

DeFEBIO HEARING IN JUVENILE COURT MORNING OF MAY 18

Mr. and Mrs. Frank J. DeFebio and eight witnesses appeared before Juvenile Court Judge C. S. Meekins in the county clerk's office last Friday at 10 a.m. for a hearing upon a complaint charging Frank DeFebio with caring improperly for three minor children and failure to enroll them in the public schools.

At the outset, Judge Meekins made it clear to all that disposition of the complaint would not be made on Friday. He said he would hear testimony from the DeFebio children and give a decision as to whether they would be left in the care of their parents or be placed in an institution for children, after the recorder's court trial of the father in Manteo on Tuesday of this week.

Mr. DeFebio, before the first witness was called, asked whether it was possible for some sort of agreement to be reached before the hearing got under way. "As close as I was to death," he said, "I saw how unnecessary it was to have a grudge against anyone. I'll feel that way no matter how it comes out."

The Petition Martin Kellogg, county solicitor, first read the petition, signed by Mrs. T. S. Meekins, Jr., county welfare officer. The petition asserted that Mr. DeFebio was shiftless; had no apparent occupation; that he provided an inadequate home "unfit for human habitation;" that he forced the children to gather fuel and comb the beach for food; that Mrs. DeFebio was much absent from the home; that she had abandoned the children in the courtroom here after her husband's first court appearance last December; that the living conditions for the children were "improper and deplorable."

Mrs. DeFebio was granted permission to read the summons she had received to appear for the hearing. It was an ordinary "show cause" summons.

Testimony Dr. W. W. Johnston, district health officer testified first. In response to Mr. Kellogg's questions, the doctor said that he had examined the children twice and that "They appeared to be normal children." On April 11 and April 18, when he saw them, "Their hair was long and unkempt; their clothes were in fair condition. They appeared to be children not cared for properly."

Mrs. DeFebio asked, "Dr. Johnston, have you ever heard of our children being ill?" and asked further whether he had heard of the children's having any emotional problems while living with their mother and father. Dr. Johnston replied, "No," in both cases.

Mrs. Meekins, welfare officer, testified that she had first seen the DeFebios on March 7, when, accompanied by Sheriff Frank Cahoon, she interviewed them at their home where she had gone to investigate the report from school authorities that the children were not being sent to school. Mrs. Meekins was at that time a welfare dept. case worker. Mrs. DeFebio told her, Mrs. Meekins said, that they had no intention of putting the children in school. In Mrs. Meekins' opinion the children were improperly dressed for the cool day; she did not see a fire in the building and found the room in which she was received cold. She said that Mrs. DeFebio told her that she'd come to wait for the trial, and that the family's funds and food were exhausted. The children's "hair was unkempt, skin unclean," the welfare officer told the judge. "Mrs. DeFebio conducted the interview," Mrs. Meekins said. "Mr. DeFebio more than once asked her to hear me out."

In answer to Mrs. DeFebio's questions, Mrs. Meekins said that it was true that Mr. Davis, then welfare officer, had sent a letter to the DeFebios saying that action on their case would be taken within five days. (Mrs. DeFebio asserted that she had come to their home from her job in Washington within the five-day period, and that it was more than a month after the receipt of the letter before the case worker and sheriff arrived for the interview.) Mrs. Meekins said that she saw no obvious physical disabilities in the children and that "They are well mannered and friendly children."

Sheriff Frank Cahoon was asked

by Mr. Kellogg about the situation at the DeFebio home on the day he accompanied Mrs. Meekins to the abandoned Coast Guard Station in the Duck-Kitty Hawk area. The furnishings were sparse, he said; there was a table and bench and one or two chairs in the room in which the interview was conducted. The children sat close together on the bench; one boy was not wearing shoes. "They did not look clean," he said. He remembered hearing Mrs. DeFebio say that they weren't going to send the boys to school. In reply to a question of Mrs. DeFebio's, Mr. Cahoon said he remembered seeing the blackboard which the children used for their lessons.

Carl Salinger, caretaker of the station buildings, now owned by three non-residents of Dare County, was asked about how often Mrs. DeFebio lived with the family. "Mrs. DeFebio would come down, probably, every month. She'd stay sometimes 2 or 3 days, a week, 10 days," he said. Mr. DeFebio did not do any work so far as he knew, although he did tend a garden which he estimated to be about "50x40 ft. out on the flat." In reply to a question, he said, "It looked to me like it was a pretty tough go for clothing and so forth" for the children. The wife brought groceries when she visited the family, he said, and he thought that they also bought food at Kitty Hawk. The family had "quite a few visitors" mostly from the District of Columbia and Maryland, Salinger said.

Mrs. DeFebio asked whether Salinger had not seen Mr. and Mrs. David Stick visit the family, and whether he had not seen her bring in driftwood and work hard about the place. He answered affirmatively. In reply to a question about the children's lessons, Salinger said, "Well, sometimes, at breakfast I'd hear them spell something." Salinger said that he had never known any of the family to be sick a single day.

DeFebio's Garden Mr. DeFebio said mildly that his garden had been somewhat underestimated. There were six garden plots, he said, some of which Mr. Salinger, perhaps, did not know about. Their measurements were 50x6 ft., 130x32 ft., 22x36 ft., 117x12 ft., 96x12 ft. and 30x30 ft. DeFebio stated that it was his plan to supply as much of the family's food from his garden as possible, and that he intended to dispose of the surplus on the local market if possible.

Mrs. Julia Gray, of Washington, D. C., and Roanoke Island, told the court that she has first known Mrs. DeFebio as a customer of her shop in Washington. She first heard about the difficulties of the family with the Dare school authorities when Mrs. DeFebio drove her to her home in her taxi in Washington. She said she had asked Mrs. DeFebio, "How did you have the heart to leave your children" in the courtroom after the December trial. Mrs. DeFebio told her that she would understand if she knew all the facts about the case.

Clyde Beacham of Kitty Hawk testified that he had once given the two 8-year-old boys a ride on a hot cay last summer when they were dragging heavy bags along the road on the way to their home. "They were in pretty sad shape when I picked them up," he stated.

J. H. Spruill of Duck said he has known the family ever since they arrived in the county early in 1950. He did not remember ever seeing the boys outdoors in bed weather without shoes. He said he



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LIBRARY NOTES

A few days ago, we had callers, our new Library Supervisor for Eastern North Carolina made us her first visit, bringing with her the head Librarian from Elizabeth City, Mrs. Alexander. Miss Mullen is a very charming person. Living with books does something to people, something nice. All the North Carolina Library people with whom we have come in contact are just the kind of people one is glad to know. We enjoyed Miss Mullen and Mrs. Alexander very much and we are sorry they come so seldom.

We just had another gift, a 2 volume set of the writings of Simon Bolivar, the Great Liberator of South America. The books were sent by the publisher in the names of the three authors: Vicente Le-

saw the boys carrying the heavy bags on the day referred to by Mr. Beacham.

Thomas J. King of Duck said he had seen members of the family only rarely, but had once met the father and the boys on a cold day when it seemed to him that they weren't warmly dressed. When he remarked that it was cold weather for the boys to be out, Mr. DeFebio replied, "No, I want to make men of them," King said. "The children were mighty healthy looking," Mr. King concluded.

Mrs. DeFebio asked permission to read a long statement she had prepared, because, she said, "I expected to be too nervous to speak" extemporaneously. When she had concluded her outline of the case since its beginning, Judge Meekins complimented her on the quality of the summation.

Court was then adjourned until after the Tuesday trial.

cuna of Venezuela, the compiler, Harold A. Bierck, Jr. of the University of North Carolina, the editor, and Lewis Bertrand, the translator. In these days of stress the looks are timely. They serve to remind us that the past as well as the present was uncertain and troubled. We are glad to have them.

A number of new Juvenile books arrived yesterday. Of course they are not ready yet but a good many from the previous consignment are already being circulated.

For the small fry: "The Box with the Red Wheels," Petersham; "Chuggy and the Blue Caboose," Freeman; "Daisy," Hogner; "Lance and His First Horse," Holt; "Miss Flora McFlimsey's Christmas Eve," Mariana; "Picnic Woods," Robertson; "The Runaway Toys," Hogan; "Surprise for Sally," Hitt; "Mr. T. Anthony Woo," Ets; and "Texas Pete," Earr.

For the middle group: "Apple Tree Cottage," Voight; "Bob Cat," one of Anderson's ever popular horse stories; "The Crumb That Walked," Norman; "The Expandable Pig," Babcock; "The Fabulous Flight," Lawson; "The Flowered Donkey," Mackey; "Kildee House," Montgomery; "The Lonesome Bear," Rushmore; "The Mousewife," Godden; "The New Boy," Urnston; "Picken's Exciting Summer," Davis; "The Poetic Parrot," Mackey; "Ride 'em Peggy," Bialk; "Taffy's Foal," Bialk; "Willy Wong, American," Oaker; and "The Wonderful Houseboat Train," Gannett. Among these are several horse and dog stories, to say nothing of bears, pigs and other animals.

The fiction for the high school follows: "Caribou Traveler," McCracken; "Copper Country Adven-

CENTRAL HIGH PLAYS HERE THIS AFTERNOON

Central High School of Elizabeth City will meet Manteo's undefeated ball club on the local school's diamond on Friday afternoon. This is the second meeting of the two clubs, Manteo having defeated Central on its home field earlier in the season.

On Tuesday Coach Fry's nine squeezed out a win over Griggs on the Manteo field by a 6-5 margin. Cliff Topping, Manteo left fielder, led off the 5th inning with a two-base hit and came across with the winning run. Willard Sutton pitched all the way for the winners.

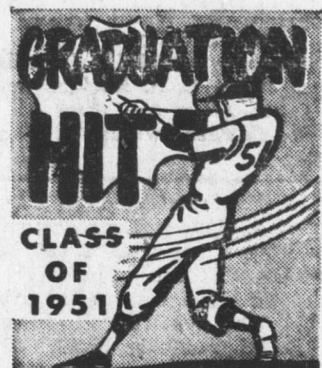
ture," Brill; "Crocodile Crew," Watkins; "The Mountain Pony and the Rodeo Mystery," Larom; "Mystery at Boulder Point," Jewett; "The Phantom Roan," Holt; "Red Fox of the Kinapo Indians," Rush; "Rider of the Mountain," Lindsay; "Sword in the Sheath," Norton; "The Voyage of the Luna 1," Craigie; "The White Mare of the Black Tents," Hoffman.

There are seven or eight non-fiction books but we will leave them for next week's column.

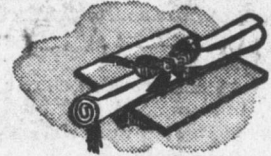
PIONEER

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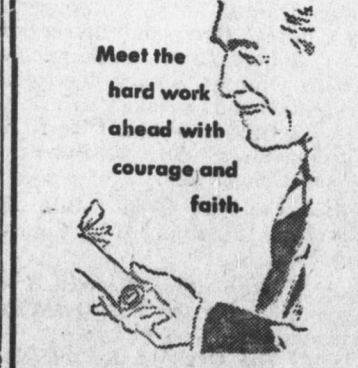
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