

CLAIM TEACHER AT BONNY OAKS ABUSED PUPILS

Children Tell Judge Negro Drank, Cursed, Imposed on Girls, Kicking One

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Charges of misconduct, including immorality, drinking, using profane language and abusing the colored children at Bonny Oaks school were made yesterday against Isaac Springs, Negro teacher at Bonny Oaks, by a half-dozen or more of the children at a hearing before Juvenile Judge L. D. Miller.

Trouble between the children and Springs has been brewing for some time and the charges have been discussed before the interracial committee. Judge Miller heard of the trouble and yesterday summoned W. S. Keese, superintendent of the institution, Mrs. Keese and other teachers at Bonny Oaks to juvenile court.

Springs was not present when the charges were aired yesterday and Judge Miller announced he would continue the hearing this morning at 9 o'clock. He said he would expect Springs to be present this morning.

"Strictly speaking," the judge said, "I may not have any jurisdiction over Bonny Oaks, but I have to send boys and girls there every day and I think I ought to know something about conditions there. I think we owe it to the public to get to the bottom of this affair."

Negro Leaders Present

A group of Negro leaders including Drs. L. L. Patton, P. A. Stephens, W. A. Thompson, the Rev. J. B. Barber, D. C. Harper and others were present at the hearing. Squire Wilkes T. Thrasher, representing the colored group, questioned several of the boys and girls who complained of Springs' conduct.

The hearing was held ostensibly for the examination of three Negro boys who allegedly slipped into the girls' dormitory. Two of the boys denied that they entered the dormitory, but one, Clifford Igou, admitted he went there. Under the questioning of Squire Thrasher, he said Springs mistreated all the boys and girls. He also stated that one of the girls told him Springs came into the dormitory one day when she was taking a bath.

Dr. Keese objected to airing charges against Springs and asserted that the hearing should be limited to examination of the boys as to whether or not they entered the girls' dormitory. But both Squire Thrasher and Judge Miller insisted on going into Springs' activities.

One of the Negro girls, Zelma Price, said Springs came into the dormitory on one occasion and asked one of the girls to go to the basement with him. She also claimed Springs drinks and asserted he was "sloppy drunk" last Sunday. She said Supt. Keese took the whisky from Springs and that the teacher had the bottle back within five minutes.

Girl Says Teacher Kicked Her

Beulah Tipton, colored teacher at Bonny Oaks, said that since Springs came to Bonny Oaks, "there has been incessant confusion." She claimed one of the girls came to her on one occasion and complained that Springs had kicked her. She said there was a big bruise on the child's side.

"I wasn't expecting anything like this," said Supt. Keese to Judge Miller. "I thought this was just going to be a conference with you and Mr. Lively (John J. Lively, Jr., probation officer)."

"This is a matter of public importance," Judge Miller reminded him.

B. Cortez Tipton, another colored teacher, admitted that he had received complaints from students that Springs made advances to the girls and used profane language in their presence. He also said one of the girls told him Springs was "high" Sunday night.

One of the Negro girls, Dorothy Wilson, said Springs' wife brought out a quart bottle of whisky.

"It was full when I first saw it," she said, "but it got less and less every day."

She testified she saw Springs Sunday night staggering with the bottle in his hand. She also claimed Springs bent over her and that she smelled liquor on his breath.

Mrs. Keese hinted that the trouble was caused by jealousy between the Tiptons and Springs. Tipton organized the colored boys' choir at Bonny Oaks. This organization has sung at a number of entertainments. The choir also went to Washington with Tipton and appeared at a concert there.

Saw "Insidious Influence"

Mrs. Keese said the choir obtained such prominence that organizations kept asking for them to appear on programs and it kept the boys out late at night and interfered with their school work. She said there has been

"some insidious influence" on the boys and that they were being given the "wrong slant on life." For this reason, she said, Springs and his wife were brought to Bonny Oaks several months ago and ever since then there has been trouble.

Mrs. Keese said Springs' wife, Ethel Springs, told her that Isaac was troubled with asthma and that she gave him doses of whisky mixed with rock candy and eggs as a remedy. She also said that the girl allegedly kicked by Springs had given them a great deal of trouble.

"Isaac is a man in his fifties," she said. "He taught in the public schools here and he had the very highest recommendations when he came to us. I wonder if Isaac has been intimidated. It's a mystery to me. I don't want to be unfair to any one, but I don't believe the Springs have had a chance. As soon as they came to Bonny Oaks, the Tiptons began to eat at home. That was irregular and against the rules, but in an effort to get along harmoniously, we let that go, even though it was more expensive.

"If Isaac is guilty of these things, of course, we don't want him out here."

Tipton said he had been notified by "three good physicians" that it would be dangerous for him to eat at the table with Springs. Later, he said, he had been told that Springs has tuberculosis. Dr. Patton told Judge Miller he treated Springs a year ago for pleurisy and that he regarded the teacher as a "chest case." He explained that he thought Springs was tubercular.

Supt. Keese insisted that Springs had a health certificate signed by Dr. J. W. L. Cooper, city health officer.

"These men," said Squire Thrasher, indicating the Negro doctors, "are not here to defend these Negro boys, but they want to see justice done. Where there is so much smoke there's bound to be a little fire. I understand this man, Springs, has been discharged from the city schools, the county schools and the Rockwood schools, I don't think he ought to be here."

Judge Miller asked Supt. Keese if he wanted to make any statement about the matter, but Keese shook his head and Judge Miller said he would continue the hearing this morning.