

14 MARSHALL NEWS MESSENGER Wednesday, October 12, 1966

UNDER POVERTY PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENT

Purple Hulls and New Start at 70

Sam Buffin, who lives in the piney woods out from Marshall a ways has taken a long step up from poverty this year.

He owns nine head of scrub cattle he didn't have last spring—and all because of the purple hull pea.

And while Sam doesn't know it, the story of the cattle and the purple hull peas have brought him to the close attention of the Southwest Regional Office of Economic Opportunity, in Austin.

OEO Regional Director Bill Crook, who was to arrive here for a tour Wednesday afternoon, and who knows East Texas like the back of his hand, calls Sam Buffin's story "a shining example of what the War on Poverty is all about." But more of that later.

This fall, in addition to the cattle, Sam Buffin also has a few chickens, two hogs, and a couple of new mules. All that livestock together adds up to meat and milk and eggs on the table, and occasional cash money if needed.

All in all, the winter of 1966 looks pretty good for the white-whiskered, semi-literate farmer who never made more than \$75 a month in his 70 years of life, and who sometimes "didn't make nuthin' a-tall."

It was for people like Sam Buffin that the Harrison-Panola Community Action Association (H-PCAA), a War on Poverty agency, was formed early this year—a self-help local agency backed by the federal government.

The H-PCAA was a little slow getting started, but it's off the track now and running. Much of the credit for its new full-speed-ahead activity goes to its chairman of the board, B. S. Manly.

Last February, Harold Wilson, director of the H-PCAA anti-poverty agency, made a series of visits to rural areas of Harrison and Panola Counties, and talked long hours with the "little" farmers like Sam Buffin who were unable to purchase farm equipment or buy cattle

(a main stay of the local rural economy.)

Wilson soon discovered that there were dozens, maybe hundreds, of these "fringe" farmers who lived in the two counties and existed with virtually no cash income. He reasoned that these farmers represented the backbone of poverty in the county.

The executive director called a mass meeting to discuss the problem with the farmers themselves, representatives of other social agencies, and county agents and others who worked with rural people.

The high point of the meeting came when a representative from the big Wooldert Cannery in Lindale got up to discuss contract farming for cash. Under this plan, he said, the cannery would furnish the seed for planting, and guarantee purchase of the crops.

County Agent Joe Frohese and his associate, Donald Williams also talked. They could help to get the fertilizer through the Farm Home Administration, and advise the contracting farmers on cultivation of the crop, they said. Both the fertilizer and the seed could be paid for after the crop was sold.

The H-PCAA adopted "Crops for Cash" as a major project, and the recruiting drive was on. Before long, 185 acres of land was contracted for the cultivation of the purple hull pea, a "kissin' cousin" of the black-eyed pea—and, as an afterthought, Cream Pea No. 12, which also grows well here.

Sam Buffin was one of the farmers who agreed to grow purple hulls on 20 of his 65 acres. Like his neighbors, he began preparing the soil for planting—a little dubiously, at first, but then with growing hope.

And then the rains came. Seventeen inches of rain inundated the two counties during April. Fertilizer was washed away, fields were flooded, streams overran their banks, farmers and their stock were ankle-deep in mud. For weeks it was im-

possible to walk in the plowed fields, much less farm them.

The merciless rains washed away all hope for a large pea crop, and the enthusiasm of the farmers went with it. Finally, however, the ground in some areas dried, and Sam Buffin's acreage was among them. But Sam was disenchanted; he cut his acreage to a bare minimum: his 100 pounds of seed to 40.

And then, to his surprise, his purple hull peas grew—and grew again. Sam plowed the fields four times after the peas began to come up; then he and Sarah, his barefoot wife, and Otis—his son—spent a month on the harvesting of the pea patch outside their front door.

The cannery had regretfully informed the H-PCAA that the overall pea crop would be too small to be commercially useful, and that under the terms of the contract it was no longer obligated to purchase the peas.

The county agents came to the fore again. Officials went to local supermarkets and other outlets, and little by little arranged for sale of the fresh peas at 10 cents a pound. Later, as the full harvest came in, the price dropped to 8 cents, in some cases 6.

But Sam was one of the lucky ones. He got his crop in early, and came out that much ahead—just how much ahead, he cannily won't say. The H-PCAA, however, estimates his gross at around \$800 for three months of work—probably the most cash money he has ever seen at one time in his life. Those nine new head of scrub cows, new hogs and new mules, would appear to bear them out.

To Wilson and Rev. George Reese, assistant executive director, Frohese and Williams, this means success—a modest success in financial terms, perhaps, but a shining success in that it proves the farm cooperative program WILL work.

To Manly, it demonstrates the whole self-help concept.

"Sure it worked for Sam, and it wasn't just luck. Sam is one of those who's willing to get out and work to help himself, and that's what our whole program is about. We're helping him to help himself, and that kind of chance is all you need."

The H-PCAA is already planning a new and greater "Crops for Cash" drive in 1967. The cannery and the county agents are helping. But Wilson feels there are other, and far greater, possibilities for the co-op farming than purple hull peas at some not-too-far-distant date.

There's a good possibility that one of these days we may have some really diversified farming in this area, through this co-op plan," says Wilson, a retired military officer.

"For example, take sunflower seeds. They grow around here, and they sell for 35 and 40 cents a pound. It's true, there's been a blight on sunflowers in East Texas the last few summers, but Texas A&M is working on it right now, and they'll lick it. Think of the possibilities there then."

Harrison-Panola CAA has other projects going—Freeman's NYC program for teenage drop-outs; a day care center for 30 children of working mothers, Ebenezer Day Care Center operated by Mrs. Beryl C. Tebbetts.

But it is the farm program which excites OEO Regional Director Crook in Austin. Crook has close ties in Marshall; he's a former vice president of the board of East Texas Baptist College. He lived in the area several years.

And, as Crook sees it, the root of poverty in East Texas is deep in its rural soil.

"These are the poor people—the marginal farmers like Sam Buffin. Help them to help themselves, and the whole East Texas economy will feel the shot in the arm. This is just what the War on Poverty was designed to do," Crook points out.

"The Harrison-Panola farm cooperative may be small now, but it is one of the most imaginative and creative programs in the whole state of Texas. Poverty workers there are really getting down to the grass roots—and they can root out poverty, literally, with a few more Sam Buffins and more crops like purple hull peas."

Court Records

MARRIAGE LICENSES

Harold Rex Combs and Avanel Power, both of Marshall.
Daryl Wainline Palk and Gwen Louise Kibler, both of Tampa, Fla.
Robert Joseph Hutton and Cynthia Kay Robbins, both of Shreveport.
John Thomas Rains Jr. of Lackland Air Force Base and Willie Dean Norman of Marshall.

Robert Lee Gamblin and Juanita Cecil Davis, both of Monroe, La.
Edwin Watson (DeMott) Jr. of Marshall and Glenda Lois Horrell of Newton.

William Rodney Wyatt and Shirley Jean Brook, both of Shreveport.

Kenneth Andre LaFoe and Judy Lorraine Oatts, both of Shreveport.

James Lee Duvall and Mary Frances Cutler, both of Shreveport.

James Madison Furnit of Elysian Fields and Carmen Angela Shepherd of Hazelwood, Mo.

Paul Milton Jackson of Leesville and Cherrie Sue Amberg of Georgetown, La.

Eddie William Jones and Ruby Lea Jones, both of Narco, La.

William Smith Nance and Marilyn Rose McCaffigan, both of Shreveport.

Glenn Fields of Grand Prairie and Bessie Jo Hall of Hallsville.

Frankie Joe Linton of Longview and Helen Jane Wetly of Hallsville.

Richard Herbert Fausett and Margaret Dale Precetti, both of Shreveport.

James Costa of Abilene and Martha Irene Turner of Bossier City.

John Robert Mytrey of Jefferson and Johnette Dossert of Marshall.

Roy Bert Whitehead and Jewell Breedlove, both of Prevercal, La.

Edward Albert Dickey of Karnack and Frankie Ann Kirkpatrick of Marshall.

Claude Cletus Childers and Little Mae Page, both of Marshall.

Bobby Chris Chandler and Patricia Cheryl Benson, both of Ruston, La.

Harry Gustave Shuff III of Shreveport and Betty Kathryn Bridges of Natchitoches.

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