

# Bethel Farmers Call Fair a Plot 'to Avoid the Law'

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BETHEL, N. Y., Aug. 19—A number of Bethel residents threatened legal action today against the Town Board and the Woodstock Music and Art Fair to recover money they said they lost because of the four-day stranglehold the festival had on the community and because of damage to their property.

Joseph Lynch, owner of the Island Glen Country Club on Route 17B, called the festival a "conspiracy to avoid the law."

He said that a special permit, needed to operate the festival, had never been granted by the Bethel Zoning Board of Appeals and that the Town Supervisors and the Board of Health had issued permits that did not even begin to meet the needs of the hundreds of thousands of youngsters who crowded this small community.

"Sanitary facilities were completely inadequate," Mr. Lynch said. "The Board of Health made a complete mockery of the health code. The whole town was left without police and fire protection."

He said that many of the community residents were banding together to force the Town Board to "come up with answers" as to how and why a permit had been issued.

## Expense of Protection

His country club had been closed while the festival was in operation, Mr. Lynch went on, and he had spent hundreds of dollars protecting his property from the thousands of squatters who arrived.

Mr. Lynch's comments on the lack of a special permit were echoed by Richard C. Joyner, a member of the Town Zoning, Board of Appeals and the operator of the local post office and general store on Route 17B.

Mr. Joyner said:

"The matter was never brought before the zoning board. We are supposed to have a public hearing, but we're never allowed to call one. This seems to have been worked out before anyone knew about it.

"The zoning board is already on record that they will accept no responsibility, because it was definitely against the zoning ordinance."

He said that the youngsters at the festival had virtually taken over his property—camping on his lawn, making fires on his patio and using the backyard as a latrine.

He was ordered to close the Bethel post office by regional postal officials at 4 P.M. Friday, he said, and was told not to reopen it on Saturday. It is usually open until 5 P.M. six days a week.

People who live closer to the festival site apparently took the brunt of the human tidal wave that descended on them last Thursday.

## Farmer Shaken

Clarence W. Townsend, who runs a 150-acre dairy farm three miles from the alfalfa field where the festival was staged was shaken by the ordeal.

"We had thousands of cars all over our fields," he said. "There were kids all over the place. They made a human cess-pool of our property and drove through the cornfields."

"There's not a fence left on the place. They just tore them up and used them for firewood."

Mr. Townsend said that milk trucks could not get to his property during the weekend because of the traffic jams.

"The boys just milked the cows and then dumped the milk over the side," he said. "This is our livelihood. We couldn't put the cows out because of the traffic."

Royden Gabriele, still fuming over the weekend, hurled verbal abuse at a visitor who parked near his house.

"Get that car off my lawn," he hollered. "You're worse than the hippies."

He later calmed down and told of his experiences on his 210-acre farm.

"My pond is a swamp," he said. "I've got no fences and they used my field as a latrine. They picked corn and camped all over the place. They just landed wherever they could.

We had to be up around the clock to watch them."

Mr. Gabriele, too, is considering legal action against the town board to collect damages.

## 'Will Never Be Same'

"This community will never be the same," he asserted. "We pulled 30 of them out of the hay mow smoking pot."

All those who were interviewed appeared perturbed when they were told that town officials had been quoted as having said the festival would be invited back.

"If they come back next year I don't know what I'll do," Mr. Gabriele said. "If I can't sell, I'll just burn the place down."

Herman Reinshagen owns a produce farm near the festival area and is also a member of the Bethel Zoning Board of Appeals.

The festival operators "never got a permit," he said.

"There was a stop order made, but they just put the festival up anyway," he said. "We were against it from the beginning and now that it's over, we're sure we're right." Mr. Reinshagen contended that the festival managers had not been prepared for the crowds. He said that the store where he sells produce to customers from the surrounding area had to be closed for the four days of the festival.

Despite their anger against town officials and operators of the festival, the residents were not angry at the youngsters who overran their property.

"They just had no place to go," Florence Townsend said. "They were led to believe that all the needed facilities would be provided and they just were not."

There were still many cars in the festival area mired in mud up to their hubcaps, abandoned on the highway or apparently just forgotten or believed stolen.

Town officials could not be reached for comment on the charges of the residents.