

"We seek a new spirit..."



A group of two-month volunteers gather at our camp site to study together.

in the big combines, and hauling them load after load to the market in Plains, eight miles down the road. We tried to get Ed to describe for us what he and the other farmers were doing, but he begged off -- said he was "too busy right now."

Even before peanut harvest was complete, some of the farmers were making final adjustments on the corn combine, and now they are harvesting our 190 acres of corn. We've had a dry summer this year, so the corn yield may not be too good.

In spite of the dry weather, the news from the vineyard has been excellent. Hundreds of people came to Koinonia in response to an ad in the local paper and picked their own grapes. The remaining grapes were picked by hired workers and volunteers and sold commercially. In all, our little four-acre vineyard produced twenty-four tons of grapes, half again as much as any harvest in the past.

KOINONIA FALL NEWSLETTER #2 November 1972

The changing seasons are always more spirit-stirring in the country than in the city, and autumn is the most exciting of all when you live on a farm. The heat and the humidity of the south Georgia summer finally give way to the cooler breezes coming down from the Great Smokey Mountains, the trees begin to change color again, and the kids gather at the entrance road to meet the county school bus at sunrise every morning. But above all else is the excitement of harvest, an excitement that is much more than a concern about the profits the crops will bring -- important as those profits are to our livelihood and our many Koinonia projects. The contagious enthusiasm becomes clear when you see someone like Chris Bugbee spontaneously pick up a hay fork and spend days in the field helping the farmers with peanut harvest.

And what a mountain of peanuts they brought in -- over 110 tons! For weeks farming partners Ed Young and Bo Johnson, with the help of George Mandel and Chris Ficker, have been plowing up the peanuts and inverting them to dry in the sun, threshing them



Bo runs the corn combine while Ed waits to take the loaded truck to town.

... a spirit of partnership with God and our fellow man."

These harvest activities make us more aware of the abundant life we are privileged to share. One Sunday afternoon in mid-September we worshipped together in a service that was outstanding for its beauty and deep meaning. Nearly a hundred people walked through the fields and across a little valley to a grassy hill, singing along the way with Ed and his guitar. (Ed may be a man of few words, but give him a guitar and he soon has everyone around him singing.) Ladon Sheats began the service by discussing the symbolism of foot washing as described in the New Testament. Several people then took pans of water and began to wash the feet of others in the crowd.



*Will Wittkamper--grower of food and
seeker of God's Kingdom*

"Well, by golly," exclaimed Will Wittkamper, who had just celebrated his 80th birthday a few days before, "I've never done this before." The rest of us understood his reaction, because it was a new experience for us, too. Soon, however, our initial hesitancy and mild embarrassment gave way to an understanding of the act as an expression of mutual love. Most of us had come across the field barefoot or in sandals, and the dust on our feet added a note of authenticity to such a service. It was suddenly easy to understand why Jesus chose washing feet -- dusty from dirt roads and fields -- as an act of service to his disciples. We concluded by sharing in a simple communion service with a loaf of freshly baked bread and wine from our own vineyard. By the time we returned across the fields we were keenly aware of the great treasure we share in our relationships with God and each other.

In 1969, Clarence and Florence Jordan spent several weeks in Africa visiting mission programs of all types. In a remote part of Ghana they met a busy young missionary named Bob Thelin. Through Bob, they learned of Joseph Waja, a poor farmer who had been saving every cent he could spare for three years toward the purchase of a grist mill for his village. Lacking such a mill near their own homes, the women of Waja's village had to carry their grain to a mill several miles away to have it ground into flour. Yet in three years, Waja had been able to save only \$300 toward the purchase of the \$800 mill. The Jordans quickly agreed that this would be an appropriate use of cash from the Fund for Humanity, so they loaned \$500 to Waja with the stipulation that it become a permanent revolving fund for other such projects in Ghana. Waja set up his new mill and soon managed to return the money to the revolving fund. In a recent letter, Ted Braun of the United Church Board for World Ministries, reports:



*Joseph Waja beside
his mill.*

"In Ghana, we got up to the Chereponi area where we found a most exciting ministry going on with Bob Thelin and his Ghanaian colleagues. The wholistic approach of evangelism, literacy work, agriculture, and water development, and cooperatives and interest-free loan programs is most exciting. We saw several gasoline-powered grain mills busily at work -- enabled



by your Fund for Humanity. Also through the Fund, several farmers have been able to buy bullocks, which has increased their crops forty-fold. Incidentally, one farmer whom we met was able to pay for the bullock in one year -- a miracle for him. So the exciting story goes on."

The local Fund for Humanity has been at work, too. During the last month or two, three more families have purchased and moved into new homes. Queen White moved into her new home in Koinonia Village in mid-August. Then Perry and Mildred Burton became the first residents in the new village a few hours after their wedding on the front lawn of Sunny Acres on August 27. Clyde and Rose Angry and their son became the Burton's next-door neighbors three weeks later. Five more homes are at various stages of completion and seven additional house sites have been cleared and supplied with utilities. It is interesting to note that in four years, the population of Koinonia Farm has grown from four adults and their three children to a total on any given day of about two hundred people, counting resident partners, volunteer workers, and families in the housing villages.



The youngest of those residents is Jennifer Robyn Mosley, who arrived on that same eventful day that the Burtons married and moved to the new village. Proud as they are of their new daughter, Carolyn and Don insist that two children are enough for them or that, in any event, any further addition they make to the local population will be strictly by adoption.



It has been just over a year since the Koinonia Sewing Industry went into operation. Housed presently in a building at Koinonia and started on its way with a large loan from the Fund for Humanity, the Sewing Industry has been intended all along to develop into an autonomous operation -- fully self-supporting and directed by its workers. The first months were a real struggle as production techniques were worked out, a marketing structure was set up, and the new employees gradually acquired their skills. During this year, many of those problems have been ironed out.



There are fifteen people working full-time now -- a competent group whose new skills are reflected in the quality garments they produce. Better yet, they are rapidly assuming the responsibility for most of the management decisions. At first, the Sewing Industry leaned heavily on Bill Londeree, the only one at Koinonia with experience in the clothing business. But early this year an organizational structure was adopted whereby Robert Mansfield, Emma Sue Sims, and Fanny Sims were elected to represent the other workers, each to share equal responsibility with Bill for the overall operation of the Industry.

Their decisions have consistently shown a healthy blend of good business judgment with a concern for the needs of their co-workers. Bill says they have done so well that his own duties have dwindled to little more than expanding sales around the country. Koinonia garments are already being sold ~~coats~~ to coast in all the southern states and in a growing number of mid-western states. Orders have begun to pour in so fast that Bill says, "We are likely to have more work this fall than we can handle." Soon more workers will be added to the present group -- a real mark of success for a business which was created in the first place to provide as many jobs as possible for unemployed people of Sumter County.



Robert, Emma Sue, and Fanny help make decisions in the Sewing Industry.

Next door to the Sewing Industry, the pace of work continues to accelerate in the Pecan Industry. As this newsletter goes to press, the crew is ready to throw the switch that will set our new pecan shelling equipment in motion for another season. And for weeks now, the ladies in the newly remodeled Candy Kitchen have been mixing big vats of pecans and melted chocolate, pouring it out on the cooling sheets, and cutting it into big chunks. Even at some distance from the Kitchen, the aroma of freshly-made candy is tantalizing, but the cruel signs on the doors say "Kitchen Employees Only." Stacks of orders come in every day for pecans, fruit cakes, and all kinds of candy. We've shifted several people to the office and shipping room in order to keep up with the pre-Christmas rush, but we urge you to send your order in as early as possible to insure prompt delivery. The rush is under way!



Gail watches as Raechel turns out a pot on the wheel.

The Koinonia Pottery Shop is open for business! After many months of planning and building, Raechel Groff is ready to take orders by mail (see the enclosed leaflet) or from visitors at the farm. The opening has been made possible largely by the efforts of Gail King, a versatile student assistant in ceramics from Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana. He has agreed to remain "as long as needed" to help Raechel give the Pottery Shop a good start. At the moment Doris Baker is helping them keep two potters wheels whirling, turning out a variety of handcrafted pitchers, bowls, mugs, and much more. As Gail points out, "this is a craft in which the potter has an opportunity to express his own creative, artistic impulses. We want to offer people something more natural and personal than the standardized ceramic

products they usually have to choose from." The Pottery Shop is a picturesque little white barn under the shade of a giant pecan tree at Sunny Acres. The new kiln is in a shelter behind the Shop, ready to fire the wares as they come off the potters wheels. Let's hope the kiln seldom has a chance to cool off between firings.

Be sure to take note, too, of the enclosed information about another special seasonal product -- decorative pine cones -- some from the forests here at Koinonia and others from Florida pines. George Woods and Barron Bourne are standing by to fill your order. These pine cones add a touch of natural beauty to any Thanksgiving or Christmas decor, and they are durable enough to be used year after year.

Amidst the many problems and struggles here at Koinonia, there is an undercurrent of fulfillment and excitement that comes from devoting our talents and energies to goals that we feel are eminently worthwhile--from believing that we are furthering the Kingdom of God through our efforts here in southwest Georgia. Our attempts to acquaint you with our products and our appeal that you help support with loans and gifts the work done through the Fund for Humanity, are invitations for all to join us in our much larger Work.

Our concern is not limited to building low-cost housing and providing employment for the jobless in Sumter County. For this reason, we would like to conclude this newsletter by urging your strong support of the Vietnamese Children's Fund, sponsored by Suruban Partners in Durham, North Carolina. The following page lists the children's aid organizations which this Fund supports. Against our wills, we Americans have given, through taxes, most of the huge sums of money to finance the awful technology inflicting this suffering on the children. How can any of us refuse, then, to give freely at least a fraction of that amount to ease their pain?

