

George Junior Republic:

A Classroom Without Walls

By JOY CHALONE

Situated on more than 1,000 acres of rolling farmland, a few miles outside of Ithaca, near Freeville, is the George Junior Republic. It is the world's smallest republic and largest classroom, and has been in existence since 1895.

Founded by William R. George, it is a residential center for the 'total education' of teenagers. The Republic accepts boys and girls, ages 13-19, of all races, creeds and economic levels, from all over the U.S., who have one thing in common: some part of society — parents, schools, agencies, churches has been unable to break through to touch the heart of their problem.

They come to the Republic at the behest of families, clergyman, teachers, child-guidance clinics, doctors, social agencies, courts and other referral sources. The junior "citizens" (as they are called here) are admitted for a total daily educational experience in a "classroom without walls" — or fences.

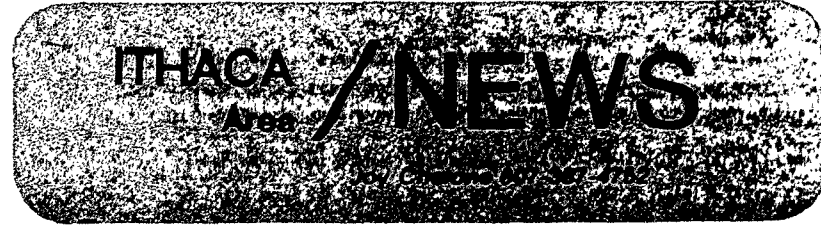
Whether they are preparing meals, farming, engaging in sports, sweeping floors, sewing, repairing machinery, studying algebra, having a session with a counselor, attending a town meeting or relaxing in the swimming pool, they are going to school, for every experience at the Republic is a lesson for living.

Donald T. Urquhart, executive director, puts it this way: "This is a community center for educating basically healthy youngsters for whom special attention is needed so they can be assured of rescue, motivation and restoration to society."

An average stay for a citizen is 18 months. The citizen himself helps decide when he has completed his program of 'total education'. He may apply for graduation. This is a time for unblinking self-analysis. Attainment of grade level has little to do with the decision. He is screened by the staff committee their decision resting on whether he is ready to face the world he once found to be filled with disappointment and frustration. Some graduates leave with high school diplomas, some go back to their former school for completion.

Every citizen is assigned to a residence with house parents, in as homelike an atmosphere as possible. Each youngster is required to work and is paid for his efforts in the Republic's own currency, according to his job, his experience and his skill.

Citizens maintain and improve the Republic. GJR has its



Students file out of George Junior Republic's chapel.

own water, sewer system, roads and other utilities. Thursday is pay day, and the day citizens room and board payments are due.

Citizens contribute nominal sums as their share of their living expenses. They also pay for personal necessities and luxuries, for laundry, income taxes, health insurance and recreational activities.

The Republic, whose currency bears the motto "Nothing Without Labor" maintains its own bank where citizens are encouraged to establish savings accounts and where they may exchange Republic money for United States currency as needed. Some have nest eggs when they leave the Republic and all must maintain a \$20 balance.

The citizens learn to develop good work habits and work relationships to build special skills, to explore job possibilities, to determine what they can do best to set their goals for earning a livelihood.

Life is not all work, though. Activities encouraged at the Republic include dances, athletic events, movies, and talent shows.

Citizens learn, too, about morals and ethics. There is freedom of worship at Freeville, with a chapel on the grounds being shared by the Catholic and Protestant students, and provision is made for Jewish youngsters to attend services nearby. Every encouragement is given to practice religion and attend services, but nothing is forced. Father Thomas K. Cleary is Catholic chaplain.

The junior citizens govern in this capsule republic. They elect their own officers, enact their own laws, preside over their own courts, operate their own police force and pay taxes — learning at first hand the operation, economics and leadership requirements of government. Elections are held on the same day as our national elections. Officers and agencies are set up in replica of government and called by the same names.

One way to measure the George Junior Republic's success over the past three-quarters of a century is in terms of the thousands of citizens it has benefited. Between 1895 and 1966, 4,290 citizens have graduated and taken their places in the world. The challenge today is to expand — to attack the long waiting list for admission to the republic. Today an average of ten boys and girls must be turned away for every new citizen ad-

mitted. Thus, the goal is to 'open the classroom walls even wider'. A \$6.7 million expansion and improvement program has been launched to expand their citizen population by 90 per cent. Present enrollment ranges around 180 citizens at one time.

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Ithaca Area Notes

Watkins Glen—Trustees for St. Mary's of the Lake, for the coming year are Naomi Roberts and Joseph P. Saptura. Auditors are Doris Fennell and John Kapral who succeed Mary T. Valeant, auditor for the past 2 years.

Trustees for St. Benedict's, Odessa, for the coming year are Dennis O'Neal and Michael Ungarvasky Sr. They succeed John McDonald, trustee for the past 2 years. Auditors will be Bertha Letteer and Anne Martin. They succeed Ned S. Lewis.

Penn Yan — St. Michael's Parish will hold a chicken barbecue, Sunday, Aug. 13, 11:30 a.m. — 4 p.m., in the school playground. The event is being held for the benefit of the school.

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