

Open School Dreams Take Shape At Picnic

By FRYE GAILLARD
 Observer Sports Writer

They sprawled across the lawn, a thousand of them more or less, munching away on sandwiches and fried chicken, while the organizers spewed forth predictable cliches about community involvement and dreams coming true.

It was a simple Thursday night picnic, really, a get-acquainted open house for par-

ents and pupils at Charlotte Mecklenburg's new Open School. But many of those present found themselves caught up in a gung-ho euphoria that the city's school system has not experienced in some time.

There were blacks and whites in roughly the proportion they are in the county. And there were children of both races chasing fireflies in the summer dusk.

For people like Lib Randolph the very normalcy of it all was a little bit overwhelming.

Mrs. Randolph, a motherly coordinator on the school system's central staff, was one of the moving forces behind the establishment of the Open School, will serve grades kindergarten through six.

And in recent months, she has allowed herself to hope — along with the school's principal, Deane Crowell, and a growing host of parents that it may lead Charlotte away from its nearly all-consuming preoccupation with busing.

"Look at them," Mrs. Randolph said, gesturing toward the crowd and beaming so broadly that the corners of her eyes pulled up into a squint. "This school is going to demonstrate community involvement at its best. For me, I can tell you, this is really a dream come true."

Mrs. Randolph's excitement stems largely from the fact that the Open School has been placed in the heart of the black inner city — in a rambling former high school that was closed under Charlotte's most recent desegregation plans.

But despite that fact, white and black parents from all parts of the county — from Huntersville in the north, to Pineville in the South, to Newell in the east — have clamored to have their children admitted.

The school is entirely voluntary. None of its 600 pupils is forced to go there, and none of its teachers is compelled to teach there. No transportation is provided those who decide to attend, and there apparently is no inclination to change that policy.

"You might call this voluntary busing, or at least voluntary carpooling," said Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board member Carlton Watkins, who, along with board member Phil Berry, was on hand for the picnic.

"What it shows," Watkins continued, "is that many of our parents here are not concerned about bus rides and distance, or even about the kind of neighborhood at the end. What they care about

more than anything is the kind of education at the end."

Many parents agreed essentially with Watkins.

"I was familiar with open education in a sense," said Bowell Mills, who lives in the northern part of the county between Long Creek and Huntersville. "I wanted something that turns kids on because I remember a lot of things about my education turned me off."

Mills also was quick to admit that there is a great deal he does not know about open education. But he said, "It just seems like they strive for quality here — not that there isn't quality elsewhere, but here they seem to put education paramount."

Bob Culbertson, a young businessman who lives near the Mint Museum, said he and his wife "really felt this is the

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Indicts SUCCESSOR



Dale Anderson

and everything I know about him.

"Despite our political differences, in all my associations with Mr. Anderson, both official and private, he has exhibited unusual candor and integrity."

Anderson, 56, is accused of conspiring with his former chief administrative officer, William E. Fornoff, to extort 31 bribe payments totaling \$46,420 between November 1968 and June 1972 from eight engineering and architectural firms performing construction, sanitation and road work under unbid contracts.

In addition, Anderson is accused of conspiring with Fornoff to violate the federal Hobbs Act and with seven counts of using interstate travel to promote extortion and bribery. Conviction on all charges could bring a maximum penalty of 67½ years in jail and \$300,000 in fine.

Fornoff, who served briefly in the same role under Agnew, resigned in June after pleading guilty to a tax charge stemming from his alleged role as a middleman between Anderson and the consultants.

A source close to the invest-

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Plan

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