

Former Bonny Oaks Pupil Back At School As Counselor

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At age seven and a half, Ellis Coleman found himself and two sisters in Bonny Oaks School as resident-pupils, and now the soft-spoken 23-year-old man is back as a full-time counselor, helping kids who had it rough in much the same manner as he did.

Mr. Coleman had his share of hard knocks as a young man at Bonny Oaks—he made the drug scene through heavy use of marijuana, an activity he engaged in because of peer pressure.

But he shucked it, and he wants other young people to avoid that useless pitfall — not to yield to peer pressure, not to hit the destruction trail merely because you want to feel accepted. He said, "Just try to be your own (person). Accept yourself."

Ken Clay, Bonny Oaks executive director, says in a paper he had prepared, "I can remember several crises which Ellis experienced and came through with the grace of God. His most important crisis came when he and another youngster smoked a large amount of marijuana.

"This was Ellis' first time to experiment with marijuana and he was really frightened by the effects he was experiencing. (Ellis said he thought that he had ruined his brain, would not recover his mental faculties.) Ellis had believed in God most his life, but states that this ordeal brought about a major change in his life.

"He had made a full commitment to God and began serving him with all his being. He began his own crusade with his peers and became a great source of guidance and counseling for many children here at Bonny Oaks.

"I am convinced he contributed more in this area than all our paid staff put together."



KEN CLAY, LEFT, AND ELLIS COLEMAN



BONNY OAKS ATHLETES — From left, Willie Ware, Steve Bentley, Mr. Coleman, and Montez Bailey.