property on the north side of Jackson from Auburndale to Belvedere would be zoned commercial. There's a service station on the southeast corner of Jackson and Evergreen, and commercial zoning from there west to Belvedere.

CLASSIFIEDS

FOR SALE

- Brick duplex. Hardwood floors. Has rented at \$75 a month per side. FHA financing available. 276-6056
- Great Books of the Western World - 50 volume set plus supplemental books and bookcase \$145, half the initial price. 274-1278

WANTED

- Portable wardrobe closet. 276-3721 (after 6).
- New high back rocking chairs -- \$15.00. Conn Saxophone \$100 BR 6-6056
- House or duplex to rent near Southwestern. Three well-educated girls in professional positions seek mid-town location. Will consider rent in the \$100-\$140 range. Call Virginia Anne Jones evenings at 275-7779.



VECAA NEWS

LOUIS SILVER REPORTS

FOR THE REAL ESTATE COMMITTEE

The Real Estate Committee explored the question of how to "stabilize" the real estate market in the Vollentine-Evergreen Community and came up with the suggestion, "Let's take VECAA to the people."

This means setting up neighborhood meetings to discuss problems under trained leadership. In other words, residents on one block may have something concerning them--something that might not occur to someone living a few blocks away. Or it might be something considered too localized to warrant discussion at a VECAA membership meeting.

Work has already begun to find neighborhood representatives to convene neighborhood meetings. They may be scheduled in schools or churches for large groups. Or attendance as small as a few couples could be handled in somebody's living room.

The Real Estate Committee also favors focusing THE EVERGREEN NEWS spotlight on the men and women operating businesses in our community. More about them later.

REPORT FROM THE TREASURER

Although the operating expenses of VECAA are quite low at present, a certain amount of funds are required to cover costs related to printing and mailing. Approximately 45 family memberships have been issued at \$2.50 a piece and an upcoming membership drive will hopefully attract additional supporters. Anyone wishing to join now may send a check for \$2.50 to John Appling, 2116 University Circle.

At the February VECAA meeting, Dr. Joe Westbrook, the new Central Area Assistant Superintendent for the Board of Education was guest speaker. Dr. Westbrook explained the decentralization process that will take place this summer and how it will affect the neighborhood's schools. He emphasized the School Board's efforts to make the administration more sensitive to the needs of the individual schools. Each student, Dr. Westbrook said, should be given the best education possible and tailoring each school to the needs of the students will be a step in this direction. The School Board will also utilize Community Advisory Councils in this effort.

After Dr. Westbrook's presentation, a lively discussion on the problems of the neighborhood's schools followed.

SPORTS

The end of the basketball season finds all of the teams in the Vollentine/Evergreen community with winning records. Of the four schools, three finished high up in their respective conferences.

The Southwestern Lynx completed their fifth consecutive winning season, compiling a 14-10 record. In their conference tournament last weekend the Lynx finished in second place in the College Athletic Conference.

Cypress Junior High finished with the best record in the neighborhood. Their 15 wins against no losses gave them the city junior high championship. In other junior high play, Snowden compiled a 9-6 record and placed a player on the all-conference team.

Northside High School had a 20-6 record at the end of the regular season and went on to finish third in its district in tournament play. Now 22-8, Northside was eliminated from the regional tournament Monday night.



MEET THE NEIGHBORS

MARVIN RATNER: CITIZEN

by John Bruhwiler

Few of the remarkable men from Mississippi who made Memphis their home have contributed more to making it the "city of good abode" than Marvin Ratner.

Upon graduation from Central High School, Marvin attended Southern Law University (now Memphis State), then the University of Tennessee where he studied Accounting during the day and Law at night, becoming a C.P.A. at the age of twenty-two. After earning a Master's degree in Tax Accounting at New York University he returned to Memphis, specializing in tax, estate, and corporate work. When he joined the prominent law firm of Heiskell, Donelson, Adams, Williams & Wall as a partner, he seemed to have come a long way from Yazoo City where the bright Jewish student had been barred from a high school fraternity.

However, Mr. Ratner was to go further. Ignoring the advice of his major clients, he formed an integrated law firm, in 1967 the first such firm in the South. Almost immediately, Ratner, Thompson, Sugarmon, Lucas, and Willis were retained by the N.A.A.C.P. in its struggle to gain equal educational opportunities for blacks in northern Mississippi and Memphis. Many of the cases the firm has been retained for, or appointed to by a judge may have been controversial and often less than profitable, but never dull. In order to protect an individual's civil rights the firm has had to do battle with such adversaries as landlords, school boards, police departments, military bases, and our own City Hall.

Civil rights, however, is not the firm's only field. It also specializes in the less spectacular but more lucrative areas of tax, business, and real estate. Mr. Ratner points out with some pride that now similar integrated firms are found in Nashville, Little Rock, and Atlanta, and that the operations of their own firm are not limited to Memphis and the Mid-South but extends to major cities from coast to coast.

Mr. Ratner's devotion to the pursuit of justice, especially in regard to education,

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CITIZEN continued

carries over into his private life. He is one of the founders of the Day Care Center; he served on the board of the now defunct Day Care Federation; he served two terms as President of the Memphis Better Schools Committee; he is Vice-President of the Tennessee Citizens' Committee for Better Schools; he is very active in the Scout movement, and he is also immediate past President of the Ballet Society of Memphis.

Marvin Ratner has a matter-of-fact, friendly manner, much like his wife Emilie, his son Carl, and his daughters Susan and Yvette, with whom he shares his home at 925 University. Typical of his personal involvement is his latest letter to the Editors of the Commercial Appeal in which he, an active Democrat, praises Mr. Nixon's switch in fiscal policy.

A STEED FOR A SHEIK

by N. Unsinn

The matter of VollEntine versus VollIntine involves two problems. First, who was this so-called Hiram Volentine the School and the Street are named after. Second, who was responsible for changing the original E, retained in the name of the School, to the I on street signs and city maps.

Extensive research into these problems has established the following findings, which, as it turns out, are closely related: one H. Valentine signed the guest book at the Pink Palace on April 3, 1904. The records of the County Public Works Department which perished in a fire on May 1, 1933, reveal that one H. Valentine became head of County Road Repairs on October 3, 1908. There is no conclusive evidence that these two men were the same person. It is interesting though that an entry dated April 7, 1921, in the sales record book of the now defunct West Memphis Walking Horse Stud mentions the purchase of a dapple-grey gelding by an H. Valentine to be shipped to a Mr. R. Valentino in Hollywood, California.

For the evolution of the name Valentine to Volentine to Vollentine to Vollintine, however, the only scientific explanation that can be furnished is spelling incompetence on the part of draftsmen or sign painters or both. Unless, of course, it was done in jest.

Dr. Unsinn is with the State Research Center. He and his dog Merriwether live in a residence on Autumn which has been removed to make room for the Expressway.