



*It Could Be Dick's Place, Harry's Place,
Or Frank's Place, but It's...*

TOM'S PLACE

Photographs by Jim Pepler



'Something to Be Really Proud Of'

FREEDOM QUILTING BEE

BY WAYNE HURDER

ALBERTA -- Negroes in Dallas and Wilcox counties have found a way to end their dependence on the local white man's money.

Negro women used to spend hours making quilts which they sold to white people for \$5 or traded to them for rags. Now about 150 women are selling their quilts up North for \$25 or \$30 apiece.

What's doing it for them? The Freedom Quilting Bee, a co-operative started last February by the Rev. Francis X. Walter, an Episcopal minister.

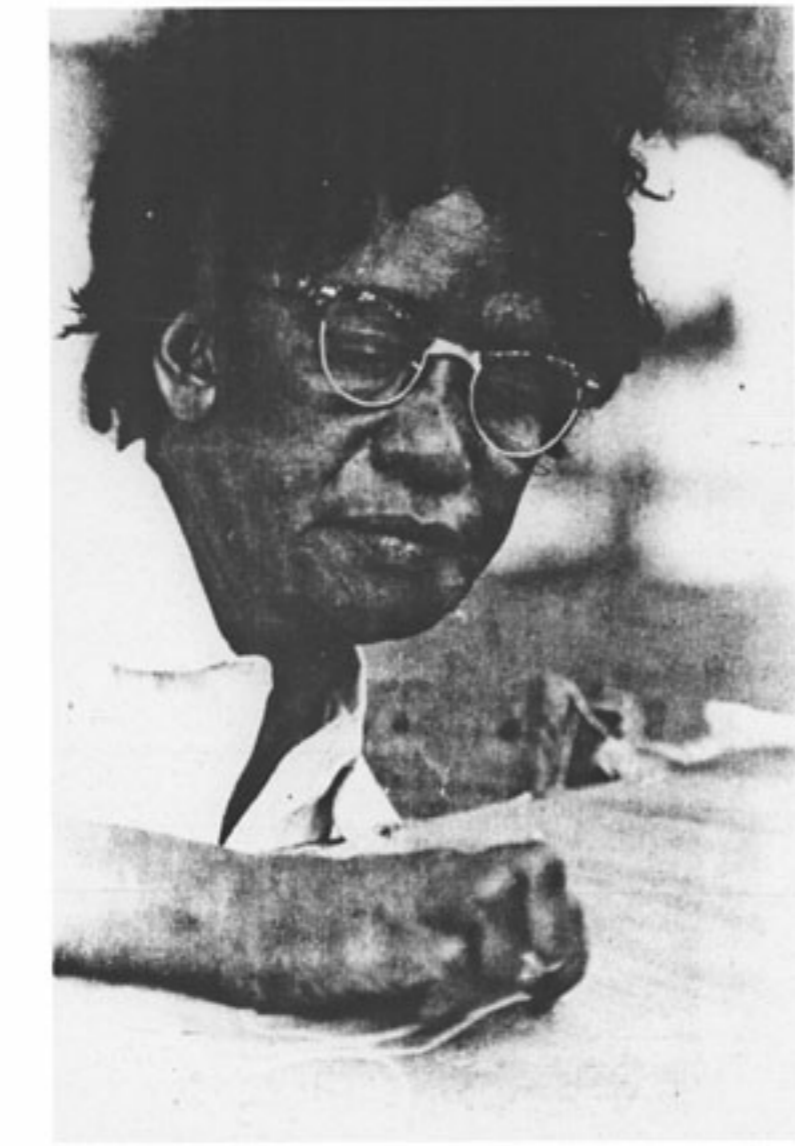
Father Walter said he started the quilting bee because he thought the Negro women who made the quilts were being cheated: "I got interested in it because it made me mad that the people were being cheated of knowing that they were doing something bold, that this quilting was something to be really proud of."

It all began last January when Father Walter and a friend were in Possum Bend, doing some work for the U.S. Justice Department. They saw some quilts hanging on a line--and an old woman quilting on her front porch. They tried to talk to her, but when the two white men came up to her house, she ran back into the woods.

Father Walter--who now works with the Selma Interreligious Project--came back later with an SCLC worker and talked to the lady about her quilts. When she told him how little she got for making the quilts, Father Walter decided to do something about it.

In February he got \$300 from the Jonathan Daniels Memorial Fund, and bought 30 quilts for \$10 each--about twice what the people usually got.

With the help of three friends from Birmingham, he held an auction in New York City and sold all the quilts. One of them brought \$70, and the others sold



SEWING IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF QUILTING

for \$30 to \$40. Another auction was held later in New York. Altogether at the two auctions, 125 quilts were sold for \$3,200.

This was the beginning of the Freedom Quilting Bee. Anybody could become a member, simply by making a quilt and selling it to the co-op. The co-op, in turn, would sell the quilt in the North.

The quilting bee got a big boost back

in June when Miss Lois Deslonde came up from New Orleans, La., to be technical assistant for the co-op. She was supported by a \$300 grant from the Southern Regional Council in Atlanta, Ga.

Her main job this summer, as she explained it, "was to get them conscious of good workmanship." She spent the summer holding workshops in 12 different communities, to tell the people how to make better quilts. She also worked at getting the people to run the co-op themselves.

The co-op is run by a 12-man board of directors. A committee of members decides what quilts to buy, and how much to pay for each.

When the co-op first started, each person usually received \$10 for a quilt. However, since some quilts could be sold for more than that, it was decided to pay some people \$13.

A little later, the members of the co-op began giving a bonus to each person whose quilt sold for more than \$20. However, last Friday the members decided that it wasn't fair to give bonuses--since the quilts that were sold at auctions usually brought more than those sold in stores, even though that might not be any better. So the co-op is going to start grading each quilt according to how well it is made, and the grade will determine the price.



QUILTS ON DISPLAY AT FREEDOM QUILTING BEE FESTIVAL

Soon there will probably be two committees to figure out how much to pay for the quilts--one on the east side of the Alabama River, the other on the west side.

The first thing a committee looks for in judging the quality of the quilts is the sewing. The stitches must be fairly close together, and even. The corners of the pieces have to be sewn down, and there shouldn't be any stitching on the outside.

A quilt is really just two layers of cloth, with cotton or other filling in between. The first step in making a quilt is to pick out a design. The design is occasionally taken from a book, or it might be a design that has been handed down from mother to daughter. Sometimes people will take a portion of an old design and use it as the design for a whole new quilt.

The next thing to do is to get scraps of cloth and sew them together to make the top layer of the quilt.

To make the bottom of the quilt, old feed sacks are sewn together. The bottom layer is spread out, and cotton filling is laid on it evenly. It's important that the cotton be even, or the quilt will be lumpy. The cotton used for the filling usually comes from the maker's own field.

The final step is to put the bottom of the quilt on a frame. It is drawn tight, and the top is laid over it. Then the top and bottom are sewn together.

Usually four or five people will get together to visit and work on a quilt. It normally takes one person a week to make a quilt, working two or three hours a day.

There are many co-ops across the country that try to sell quilts and other handicrafts. But the Freedom Quilting Bee's quilts are different.

Alabamians have a "more carefree interpretation of designs," said Miss Deslonde. "Since a lot of the people don't read anything about quilts, she said,

they feel free to design them any way they like.

Father Walter said the people in the quilting bee are very creative, because they have been able to make such unusual and bold designs with a limited amount of material.

A museum in New York thought enough of the designs to buy a couple for (CONTINUED ON PAGE SIX, Col. 5)



LOOKING OVER THE QUILTING BEE'S POTHOLDERS



WOMEN PONDER DECISION AT CO-OP MEETING

Mrs. Bessie Munden Builds a Playground

BY WAYNE HURDER

CAMDEN--"The children played in the streets between passing cars," said Mrs. Bessie Munden. "They had no place to swim except for a mud-hole. It had tin cans around it and mosquitoes breeding in it. That was a hazard, and I knew something had to be done about it."

And so in 1950, Mrs. Munden began

working to get a playground for Negroes in Wilcox County.

The result of her efforts is the Bessie Munden Playground, just outside Camden. There kids can swim in a pool while a lifeguard looks on; they can swing, seesaw, or play football, baseball, or basketball. Events like the recent Freedom Quilting Bee festival are held at the playground.

It was 11 years ago that Mrs. Munden convinced the 180 Negro teachers in the county to put up \$20 each for land. With that money, they bought 20 acres for the playground.

That first year, they received \$1,200

from the Wilcox County commissioners. Since then they have received \$1,000 every year except this year from the United Fund. (This year there was no United Fund drive in the area. However, to make up for the lost income, the county commissioners gave \$900 for the playground.)

By 1959, there was enough money to build a pool and hire a life guard. A cement roller-skating area was installed, along with a large covered area for kids to play under in case of rain.

The playground is owned by the Wilcox County Teachers Association, an organization of Negro school teachers. Every year, the members make a contribution to the playground.

A board of directors--made up of school principals and local citizens--run the playground. Mrs. Munden is



MRS. BESSIE MUNDEN

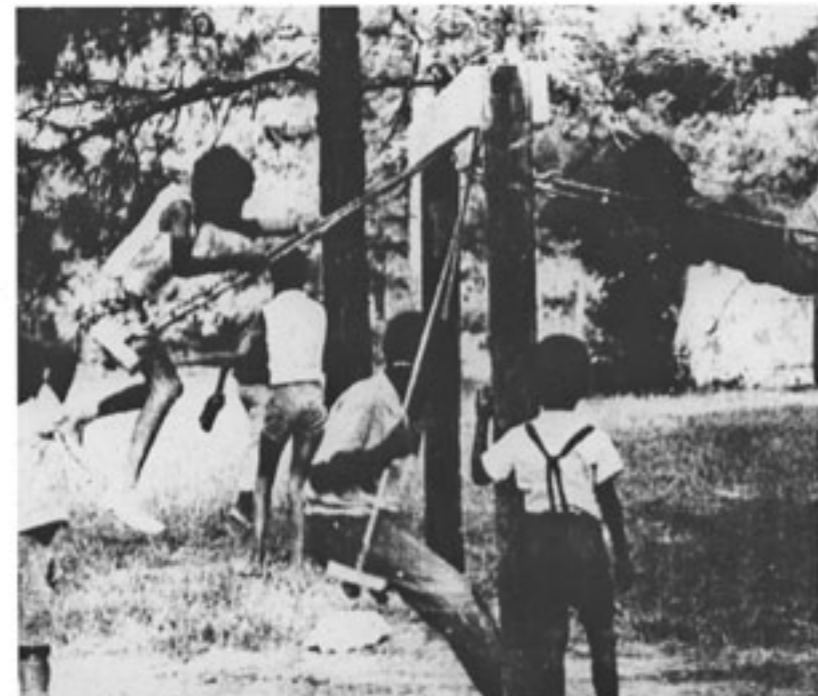
chairman of the board of directors. In all, the teachers have invested \$25,000 in the 20 acres, and they have no debts. For their next project, they are planning to put up a club-house and light the ball fields.

Albert Gordon, who said he lost his teaching position because of civil rights activity, is the director of the playground. He keeps it open every day of the week except Friday.

Kids from all over the county come to the playground. The Negro teachers have even been allowed to use the county's buses to haul school-children to the park on special play days.

A former county school superintendent, W. J. Jones, has helped the playground a lot, said Mrs. Munden. He has given the teachers money, attended their meetings, allowed them to use the buses, and donated baseball equipment to the park, she said.

Mrs. Munden is now a teacher-counselor at Camden Academy. For 28 years before that, she was a supervisor of instruction at county schools.



THINK AND GRIN

BY ARLAM CARR JR.

Paul: "That cake you're eating looks good."

Saul: "It is good."

Paul: "It makes my mouth water."

Saul: "To show you what a good guy I am, here's a blotter."

Baby Ear of Corn: "Mama, where did I come from?"

Mama Ear of Corn: "Hush, darling, the stalk brought you."

Hughie: "Hey! Why are you wearing my raincoat?"

Louie: "You wouldn't want your best suit to get wet, would you?"

Con: "My brother is connected with the police department."

Dick: "Police department? How?"

Con: "By a pair of handcuffs."

Freshman: "But I don't think I deserve a zero on this paper."

Professor: "Neither do I, but it's the lowest mark I can give you."

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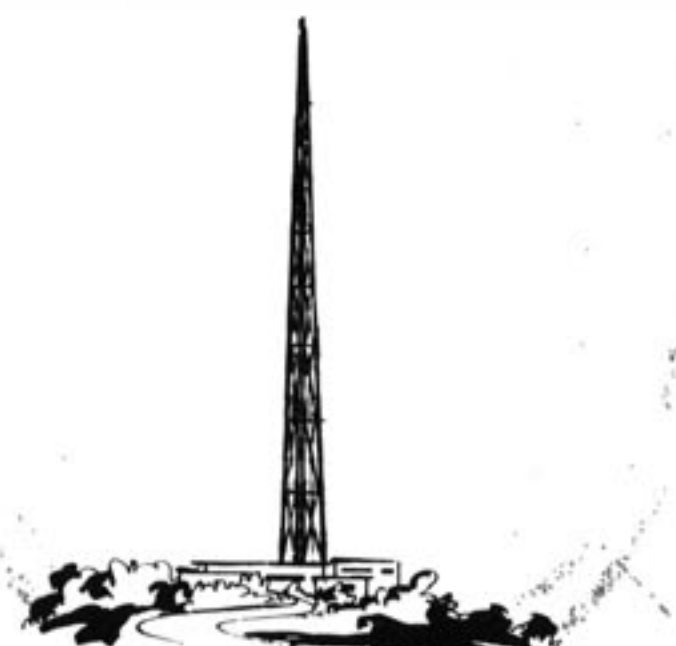
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Busted Nose Old School Annex to Come Down After PTA Complaint in Mobile

THOMASVILLE--Saturday in Thomasville continues to be the roughest time of the week.

Two Saturdays ago, a Negro girl got slammed by a door, and a white man was punched in the teeth. Last Saturday, said Andrew Leslie, president of the Thomasville Movement for Dynamic Action, Eddie Lee Jones "got his nose busted."

Jones said he and two other Negroes bought Cokes at the front window of the Dairy Queen on Highway 43. Then, said Jones, one of four white men nearby said, "You niggers won't come up front to get served any more."

At that, said Jones, he and his friends went back toward the front window, and some of the white men pulled out knives. Jones said he was hit with the closed knives, and "I went out." When he came to, his nose was smashed and bloody. Jones said he signed a warrant charging three of the white men with assault and battery.

This was "the first incident" at the Dairy Queen, said Leslie. "We've been going there a good while to get service."

MOBILE--Students at all-Negro Williamson High School are scheduled to get a new wing on their school this year. Parents in the Williamson PTA say the threat of a boycott--or of stepped-up school integration--produced this action.

For years, Williamson students have been using a wooden annex, built during World War II. Each year, it has fallen apart a little more. Now its roof leaks, the toilets are broken, and there are holes in the walls.

"It's an unsanitary fire trap," said Earnest L. Freeman Jr., vice-president of the Williamson PTA. The Mobile Fire Department condemned the building last year.

The school board has planned for eight years to tear down the annex, and replace it with a new wing for the high school.

Cranford H. Burns, superintendent



It up again. When we saw those patches, we knew we were not going to let our kids go into that school again."

A committee from the PTA told the school board last week that if the annex wasn't torn down, they would either boycott the school or transfer their children to "some of the high schools in their immediate area where these conditions do not exist."

Many of the 1,200 students at Williamson High are now bussed down Dauphin Island Parkway past two new white high schools, B. C. Rain and Maryvale.

But, said one Williamson parent, "our threats paid off."

The wooden annex is being torn down almost immediately. And the school board has promised to start the new wing in December or January. Meanwhile, Williamson students will use ten modern portable classrooms.

"We've got to stop asking and start demanding our educational rights from the school board," said a PTA member. "That's the only way we're going to get things done."

of Mobile County schools, said the old wooden annex "is embarrassing." But, he said, the annex had not been replaced because there had been other, more pressing needs in the school system.

Last June, the school board promised to start work on the new wing during the summer. "But in August," said Mrs. Carrie Thomas, head of the Williamson PTA, "they were just patching

WJLD Radio Top 14 Hits

1. B-A-B-Y-- Carla Thomas (Stax)
2. YOU CAN'T HURRY LOVE-- Supremes (Motown)
3. BEAUTY IS ONLY SKIN DEEP-- Temptations (Gordy)
4. WITHOUT A LOVE-- Jackie Lee (Modern)
5. LAND OF 1000 DANCES-- Wilson Pickett (Atlantic)
6. WORKIN' IN THE COALMINES-- Lee Dorsey (Amy)
7. POVERTY-- Bobby Bland (Duke)
8. HOW SWEET IT IS-- Jr. Walker (Soul)
9. I GOT TO LOVE SOMEBODY'S BABY--Johnny Taylor (Stax)
10. I BELIEVE PM GONNA MAKE IT--Joe Tex (Dial)
11. NOTHING IN THE WORLD CAN HURT ME--Buddy Ace (Duke)
12. OPEN THE DOOR TO YOUR HEART--D. Banks (Revilot)
13. CAN'T SATISFY-- Impressions (ABC)
14. WARM AND TENDER LOVE-- Percy Sledge (Atlantic)

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FREEDOM QUILTING BEE

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE FOUR)

exhibit, and one of the biggest furniture stores in New York bought three to put in its show windows.

Besides making quilts, the co-op also sells pottery and baskets. The pottery is made by a white man in Chilton County. Four other men in the co-op make

white oak baskets. There aren't many people in the area who can make baskets, because it is hard to get the wood. Few of the people have timber on their own land, so they have to ask white people for it.

Miss Deslonde had to leave last Sunday to go back to New Orleans. Now that she is gone, the co-op is looking for a person who knows something about handicrafts and business, to be the manager.

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