

Addendum G

I, James A. Coleman, currently residing at 73 Mary Coburn Rd., Springfield, MA would like to state the following:

1. I am the author of a book entitled The CIRCLE which I published and distributed for sale throughout the Greater Springfield area in the fall of 1970. The book is based on fact and records many of the incidents that actually happened in connection with a group of teenage boys of various ages from 12 to 17. They called themselves the Circle for reasons detailed in the book.
2. On pages 99 and 100 references are made to St. Jude's church as the name of the church and parish where the raconteur of the story and many of the Circle gang members lived. St. Jude's is a synonym for St. Catherine's church on Parker St. in Springfield. (The parish house does have a swimming pool there and the funeral service for Frank Archie was held at St. Catherine's church as detailed on p. 95.) Also, Father Miffin (mentioned on pages 99 and 100) is a synonym for Father Griffin who was the pastor at St. Catherine's at the time the various events occurred and the book was written.
3. On pages 99 and 100 reference is made to Father Ravine. This name is a synonym for Father Richard Lavigne who was a priest at St. Catherine's church at the time the various events occurred and the book was written. Furthermore, Father Lavigne's actions and general behaviour as written on pages 99 and 100 were written by me as accurately as I could recall from what the kids in the Circle told me at the time.
4. The following is especially pertinent. On page 100 the raconteur quotes the opinion expressed by some adults (in reference to Father Lavigne) who "figger that if he likes the kids so much, there must be something wrong with him".
5. I knew Danny Croteau very well. He was well-adjusted, "open", friendly, likeable and had a generally extrovertish personality. He was not overly aggressive but he was definitely not the kind of boy that anyone could "push around" easily. Furthermore, although many of the Circle boys lived in his neighborhood he got along with them very well because they liked and respected him.
6. Finally, Danny Croteau was NOT a member of the Circle and is not mentioned or represented in the book in any way.

James A. Coleman
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Date: *May 13, 1993*

Shirley L. Dannelly
Notary Public

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This book is dedicated to all my good friends in the Circle but especially to the memory of

FRANK ARCHIE

whose tragic death at such a tender age was so unnecessary and could have been avoided.

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PREFACE

This book is based on actual events which have occurred while I have been associated with a teenage gang of boys in a middle class neighborhood for several years. I have seen their problems developing, in many cases, directly from ignorant or negligent parents. But to be powerless to prevent it, in most instances, is an agony in itself.

Mike Moran, the hero and raconteur of this story, is typical of the teenager who is a victim of "stupid" adults. Misunderstood and abused at home, he develops antagonism and defiance to his parents which he extends to adults as a whole. His friends are other boys of similar backgrounds and attitudes and they form a gang with mutual interests, one of these being to "get back" at the adults. All kinds of juvenile delinquency and violent behavior are the result. This book is their story - their "action" and the community's reaction to their action.

Surprisingly, Mike Moran and his friends are not hopeless because Mike Moran's better qualities shine through many times. These plus the occasional guidance given by a rare adult with understanding may be sufficient to save Mike Moran from the hopeless life of the habitual criminal or drug addict. But one or more of the boys in the gang may not escape for reasons detailed in the story.

Some incidents have been modified for various reasons. The boys' names, too, have been changed to protect the guilty. Despite these necessary changes the story still presents an accurate picture of the Circle gang.

While this is a book about teenagers written for teenagers it is hoped that adults who read it, especially parents of teenagers, will gain a deeper insight into the complexities of teenage behavior. This should permit greater understanding and tolerance of teenagers in general. And therein lies my main reason for writing this book.

James A. Coleman
Springfield, Mass.
September, 1969

catch us when we run in there. They sure try hard sometimes, though.

Anyway, the adults decide to build a library alongside the shopping center. We like the library 'cause we can play on the front lawn. But that's only 'till old Miss Blandford, the librarian, calls the cops and they chase us off. We tell them that's the only place we can play football. They let us to play back in the fields. We tell them we can't 'cause the fields are rough and we sprain our ankles and get banged up on the rocks. But the stupid cops say we got to move 'cause they got orders to move us off.

That old bag Miss Blandford sure is a mean old bitch. Like when we're cold and stand inside the front door to warm she tries to throw us out. We tell her we're cold but she says it makes no difference. She says we're blocking the entrance and we got to go. We used to go but not no more. Jeff Kopchek gets real pissed at her one day and tells her to go fuck herself. So now she doesn't bother us so much anymore.

Behind the library there's this big old tree. So the old codgers that are planning a park on all the empty land around the center figger it's so nice and quiet like there would make a good reading area. I guess the idea was that people could get books from the library and go back there and read them. So the codgers put a brick walk in around the tree with some benches sort of in a circle facing the tree. Then they put a big mound of dirt with grass on it in a big circle around the brick area. The whole thing was kind of nice looking when it was first done.

They had a big dedication thing soon after it was finished. The mayor and the president of the park department and other codgers came out and made speeches and stuff like that. They even had a bronze tablet with some writing on it that they put in the ground next to the tree. But I didn't go to the dedication 'cause I don't go much for that crap. Some of the guys went, though, and said it was real nice.

We sort of forgot about the Circle until we see nobody 'er there. The stupid adults do all this work on the thing and then they just ignore it. There isn't even a window in the back of the library where anybody can see what's going on in the Circle. Even old eagle eye Blandford doesn't seem

to care. Just like stupid adults!

So we guys start hanging out at the Circle. Since it's kind of hidden we can smoke in there without getting caught. We had to drive the little kids away, though, 'cause we couldn't take a chance of any of them squealing on us. For smoking, I mean. And the Big Acres don't bother us 'cause they still hang around their cars in the parking lot. They don't like to leave their cars alone 'cause they're afraid we'll make one for a joy ride sometime. And we did once, too! But I'll tell you about that later.

Like I say, we started hanging around at the Circle and that soon becomes like our official hangout. We can play all kinds of games like "Jail" where we run up and down the dirt mounds and take turns capturing guys and making believe like they're in jail. The fun comes in when we start beating on them like the cops do downtown to make them confess to something. We gamble a lot with cards at the Circle, too. The stakes ain't too high 'cause none of us has too much bread. Just enough for our cigs. And even them we swipe half the time at Acre Drugs.

We never figger to start a gang or anything like that at first. But things start to happen which draw us together like. Like the time Candy Kohn has her trouble. It starts out just about like any other day. About ten of us are at the Circle doing what we're usually doing. Four of the guys are playing cards. Pat Wilkes is hacking away at one of the benches with a new knife he'd swiped somewhere. Willy Bogart is pulling bricks out of the walk and seeing how high he can pile them without the bricks falling over. Bob Cobb and Paul Cirelli are out on one of the tree limbs trying to bend it to the ground. They finally get it down just as it breaks off.

Storky's riding his bike up and down the dirt mounds and, like he always does, he's poking somebody every time he's going by him. Not real hard, of course. Just hard enough to annoy hell out of the guys 'till they want to kill him. But they can't catch him, though, 'cause Storky's real fast. So Storky's dodging all the guys, laughing his skinny head off.

Willy Bogart tries to ignore Storky and makes like he isn't around. But nobody can ignore Storky. Storky comes riding over the mound, swoops down and knocks Bogart's

Pat's kind of proud of how he got the old man to give a couple of nights before his old man's got no cigarettes and is dying for a smoke and it's too late for him to buy them anywhere. Pat knows about the nicotine craving he gets enough of them himself, so he figgers he'll win the old man over. Pat's old man knows he smokes 'cause he notices some of his cigs gone lots of times when the old man's around. So Pat whips out his pack and says to his old man.

"Here, Pop, have one of mine."

The old man kind of blinks and takes it and now they swap cigs all the time.

I been smoking since I'm about ten. I used to have to sneak them all the time, too, till my last birthday when I was fifteen. Then my old lady tells me she gives me a real birthday present. She's going to let me smoke now. So I'm puffing cigs all over the house now. My little brothers and sisters think I'm a big guy now puffing all the time just like those cowboys on TV. Funny thing, though. My old lady always swiping my cigs and now I got to hide them better than I ever did before she gave me permission! I sometimes think she lets me smoke just so she can swipe my cigs.

All of a sudden Bob Cobb says,

"I'm gonna kill myself when I get older."

"Why?" I says.

"Because life's too boring," he says. "There's nothing to do."

Wilkes says to him,

"You just can't take it. You're chicken."

"And I don't care where I go when I die, either."

"Maybe you'll go to hell," I says.

"I don't believe in that crap about hell," Wilkes says.

"How about Jesus?" I says to him. "Do you believe in him?"

"There's just one thing about that Jesus guy that puzzles me," Wilkes says. "How come all the guys that seen him are dead?"

Bob says, "If you saw him, you'd be scared to go. Boy, if he suddenly appeared here right now, I'd be right over that tree!"

We all think about that a few minutes. Then Pat Wilkes says.

"Jesus was a head, you know."

I don't know why he says that but I get to thinking about this religion stuff and what happens at our church. That's St. Jude's where the pool is and where we have Arty's funeral service I told you about before. Father Miffin brings in this young priest a few months back. His name's Father Ravine. What a great guy he is! All the kids like him 'cause he sparks things up a lot. Like he gets some guitars and beat music in for the masses instead of that dead stuff with the organ we had before. And all the people are singing now where they never did before. And liking it, too! Then Father Ravine's got the kids doing big posters to decorate the church with religious sayings and stuff. Only he lets the kids do them any way they want to. So we put our favorite cartoon characters on them, like Peanuts. Those posters sure were great!

Father Ravine's got some different ideas about the church, too. We got this real fancy expensive church that's just built a couple of years ago. It's about the best looking church building in Massachusetts. But that's all we got. The church, I mean. There's no recreation hall, or gym, or bowling alleys like the other churches have. Even the small protestant church on the corner has meeting rooms and social rooms and a kitchen in the basement where they have poppers and movies for the kids and stuff like that. All we've got is a church where we go one hour a week on Sunday. When we go, that is. All the rest of the time all that fancy stone and marble just sits there doing nothing.

Father Ravine says a church belongs to the people 'cause they pay for it and they should use it every day. Like he says, we should have dances and a drop-in center in it and all kinds of stuff for the adults and the kids, too. It sounds right to me 'cause we got no community center or recreation center or anything like that in our area 'cause the people spend so much money on the beautiful church they got none left over for anything else. They complain about the guys hanging around and doing stuff, like vandalism and stuff like that, but they never give us a place to go.

So what happens with Father Ravine is that Father

Miffin and the other old codgers and bags in the church don't like him wanting to change things. They figger they got no business thinking about anything but religious stuff. They figger if he likes the kids so much, there must be something wrong with him. They don't understand him so they get rid of him and send him away to another parish. We guys were going to get up a petition and try to get Father Ravine back but we know it's no good. Father Miffin's too old to change and the adults are too stupid.

After Father Ravine leaves the kids that belong to the church can't stand going there anymore. It's boring as hell just sitting and kneeling there and saying the same prayers every Sunday. And listening to Father Miffin's crap. So we start sneaking off to the Circle on Sunday mornings. The guys that don't go with their olds I mean. We leave home heading for church but duck back towards the Circle as it's safe. We sit around there only talking 'cause the horse around and mess up our clothes our olds will get mad.

One Sunday morning Mr. B sees us at the Circle and comes over. We tell him why we don't go to church anymore and he understands. He's with us. Only he says we need some kind of religious stuff on Sunday mornings. He gets us talking about stuff like where the world came from, what color Jesus was, and stuff like that. I don't think of it before but if Jesus is born over there where those Arabs are and he's supposed to be an ordinary guy just like them, then he must be dark just like the Nigger Man. Jesus must have been a black man! But in all the pictures and statues he's white. How do you figger that?

Mr. B tells us stories about what the church was like when it's getting started and how they made those guys fight lions 'cause they're religious, and Galileo fighting the pope and all that stuff. I sure wish the old Circle was around then. We'd have taken care of some of those motherfuckers. We'd have kicked their ass.

Anyway, we're having such a good time with these interesting discussions with Mr. B on Sunday mornings that more and more kids come every week. When Mr. B is happening he stops coming over. He tells us he doesn't want to be a preacher and that the way all the kids are flocking to the Circle he might get busted for "alienating

action." whatever that means. We can, though. Our olds sure get a kick out of us and the area do cause it's the time the codgers at the church challenged us to a basketball game but don't know how. That's the minister there and that was some ball game. We're alright! He's sliding in so Paul Cirelli and Kieth kneels hard on his back. The man Bean has to go to the toilet he can hardly walk yet. I get to that codger.

Anyway, while we're shooing I'm telling you about Mr. B. "You guys going to the meeting?" we all say. "Well," he says, "the meeting's over all the vandals happened around here the public meeting at Kiley! I don't know what to do about it." "What you guys are responsible for what things?" Pat Wilkes asks.

We all look at Pat Wilkes and the thing's serious and Mr. B says, "Can we go to this public meeting?" "Of course," he says. "You're as anyone else. You're kids. I think you'll find it interesting."

All the guys say they want to go. They must have about 100 kids. I know too many of them from the stores around the neighborhood. None of our olds are going to break. But, then, we die